

OUR VIEW

New bill same as old bill

The Oregon Senate's Interim Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has unveiled the Legislature's latest version of climate change legislation.

Unfortunately, it's not much different than the bill that tied the Senate in knots at the end of the 2019 session.

Last year's attempt to cap carbon dioxide emissions and force many businesses to purchase "allowances" to cover existing emissions was the measure that spurred a nine-day walkout by Senate Republicans in late June. They returned two days before the session ended.

Democrats say the proposed measure contains a variety of concessions aimed at easing its impact on rural Oregon. At least one Republican who took part in some discussions of the new proposal, Sen. Fed Girod, R-Stayton, disagrees. Some climate change activists, meanwhile, believe the bill has been so weakened it may do more harm than good.

Some of the changes come in the manufacturing and utility sectors, and are designed to create fewer impacts for rural Oregon. Those tweaks are largely centered on how automotive fuel suppliers and big industrial players are treated.

Rather than uniform statewide regulation of automotive fuels, the new proposal splits the state into three geographic zones that would be phased in separately. That approach, which Democrats have been telegraphing for months, is designed to address concerns that cap and trade would hike gas prices statewide, disproportionately affecting rural communities that have little option but to drive.

Among other things, the proposal, LC19, would phase in taxes on transportation fuel providers, with those in the Portland area being hit first, and those in rural Oregon being required to pay at some future date. Instead, Girod argues, fuel importers will end up paying the tax, and pass it on to distributors who would, in turn, pass it on to retailers across the state.

That's one scenario that both rural lawmakers and some climate activists can agree on.

In the end, it appears that what's being proposed in LC19 is largely what was defeated in 2019's House Bill 2020. This new version, however, may face criticism not only from Republicans and rural Oregonians but from environmentalists, as well.

Lawmakers are, apparently, unable to find a shade of lipstick that makes the old cap-and-trade pig beautiful.



"WE'RE GETTING AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT FROM ANONYMOUS SOURCES MAKING UNVERIFIED CLAIMS IN AN OUT-OF-CONTEXT VIDEO, WHICH-IF TRUE, IS HUGE NEWS, AND IF NOT-UTTER HORSE HOCKEY!!"

MY VOICE

State should adopt a basic income

Oregon is not a wait-and-see kind of state. So it's time to stop waiting for more research about providing a Universal Basic Income. Instead, it's time we adopt a UBI and fine tune it as we go. A UBI would provide every Oregonian with a monthly stipend; current UBI programs range from \$500 to \$1,500 a month. Year after year, the program can be refined to make it a means of empowerment and self-sufficiency.

From helping people attain housing security to getting people through an expected illness, a UBI offers every recipient a chance to be more autonomous and less anxious, more aspirational and less risk-averse.

When Oregonians have identified a solution for a need, they tend not to test the political winds for whether it should move forward. Instead, they stake out a position on the vanguard of making the state more inclusive and welcoming. It's this sort of thinking that led the state to pass paid family leave. It's this sort of thinking that created sustainable land use policies. And, it's this sort of thinking that resulted in mail-in voting and, later, automatic voter registration.

However, when Oregon has hesitated on making a big move on a big issue, it's usually because of costs. We act quickly when we can save money, but have trouble making sizable investments. Everyone knows that solving the housing crisis could be ameliorated, in part, by spending more on affordable, dense housing. We've yet to see sufficient investment. Everyone agrees that people experiencing homelessness would benefit from greater access to mental health care. But, creating and operating such mental health facilities would require substantial financial support. Everyone would appreciate transit upgrades that cost upwards of a billion dollars. However, commuters continue to sit in traffic as the state sits on bold transit projects such as high-speed rail. One explanation for the state's hesitancy to invest in these capital projects

About the author

MY VOICE

Kevin Frazier was raised in Washington County. He is pursuing



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is that too few people are willing to wait and see if their investment in a new affordable housing complex, mental health center, or transit line would be worth it.

A UBI is not a capital investment but a human investment. It directly supports people on the edge of problems with dire consequences. Consider the tenant on the edge of eviction because of being a few hundred dollars short; a UBI could help them make it to the next month and stay off the streets. According to the Eviction Lab, many tenants are evicted for sums that a UBI could cover. This is the autonomous promise of a UBI, freeing people to remain in control of their own affairs. Next, think about the unemployed worker whose job prospects are confined to where they can go within an hour on public transit. Now imagine they have the funds to lease a car and reach a job with higher pay and better benefits. This is the aspirational promise of a UBI, allowing more people

to pursue more opportunities.

The benefits generated by greater autonomy and aspirational activity would immediately be felt throughout the state. So long as people are teetering on the edge of uncertainty, a UBI will reduce the frequency with which people come to rely on the state for expensive, more extensive support. And as long as people are prevented from pursuing the jobs suited to their skills, the state will fall short of its economic potential.

Funding the program could come from a variety of sources. For one, a UBI should almost immediately lead to a decreased need for state support services — the corresponding savings could be distributed to the UBI. Another proposal would mirror the Alaska Permanent Fund after creating a collective wealth fee. The state could also source funds from congestion pricing systems or a sales tax.

Regardless of the source, the state needs to recognize a UBI as a solution suited to the scope and scale of the state's needs.

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