

PRICE ON POLLUTION

In response to the article on 3-5 “A Case for the Climate: PIELC panels ask whether corporations pay for climate change,” I agree with the PIELC panelists who said no they don’t and yes they should! It’s time for corporations to pay for or otherwise reduce their carbon pollution! Currently, the prices of gasoline, electricity and fuels in general include none of the long-term costs associated with climate change or even the near-term health costs. But they could include these costs.

Carbon-pricing policies are generally implemented in one of two ways: 1) a carbon tax or 2) a cap policy. A carbon tax/fee is a tax on the carbon content of fuels (like coal, oil and natural gas). A carbon cap is a cap placed on allowable emissions. Both are intended to and have been shown to be effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are a number of bills intended to price or limit carbon pollution which have been introduced in the Oregon State Legislature this session, including: a carbon tax, cap and allocation, fee and dividend and cap and dividend. These outstanding bills deserve thorough

consideration and action in this legislative session.

Megan Kemple
Eugene

PSYCHOLOGICAL SHORTCOMINGS

I share Otto Poticha’s regret at the city of Eugene’s apparent resolve to demolish City Hall. For a tiny fraction of what it would cost to build an entire city block of parking garage with another block of raw office space above it, the existing structure could be seismically upgraded, including structural provisions to build whatever office building the city wishes to build on top of what’s already there. Like Poticha, I wish to elect “decision makers with a deeper and more profound vision,” but I also feel that we must diagnose and better understand the psychological shortcomings of our current “leaders.”

Those holding positions of power in the world suffer from a spectrum of human behavior. At one end of this spectrum is willful ignorance: a disinterest in information conflicting with one’s comfortable worldview. The broad, middle

area of this spectrum is self-deception, denial and delusion. Politicians, bureaucrats and people in the corporate world are particularly adept at talking themselves into believing ridiculous things when doing so happens to be convenient. At the other end of this spectrum is psychopathic or sociopathic behavior. One or 2 percent of the human population suffers from this problem. Psychopaths or sociopaths are people incapable of experiencing guilt or remorse — they don’t have a conscience. Obviously, there is vast overlap between the above categories.

If we had a friend who was an abusive alcoholic, we’d be talking about human psychology. It’s high time we bring the same understanding and scrutiny to bear on the people running the world.

Robert Bolman
Eugene

JAIL LIBRARIAN

Thank you for the rather comprehensive article “The Survival Cycle” in this week’s edition. I’ve been a jail volunteer for 7.5 years and am the jail librarian. Loved the inmate quote “hell of a good book

selection” on page 13. And it’s true — I do a lot to provide regular book and magazine rotations and maintenance in the housing units’ bookshelf areas, and have access to a very large backup supply of books for in-house distribution. The inmates *always* have a lot to say (all positive) about the contents of the library and the service in general. They love it.

It’s been a rewarding job.

Charlene Sabini
Eugene

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Having worked for the Lane County Sheriff’s Office (LCSO) for five years, of course I read the article by Ben Stone, March 12. Read it twice. Good story, I must say. Most writers here are negative, it seems to me, about the job done by the staff. The jail staff usually doesn’t read this paper anyway; at least, they didn’t when I was there at the jail. It was only in the lunchroom for the crossword puzzle. Stone’s story is good, but of course just scratches the surface of the many problems faced by persons on both sides of the bars.

What I will add is that during my time

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

That’s Politics!

OREGON SENATE SUFFERS PARTISAN VIRUS

The fubar scenario in Salem’s Capitol last week began with Governor Brown’s support of the low-carbon fuel standard, SB 324 and the Republican reaction. *The Oregonian*, the R-G and Republican legislators immediately blew up an overdue transportation infrastructure plan, a plan that likely would have resulted in the only significant bipartisan accomplishment of this session, all because Kate chose to sign SB 324.

What the hell? An informal group convened by Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney met for weeks to formulate details of a sorely needed transportation infrastructure package. Kotek and Courtney appointed Senators Lee Beyer and Betsy Johnson (both prominent business Democrats), Republican Senators Doug Whitsett and Jeff Kruse (both prominent anti-government partisan obstructionists), and four House members, two D’s and two R’s, viewed as pragmatic, pro-business and less partisan than most in their respective caucuses. All in all, it seemed like a promising group — eight out of 10 ain’t bad, right? I mean, come on, infrastructure is infrastructure, right? Those rural Republicans who always bellyache about Willamette Valley liberals ignoring their needs, they’ve gotta be on board for some rural economic development, roads and bridges, some jobs, right?

Here’s Roseburg Republican Jeff Kruse in an *Oregonian* editorial last Thursday: “By signing SB 324, the governor killed the possibility of a meaningful, productive bipartisan conversation about how we fix Oregon’s crumbling transportation infrastructure.” The message was clear: Republicans linked two unrelated measures — one dealt with a worldwide air pollution problem that has most rational global citizens and scientists nervous, and one dealt with an Oregon transportation infrastructure problem that has most of our state’s citizens and rational business/financial players demanding repair of a failing system. Really, we have to sacrifice one for the other? That’s politics? Why? Because Republican legislators now have a built-in excuse not to have to support a gas tax increase and possibly face their imminent removal at the hands of their Tea Party constituents in their next primary. That’s politics.

There are plenty of skeptics on the left and the right with regard to the efficacy of SB 324. But blaming Kate Brown for signing an unrelated bill and then tying it to the failure to pass a transportation plan that its own business constituents support, the utter failure to have the *cojones* to vote to increase the state’s gas tax, makes the Republican Party and their elected legislators and their mouthpieces look like cowards. That’s politics, too.

Speaking of bad public policy: The Oregon Senate has decided to ignore the new

vaccine recently brought to us by our OHSU doctor, state Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward. The new vaccine, called “WTF RU Thinking,” inoculates legislators from petty partisan stupidity, a virus seemingly running rampant through the Capitol these days. So, maybe it’s easy to see why the senate won’t move Senate Bill 442.

Seriously, put another way, there are 15 senators holding up a bill that would ban parents from claiming non-medical exemptions from their children’s school vaccinations. This is a bill that the entire public health system in Oregon — doctors, nurses, hospitals — everyone — thinks is a good idea! Why did the bill disappear? A small constitutional problem: not enough votes to pass this no-brainer! Steiner Hayward learned that Republicans were content to make this a partisan issue. When doing her vote count, she was told that Republicans would not vote for the bill because she had cancelled the appearance of the discredited British doctor Andrew Wakefield, whose infamous 1998 study on the link between autism and common vaccines was called “unethically financed and fraudulent” by the *British Medical Journal*. Wakefield attempted to testify before the Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care before Steiner Hayward found out and canceled his appearance. That’s politics!

Some Democrat senators are also withholding their support at this time, although most would probably do the right thing if asked. Some are holding out because they’re getting strong pressure from constituents. As I pointed out last week, the Left also has concerns about this bill, and some well-educated folks are relying on bad science to oppose this measure. I guess black helicopter conspiracies can fly left or right. Others are withholding their support now to ensure Senator Steiner Hayward’s support on their own priority bills later. It’s called horse trading. That’s politics, too!

Class Acts: Hats off to OSU men’s basketball coach Wayne Tinkler, who started five walk-on seniors in the Civil War finale. Also to coach Dana Altman and the UO for honoring Dave Frohnmyer — beloved man — with the “DF” on their jerseys for the PAC 12 tournament. That’s politics, too, probably!

OK, who’s gonna run for governor in 2016? Republicans haven’t been successful in over 30 years, since Vic Atiyeh got elected in 1982. Is Kate vulnerable? Depends. Will Dennis Richardson run again? Hope so. Is there another Republican physician in our future not named Monica Wehby? Stay tuned. ■

Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a former state legislator and soon-to-be retired state worker. The views expressed herein are his alone.

