

**OUR VIEW**

## Climate bill closes door on openness

Would it make you edgy if Oregon government was going to launch a big, new program worth millions and keep secrets about how well it works?

This is about the new Oregon greenhouse gas bill. The program would be set up like this: Bigger greenhouse gas emitters would have to get credits for what they emit. There would be an overall cap on how much will be emitted and that cap tightens over time. The state will sell the credits in auctions. The state will turn around and use the revenue raised to do all sorts of green initiatives. Nobody knows for sure what kind of money it will be, but it's safe to say it will be millions and millions.

Oregonians will be able to know what the revenue is spent on — it would seem. But according to the bill, they won't know where the money comes from and how much individual bidders are paying for credits. The language of the bill prohibits disclosure of information about participation in the auctions, including bid activity and auction results.

Now you might be thinking why should I care what a company bids and what happens in these state auctions?

Well there are a couple of reasons. One is, indirectly, it is your money that will be paying for these credits. Do you buy gasoline? Do you use energy? Those are just some examples of the products you buy that may cost more because the companies that sell it have to buy these credits. Don't you want to know how your money is being spent on a government program?

And if that is not good enough for you, remember the BETC. That was the state of Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit program. It was a very well-intentioned green program going to do all sorts of good things for the state. Businesses manipulated the program and pocketed millions that they should never have received. And that was in a program that allowed enterprising reporters access to the critical records. Just imagine what some business will be able to do when the law forbids the public from having access to important information.

Most businesses likely won't try to manipulate any new program. But they will be looking for loopholes and ways to win. It could be in way Oregonians don't like. And with the way the law is written, Oregonians may never know.

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

## Revisit timing of legislative sessions

**Editorial from the Bend Bulletin:**

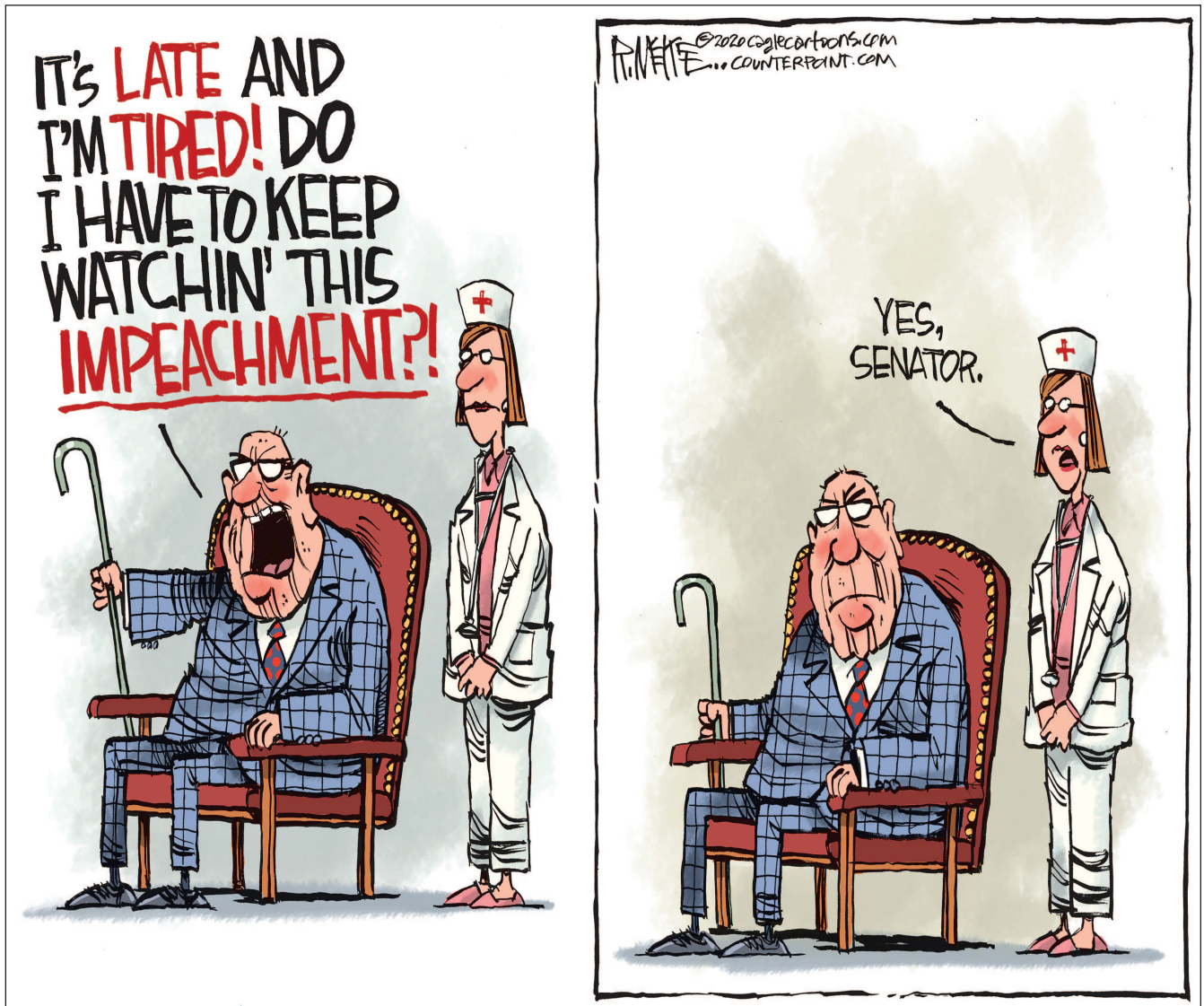
Oregon lawmakers meet every year, for 165 days in years ending in an odd number and for 35 days in even-numbered years. That's relatively new; voters approved the change in 2010. Now there's talk of changing the system again.

Before the 2010 election, the Legislature met only in odd-numbered years. It could call itself into a special session if need be, and it did so from time to time, generally to handle budget crises. The short annual session was touted as a way to do away with those special sessions, a brief period every other year to address issues that couldn't wait for the next odd-year session.

The short sessions have become something far different. This year, for example, lawmakers again will push for a cap-and-trade bill. They'll also take up, again, the tricky issue of gun control, a bill to cut the state's vulnerability to wildfire and how to spend or save \$1 billion in unbudgeted revenue.

Perhaps with the exception of the unbudgeted revenue, each of those topics could wait, a reality that might make the case for doing away with the biennial short session. That's one approach. Another would be to lay out clearly, in law, what the short session is for. A third: Lengthen the short session a bit and conduct business as usual.

It's too early to tell if lawmakers will take proposals for change seriously, but it's a discussion worth having.



## Your views

**Mail delivery leaves Observer carriers behind**

EO Media Group, owner of the La Grande Observer and Baker City Herald, recently announced its decision to switch from local contract paper delivery to the U.S. Postal Service.

The reason given is the difficulty in finding responsible carriers. Since La Grande's printing press broke down, printing has been outsourced to Pendleton. Transporting papers from Pendleton to La Grande and Baker City is currently the company's responsibility. Under the new arrangement, papers will be loaded directly from the Pendleton printing office onto postal service trucks and delivered to La Grande and Baker City post offices. Outsourcing the trip over the mountain as well as delivery to subscribers will now be handled by the U.S. Postal Service.

Rural route carriers require dependable vehicles to handle all kinds of conditions. Presumably the job helped make payments. In town delivery provided extra income for adults. Carriers were given the mandatory 30-day notice. However, as contract workers they will receive no severance pay.

The carriers' connection to the lives of subscribers and thus to the social fabric of our community was made clear in "A salute to the unsung news carriers" (The Observer, Jan. 24). They delivered far more than papers to our community. That sort of casual but attentive connection is virtually impossible to replicate.

Subscribers could cushion their carriers' transition by giving a final gift by the end of this month.

**Mary McCracken**  
*Island City*

**Charging for plastic bags does not solve the problem**

There is a saying I think is very true: "An idiotic idea though embraced by millions is still an idiotic idea." Case in point: the plastic store bags that have been replaced by heavy plastic bags that cost us a mere 5 cents.

**Write to us**

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only).

We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We will not publish poetry, consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged. Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.

Email your letters to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com) or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, 97850.

**MY VOICE**

My Voice columns should be 500 words. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships.

We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We reject those published elsewhere.

Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).

You can't even buy a half stick of gum for 5 cents so I have no problem paying the small amount for the bags — but it isn't the bags that are the problem. It is the people who have no respect for our environment or anything else. Those same people will toss the new three-times heavier bags just as readily as the old, and that makes a lot more plastic to pollute.

Paper bags, on the other hand, will break down, but they don't seem to be the majority available.

Come on, people, let's take care of our own garbage and put it where it goes. That would fix the plastic problem a whole lot more than charging a mere 5 cents for a heavier bag. Let's teach the younger generation to be responsible and have respect for others and the environment. I believe that is the only solution for the problem.

**Cristine Jons Martin**  
*Island City*

**Bill Miller is committed to the citizens of Union County**

As a former citizen of Union County, I support Bill Miller for sheriff of Union County. I've known Bill for several years, as he was a co-worker of my late

husband, Reed Waite.

I know Bill is competent, honest, hardworking and understands the law. His resume is impeccable. His 20 years of experience and training in law enforcement includes: search and rescue, volunteer firefighter, ambulance driver, corrections officer, drug task force, patrol deputy and detective for Union County.

Bill is an Elgin High School graduate and graduated from EOU with a bachelor of science degree. He also completed the Oregon State Sheriff's Association Command College. He is certified as a SWAT team member and became team leader. His training in law enforcement is very impressive.

Bill has been recognized by the sheriff and peers "For Outstanding Service and Dedication to the people of Union County" as well as received other awards.

Bill's dedication and commitment to the citizens of Union County is evident. He will bring integrity and leadership back to the sheriff's department. Please consider voting for Bill Miller in the May 2020 primary election.

**Debbie Waite**  
*Centerville, Utah*

**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

**SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE**

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50  
You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.  
Call 541-963-3161 to subscribe.

Stopped account balances less than \$5 will be refunded upon request.

Subscription rates per month:  
By carrier.....\$11.80  
By mail, all other U.S. ....\$15

# THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896  
(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by EO Media Group, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

COPYRIGHT © 2020 THE OBSERVER  
The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone:  
541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon):  
1-800-422-3110  
Fax: 541-963-7804  
Email:  
[news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com)  
Website:  
[www.lagrandeobserver.com](http://www.lagrandeobserver.com)  
Street address:  
1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER  
Send address changes to:  
The Observer, 1406 Fifth St.,  
La Grande, OR 97850  
Periodicals postage paid at:  
La Grande, Oregon 97850

**STAFF**

Publisher.....Karrine Brogotti	Classifieds .....Devi Mathson
Regional circulation director .....Kelli Craft	Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick
Editor .....Phil Wright	Customer service rep .....Mollie Lynch
News clerk.....Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....Juli Bloodgood
Sports editor.....Ronald Bond	Advertising representative.....Amy Horn
Reporter.....Dick Mason	Graphic design supervisor.....Dorothy Kautz
Reporter.....Sabrina Thompson	Graphic design .....Cheryl Christian
	IT support .....Nicole Gilbride

Chris Rush, Regional Publisher

