

Other Views

Oregon Republicans must stop saving Democrats from themselves

Oregon Senate Republicans have engaged in four legislative walkouts in less than two years. Democrats and Republicans alike have used quorum denial as a negotiating chip when all else has failed, but this nuclear option should not be used frivolously.

The first Republican walkout in 2019 occurred over a reprisal of the gross receipts tax, deceptively dubbed by Democrats as “The Student Success Act.” The proposal completely disregarded the will of Oregonians, who killed a similar ballot measure in



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Editor’s Note

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2016 by over 350,000 votes. When Republicans said the bill should be decided by Oregonians instead of politicians, Democrats said “no.” The first walkout of 2019 ensued.

The bill easily passed the Oregon House, but in the Senate, Democrats could not afford to lose any support — needing all 18 of their members to vote “yes.” In some cases, common-sense Democrats were threatened with expulsion from committee assignments and other political “punishments.” To get Republicans back, other politicians “punishments.” To get Republicans back, other politicians “punishments.” To get Republicans back, other politicians “punishments.”

Republicans had a small “win” by Democrats dropping some of their agenda, at the cost of a tax hike. Senate Democrats did not have the votes to pass the vaccine mandate, as it was very controversial in many of their districts. The gun legislation, including banning pepper spray in public buildings, would have also been massively unpopular and likely challenged in the courts or forced to the ballot. Had these passed, it would have encouraged Republican turnout in the coming election. In talking with a former Republican leader, who served in the majority, they remarked, “Republicans just saved the Democrats from themselves.”

Following the gross receipts tax debacle, Democrats were intent on pushing through a phony climate proposal, known as cap and trade. Many who have worked at the Oregon Capitol for years had never seen such opposition to attempts to refer an impactful policy change to voters. A little less than a decade before, Democrats, with some Republican support, referred tax measures (66 and 67) to the ballot.

At the time, it was unclear if Democrats would fall short of the 16 votes needed for passage, so Republicans walked. That walkout generated international media attention and gave rise to historic grassroots engagement at the Capitol. After several days of a standoff, the Senate president announced that cap and trade didn’t have the votes to pass and the session concluded over a marathon weekend at the Capitol. Democrats and the governor then blamed Republicans for the failure of their own cap-and-trade climate proposal — they didn’t actually have the votes within their own party to pass it.

Cap and trade then returned in the 2020 session. Republicans requested to schedule the proposal toward the end of the session to consider immediately pressing legislation. Democrats refused and would not compromise. Senate Republicans, joined by House Republicans, walked and the 2020 session never resumed.

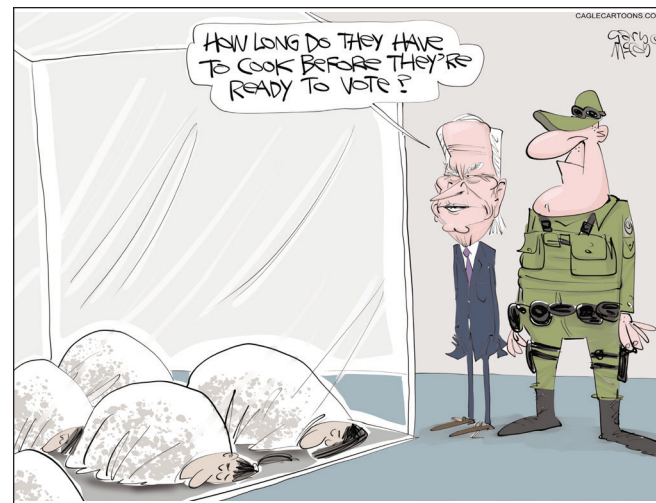
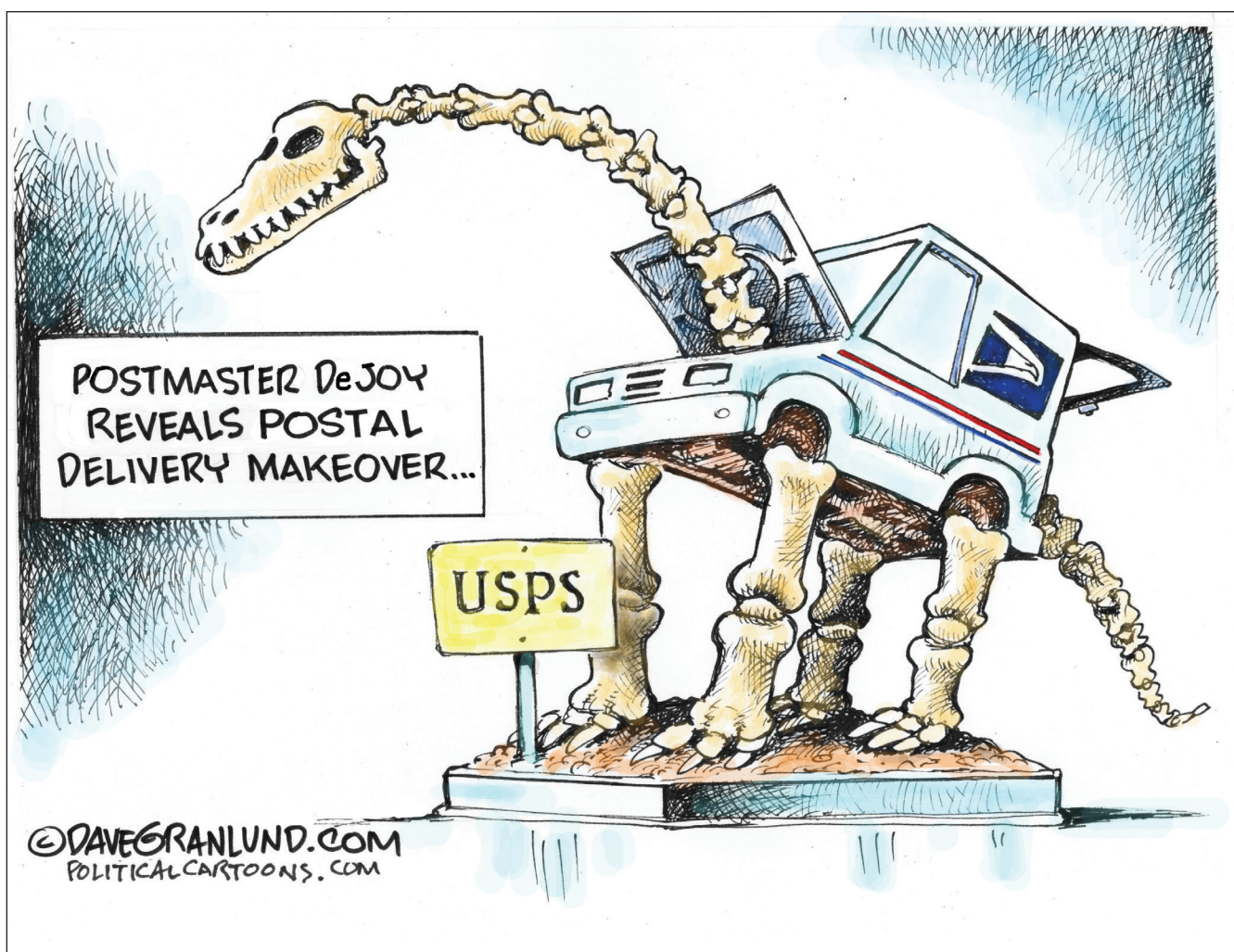
Denying quorum can be a useful, short-term tactic for a minority party, but it is not a strategy and the long-term consequences are dire. It is blunderous.

I am alarmed by the politics behind the walkouts are still occurring during a pandemic. It must end.

As Oregonians, it’s time to elect new leaders who don’t consider compromise a dirty word. Having the longest serving Senate president and House speaker in state history might sound impressive, but the reality says otherwise.

Democrats run the show in Salem. It’s time for Republicans in Oregon to make a strong case to Oregonians with solutions to improve lives and livelihoods. They need to stop giving Democrats cover. It’s time for the party in charge to be held accountable.

Evan Bryan served as a legislative director at the Oregon State Senate. He holds a master’s in legislative affairs from George Washington University.



Other Views

Hail to the presidential Punter in Chief



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He may not be the fastest president on his feet we’ve ever had.

He may bore you to death compared to the last president.

But I will tell you, if anyone in the NFL is looking for a punter, Joe Biden is your man.

The president didn’t blow up or melt down at his first, much-anticipated and ultimately embarrassing formal presidential press conference.

But on Thursday, March 25, he proved one thing with a doubt — he’s not America’s quarterback in chief.

He’s our punter in chief.

For a little over an hour President Biden ducked the mostly friendly questions of 10 cherry-picked journalists and read large chunks of his answers on foreign policy from a briefing book.

He gave vague, garbled or outrageous answers about immigration, Afghanistan, China, voting rights and the filibuster that generated zero tough follow-ups from the liberal White House press corps.

He punted on how he was going to fix the immigration crisis he’s caused at the border.

He punted on what the United States should do about the economic and military threat of China and when he was going to get America out of Afghanistan.

He punted on when his administration will allow the media and their cameras to get access to the overcrowded border facilities in Texas where thousands of illegal immigrants

and unaccompanied migrant children await processing.

The only thing President Biden didn’t really punt on was killing the filibuster.

The “relic of the Jim Crow era” as he and its new enemies now call it, is the same parliamentary tool he supported for 40 years when he was a Senator.

It’s the same weapon his party used aggressively and often in the Senate during the Trump years when it was in the minority.

Chuck Schumer used it to — among many other things — block construction of the Wall, change the Cares Act and halt Sen. Tim Scott’s police reform bill.

But now “Wide-awake” Joe and Schumer want to get rid of the filibuster so their party can ram “progressive” legislation through Congress that will change the United States forever.

No member of the White House press cheerleading squad had the courage to remind Biden about that eulogy he gave for his beloved colleague, Sen. Robert Byrd, the former KKK member who was a star on the Democrat Party’s team of racist Southern senators who filibustered the 1964 Civil Rights bill.

Meanwhile, talk about softballs tossed underhand by little league journalists.

PBS White House reporter Yamiche Alcindor prefaced her blatant pitch for ending the filibuster by referring to Biden as “a moral and decent” man.

There were no questions at all about the COVID-19 pandemic or vaccines or gun control.

And though Biden left many openings for follow-up questions by saying

looney-tune things like President Trump sent migrant families back to Mexico to starve and a majority of Republicans support him, they were not asked.

Say whatever bad you want about Trump, he always called on his nemesis Jim Acosta of CNN and he wasn’t afraid to take questions from anyone.

And where Biden seemed to need a briefing book to answer many of the questions, none of his predecessors — Trump, Reagan, Bush 41, Clinton, Bush 43 and Obama — ever did.

Besides punting whenever he was in doubt, Biden took half a dozen cheap shots at President Trump (he was among friends, so he knew he was safe).

Based on their friendly questions, the White House press corps showed that they haven’t exactly been working on their fastballs while President Biden was hiding from them for two months.

For instance, it should have made big headlines and sparked lots of follow-up questions when Biden went back on his campaign promise and said he expects to run again in 2024, but it didn’t.

The bottom line is, with those briefing books and basic punting skills, everyone who watched Biden’s press conference could have done the press conference too.

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