

OUR VIEW

Legislature has no time to waste in special session

There is a growing probability that Gov. Kate Brown will call a special session of the Oregon Legislature within the next few weeks to deal with expected budget shortfalls created by the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

Brown should call the special session and shouldn't wait long to do so.

That's because the state is beginning to stagger after weeks of closed businesses and high unemployment. Already, Brown has asked state agencies to create a plan to slash their budgets by 17%. The Office of Economic Analysis revealed Wednesday the state is almost \$3 billion short.

Oregon faces another challenge — the state constitution demands a balanced



AP Photo/Anna Reed, File

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budget.

Unlike the federal government, Oregon can't put everything on a virtual credit card and let the future take care of itself.

That creates steep chal-

lenges for lawmakers, and their jobs during the special session will be crucial. What simply cannot happen is a divergence away from the budget woes and how to deal with COVID-19 into

yet another series of legislative battles over issues tied to party dogma.

We don't have the time now to watch the special session descend into chaos because a group of lawmakers suddenly decide to resurrect some flashpoint issue from the past. The only goal must be to face the budget shortfall and balance the budget, and then get back to dealing with the virus outbreak.

Anything less will be a betrayal of voters. Party leaders and the governor need to meet before the special session and craft an agreement that narrowly defines what the special session will tackle. That agreement must be clear and precise and include provisions that there will be no devia-

tion from the pressing matter — the state budget — at hand. Oregon lawmakers no longer have the privilege of wasting away days on the legislative time clock fighting over pie-in-the-sky, New Age political initiatives. Lawmakers can do that later. Policy issues that are not related to the state budget and the COVID-19 outbreak should be jettisoned.

As is always the case, elected leaders from both parties will have an opportunity to do some good work if a special session is called. They will be presented with an opportunity to face a serious set of problems, work on them together and solve them.

Wasting time in any other fashion is simply that — wasting time. Time the state and Oregonians do not have.

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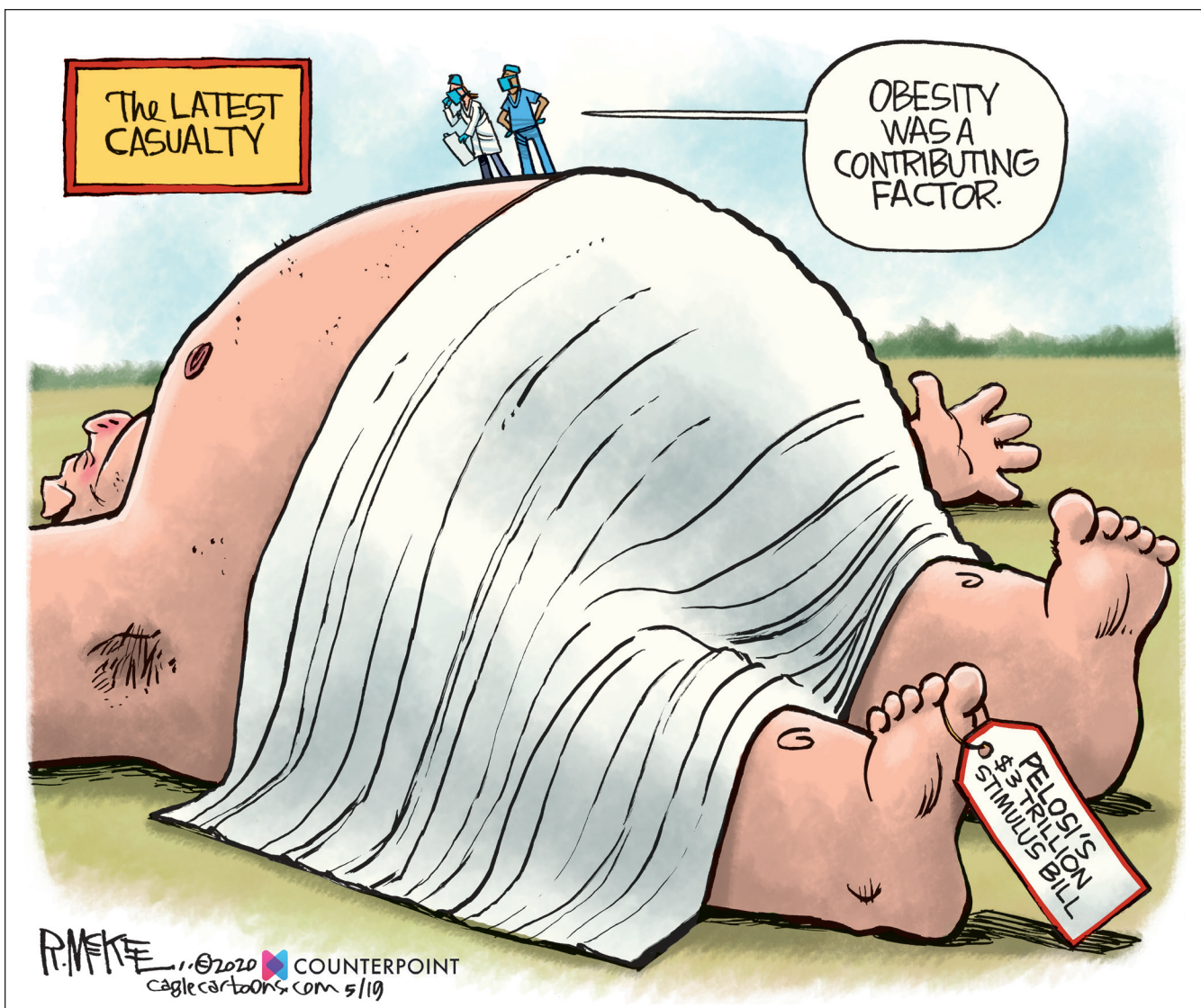
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Your views

'Social approaching' must not be lost

I've traveled and been to a number of countries, and what I found was Americans are by far the most touchy-feely. That's why social distancing is beyond hard for us. It's part of our DNA.

We are compelled to shake hands, hug, high-five, knuckle touch, or pat a child on the head. We are physically drawn toward each other like no other place in the world. In Southeast Asia, long-lost friends

greet each other with a polite bow. In Australia, it seems there is always a tankard of ale blocking a hug or a handshake. I saw social touching in France, but it seemed nonspontaneous, rehearsed and brazen, as in "hey-look-at-us."

This part of us is slipping away and making us feel hollow. We need to get it back before being colder toward others becomes OK. I think the touchy-feely chromosome is nurtured in Americans, and it adds to what makes us strong. It drives first responders to respond just that much

quicker. It has something to do with the "leave no soldier behind" mantra. It makes us stop for someone waiting to cross a street, or makes us wish we had. It makes us nod and smile at passing strangers. It might start small with a pat on the head, but in time it grows into full-fledged compassion for each other.

When social distancing is no longer a law, social approaching should become one, until we get back whatever slipped away.

Mike Hayden
Cove

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