



Gov. Kate Brown, left, and Sen. Bill Hansell, center right, listen to Cor-Tek plant manager Larry Hughes, right, talk about possible relief efforts for the manufacturing facility, which was inundated with water as a result of the Feb. 6 Umatilla County floods.

BARTER

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1530, the climate change bill Democrats are pushing this year.

Hansell said it only dawned on him later what Brown was actually asking. She wanted him to work with Jillions to figure out what amendments to the bill might keep Hansell from abandoning the 2020 legislative session altogether.

The odd meeting is a fitting example of the state of affairs in the Capitol, as Democrats and Republicans once again brace for a clash on climate change. With the cap-and-trade bill headed to a potential Senate vote next week, Republicans are showing more certainty than ever they will stage the walkout that has long loomed over the session. Democrats are trying to keep them in the building.

Brown working all the angles

The governor has been busy trying to connect with Senate Republicans to identify incentives. That's included reports of carving out extra money for a veteran's hospital in Roseburg or funneling more dollars to a community college.

The attempted deal-making is a matter of arithmetic. Democrats need at least two Republicans on hand in the Senate to achieve a 20-member quorum, allowing them to conduct business.

But so far, it hasn't seemed to work.

Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., R-Grants Pass, said his caucus is "solid" and united against the cap-and-trade bill. For the past week, Republican senators have been reading proclamations on the Senate floor from rural counties urging them to ensure the bill doesn't pass.

Baertschiger said the governor has "offered everybody something."

"It stinks. I won't have no part of it, and it's soft corruption," he said.

Brown sees it differently.

"The governor is trying to speak to individual members about the things we all want for their districts. Wild-fire funding can't practically happen without a quorum," said Nik Blosser, the governor's chief of staff. "There are things that are specific to districts, and that's more how we are seeing the conversations. We can't do these things if we don't have a quorum."

Some Republicans not talking on walkout

It's not clear all Republicans are as ready to walk out as Baertschiger.

Of 10 GOP senators OPB interviewed in the last week, seven said they would walk away from the session if SB 1530 doesn't include a referral to voters or other substantial changes. Three more — Sens. Denyc Boles, Lynn Findley and Tim Knopp — would

NORMAL

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gymnasium. Homan said the school's insurance adjuster will help determine the extent of cleanup needed in the library to see if items such as books, for example, can be cleaned or should be replaced.

"You kind of do the cost effectiveness," he said.

"That's what we're waiting for. Hopefully this week we'll have a much better (idea)."

The gym, which sustained the brunt of the damage,

will undergo a similar assessment to determine if it can be repaired or should be replaced entirely. That isn't the No. 1 focus for Homan, even though he doubles as the girls basketball coach.

"Our main concern at first is to get our kids back in and be able to have school and get our cafeteria going," he said, noting that getting even a ballpark idea is tough with the lights in the gym still down. "As we continue to move forward we'll be able to pay more

Legislation introduced to advance deal between timber and environmental interests

SALEM — The fate of the landmark deal signed between a coalition of timber companies and environmental groups depends on lawmakers acting on legislation that would reform certain Oregon logging practices.

The deal brokered by Gov. Kate Brown and announced earlier this month outlines a process for the two warring sides to set aside prospective ballot initiatives and related litigation in favor of working together. One of the provisions in that agreement says the deal hinges on passage of legislation to reform practices around aerial spraying of pesticides.

That legislation — House Bill 4168 — was introduced Thursday by the House Rules Committee where lawmakers got their first glimpse of what timber interests, conservationists and policy staff from Brown's office have been working on.

The bill would require timber companies and small-woodland owners to notify nearby residents when they aerially spray pesticides following a harvest. It would spur the creation of new notification technology and establish an opt-in system for nearby residents to receive warnings in real-time when spraying takes place. It also adds a 300-foot no-spray zone around schools and homes, as well as buffers for streams.

Lastly, the bill directs the state Board of Forestry to adopt rules regarding certain salmon species for the Rogue-Siskiyou region that were adopted for the rest of the state in 2017.

The goal is to have both sides, which have been fighting in Oregon's forests and courtrooms for upward of two decades, come together to work on a habitat conservation plan that applies to state and private forestlands. The plan would give some certainty to timber owners moving forward and would meet long-term goals for protecting ecosystem and wildlife.

Committee members heard from three people during the bill's first public hearing Thursday. That included Gina Zejdlik, the governor's deputy chief of staff; Bob Van Dyk, policy director for the Wild Salmon Center and representative of the environmental groups; and Greg Miller, representative of the coalition of timber companies.

— Sam Stites, Oregon Capital Bureau

not say whether they were prepared to leave. Sen. Dennis Linthicum, R-Klamath Falls, said he was too busy to speak to OPB. Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, is away from the Capitol.

If Republicans do stage a walkout, it could come next week. SB 1530 is expected to receive a vote in the Legislature's budget committee on Monday, the last step before the full Senate. That's as far as many GOP senators are comfortable allowing the bill to proceed.

During the 2019 legislative session, Senate Republicans left the Capitol twice. With a walkout in June, they helped kill an earlier version of the climate change bill they are currently protesting.

But last year's walkouts were a surprise, catching many off guard; this year, a Republican exodus feels more like a foregone conclusion.

Republicans have even considered branding for a walkout this time around. According to Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, they'd pitch it as a "boycott for referral," a reference to their insistence the policy change require voter approval.

Republicans learn from previous conflict

They also picked up a few tips from their previous departures.

Sen. Chuck Thomsen, R-Hood River,

said that during the 2019 walkout, when the state police were on the hunt for Republican lawmakers, they stopped by Thomsen's pear orchards. They spoke to his wife and the foreman.

This time, even Thomsen's wife doesn't want to know where he's headed. And, he said, he won't tell her.

He's had his bag packed for weeks and has already bought a plane ticket. It's on Southwest Airlines, he said, so it's easy to change the dates.

Thomsen will say this for certain: This time, he's not headed to Idaho. It's too cold this time of year. His suitcase is full of polo shirts and shorts.

Boquist said Thursday he wouldn't hesitate to head back across the state's eastern border once again. He has friends near Lewiston.

"Best steelhead fishing in the country," Boquist said. "I found a coffee shop that has Wi-Fi. I'll go there and continue to do senate work."

Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, said he shed 15 pounds during last year's protest because of stress. For the past couple of weeks, he joked, he's been doing "cheeseburger lifts" moving them from the plate to his mouth.

"I've given it a lot of thought," Heard said on a more serious note. "The walkout is not something I want to do. The majority has full control."

He said a card even came from a Houston, Texas, elementary school who has a teacher with connections to one of Joseph's educators. Homan said the school also has received donations from the local rotary club and from countless volunteers.

"It's way more than just donations, but manpower and hours," Homan said.

"It's been very powerful, and we appreciate everyone who has helped, wrote letters — it's helped morale. It's helped us all."

MERKLEY

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Congress should pick up the immigration bill the Senate passed in 2013 but failed in the House. He said it was the legislature's best shot at comprehensive immigration reform.

On the topic of gun laws and the Second Amendment, Merkley said he supported the background check system and legislation to limit the maximum number of bullets in a magazine to 10.

Merkley also discussed Trump's agricultural policies. The senator said he has seen and heard the frustrations rural farmers have shared about the lack of a coherent strategy from the administration. He said the focus needs to be on thinking of agriculture and manufacturing as separate issues and focus on farming.

"We can't move farms, but we can move factories," Merkley said.

La Grande sixth-grader Miri Koltuv asked Merkley who should be on the one dollar bill. Merkley suggested Harriet Tubman but said others who have fought for humanitarian causes also

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— **Sen. Jeff Merkley on holding town hall meetings in Oregon**

could be considered.

When discussing issues that are taking place in Washington, D.C., Merkley said the divisiveness between parties and on issues has been the biggest problem. And rather than throw his support to any of the Democrats running for president, Merkley said he is "watching it along with the rest of America."

Merkley said it is his pursuit for solutions to problems such as housing and poverty that led him to his position in the senate, one he has held 11 years. He said his favorite part of his job is the time he gets to spend outside of Washington, meeting with the people he serves.

"In the very divided world we live (in), there is all the more reason to connect in person, and do it in the same room," Merkley said about holding town hall meetings.



Staff photo by Sabrina Thompson

Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, Democrat, speaks Friday morning with Union County residents at the Elgin Community Center during a town hall.

VOLUNTEER

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structures) has been weakened," Roberts said.

Hard hats are thus needed in some situations to protect people from falling debris. Mold now flourishing in moist environments is another major concern. Roberts said relief workers should wear mold masks, which the agencies provide.

Samaritan's Purse is among the groups providing the masks and other safety equipment. The non-denominational Christian disaster relief organization addresses mold and other hazards at safety meetings for volunteers daily at 7:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. at the Pendleton First Assembly of God Church, 1911 S.E. Court Ave. The meetings are must-attend events before crews head to homes and other sites to do cleanup work. A leader from Samaritan's Purse heads each group, which is equipped with a trailer to haul supplies.

"It provides all the tools you need," said Brittany Hargrove of Cove, who accompanied a group of about half a dozen from the Imbler Christian Church on Monday to help flood victims in Umatilla County.

Hargrove said volunteers with Samaritan's Purse also are provided with orange shirts clearly identifying them as individuals assisting the agency.

"They make it easy for people to recognize us," she said.

The Imbler church volunteers and others have been busy with tasks ranging from ripping out wet carpet to shoveling mud from under modular homes. Hargrove said the locals her party assisted were grateful for the

help they received, including one woman who was visibly touched.

"She got pretty emotional," Hargrove said. "She could not believe that so many people were coming to help."

The Imbler Christian Church party worked in Umatilla County for eight hours.

"It was tiring, but it was also energizing because we were in such good company," Hargrove said.

Melissa Nystrom of Samaritan's Purse responds to disasters around the world. She said her agency has 30-40 volunteers a day assisting with flood recovery in Umatilla County. Nystrom appreciates the assistance and said more are always welcome.

"We have tools and supplies — we just need hands," she said.

To sign up as a Samaritan's Purse volunteer for Umatilla County, go to the organization's website, spvolunteer.org.

Individuals interested in assisting flood victims with Team Rubicon can do so via its website, teamrubicon-usa.org. Team Rubicon is a veteran service organization that regularly is involved in disaster response.

To join an American Red Cross volunteer team in Umatilla County, apply via its website, redcross.org.

Nadine McCrindle, executive director of the Eastern and Central Oregon Chapter of the American Red Cross, said she has been impressed with how many people have stepped up to volunteer to help Red Cross teams in Umatilla County over the past weeks.

"It is heartwarming to see how people are reaching out to their neighbors," McCrindle said.