

# Digging Deeper into Cap-and-Trade *continued from front page*

the Oregon voters,” said Johnson. “At the end of the day we had an enormously complicated bill that had process questions,” she said.

When looking at the actual policies the bill would implement, Johnson said she found plenty of things to fault. She had concerns that the bottom line costs to all Oregonians had not been fully analyzed. She said, while Democrats who crafted the bill did make some concessions to some segments of Oregon’s economy that would be more heavily impacted by the bill, including public utilities Pacific Corp, Portland General Electric, and eventually Northwest Natural Gas, the bill didn’t do enough to protect those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Johnson raised concerns that details in the bill would hobble the state’s future ability to bond highway and road projects. She said she was worried about the state’s ability to go back and undo portions of policy in the bill if positive projections proved to be wrong. She also raised concerns about where financial resources, committed on an open-ended basis in the bill, would come from. “Who are we going to take those resources away from?” she asked.

Johnson also found troubling the idea that the bill would act as a way to redistribute wealth by requiring significant spending by private business and households and diverting it into the public sector for programs that were, in many ways, unrelated to reducing the carbon footprint.

“I don’t know whether this was based on true science or parsed science,

but I was just not convinced that this overreaching bill with an uncalculated impact on our economy at large, and especially on lower income and rural Oregonians who don’t have the bountiful transit and economic choices our urban citizens have, had not been completely thought out,” she said. “The memory of the spotted owl burns bright for a lot of people who still make their living in a natural resource based economy. To have what was seen as ostensibly an urban idea motivated by transit in urban places, motivated by perhaps a higher standard of living in urban places – an urban idea pushed on rural Oregon with its concomitant costs – was something that the folks I talked with who came down to the capital railed against.”

I asked Johnson about Oregon’s history of being a leader in passing progressive legislation, and whether the state’s lawmakers had a moral responsibility to help find a solution to carbon emission reduction and global climate change? “Oregon exceptionalism is not a rationale for us to throw ourselves off of a precipice,” she said in response. “Oregon exceptionalism has gotten us into trouble previously – I can walk you to an ethanol plant where the state made a \$20 million investment before we really had looked at all the pitfalls there, and it failed.”

Johnson said it would have made more sense to move forward incrementally with the changes the bill proposed, and suggested as an example, continuing incentives to move people towards electric vehicles.

“By not passing HB 2020 I

don’t believe that we missed a chance to help fix a, quote, ‘global climate crisis.’ What we have done is sent up a clarion call that this huge bill needs to be reassessed to figure out how to incentivize the businesses that are creating carbon emissions to switch to renewables. We need to look at other things like carbon sequestration in Oregon’s forests. This was just an attempt to measure Oregon’s carbon reduction instead of focusing on other methodology and ignores Oregon’s ability to create natural carbon storage, which are our forests.”

## Where is “rural” Oregon?

When we try to examine the economic impacts of a policy as complicated as HB 2020, one of the main factors is the so-called rural/urban divide. Senator Johnson says she believes the bill’s main fault was that it ignored the economic impact on Oregon’s rural communities, businesses, and citizens, and even unduly punished rural Oregonians. But understanding how cap-and-trade would impact rural economics by looking at statistics isn’t as cut and dried

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## Where Do You Read the Voice?



**Carol McIntyre celebrated her Grandma’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in New York by reading the Voice together on her front porch.**

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