

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES AND LNG PROTESTERS

Inauguration Day sets the tone for the year

Oregon's political season officially got underway Monday, Jan. 14, with the inauguration of Gov. Kate Brown, who is serving her first-*yet-last* full term as Oregon's governor, and a joint session of the 80th Legislative Assembly in the House Chamber of the State Capitol.

In attendance were former Oregon governors Barbara Roberts and Ted Kulongoski, as well as environmental protesters speaking out against a liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline and export facility.

While addressing a packed House Chamber prior to the governor's inaugural address, Senate President Peter Courtney quoted his son on several occasions, saying Oregon Legislature needs to do "some good."

These solemn remarks provided a reminder that although Oregon Democrats can effect change in Oregon with supermajorities in the Legislature and control of the governor's chair, the dire situation nationally is largely out of the hands of Oregonians.

Early in her address, Brown noted that her budget called for a \$400 million housing investment and urged the Legislature to approve a \$20-million housing bond early in this session so that construction on 200 units of housing for the chronically homeless can be sped up. Brown also called for Oregon to build a "clean energy economy."

Brown's address was interrupted by protesters associated with environmental advocacy group Southern Oregon Rising Tide (SORT). One of them shouted "Stop the Pacific Northwest pipeline!" from the rear gallery of the House chambers before quickly exiting, while another banged on the chamber doors from the outside.

About a dozen environmental activists rallied near the steps of the Capitol to protest the Trump administration-backed Jordan Cove LNG pipeline that is being planned for southern Oregon.



GOV. KATE BROWN IS SWORN IN

PHOTO BY MIKE BIVINS

"Some protesters did attempt to display some banners and disrupt the governor's speech. They immediately left the building. No charges are being considered," says Oregon State Police spokesperson Capt. Timothy Fox.

SORT spokesperson Alex Budd says the group attempted to disrupt the inauguration because "for 13 years now, us Oregonians have been standing against the Pacific Connector Pipeline and Jordan Cove project; this would be the largest source of climate pollution in this state."

Budd points out that in addition to the negative climate ramifications, hundreds of landowners potentially would also be subject to eminent domain seizures to clear a path for the pipeline.

The Jordan Cove project would feature a 229-mile pipeline with a terminus near Coos Bay that would "threaten traditional tribal territories, 2,000 acres of forest and 485

wetlands and waterways," according to Seattle-based environmental watchdog organization Sightline Institute. And though the commodity in question features the word "natural," Sightline studies have pointed out that the gas in question is fracked.

"Jordan Cove would be the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon," says Sightline Programs Director Eric de Place. "For Gov. Brown to live up to her aspirations of climate leadership, it's clear what she needs to do: Stop the project from getting built."

In response, Brown's office says, that she expects state agencies to "follow all laws and regulations to the letter," and she "urges Oregonians to share any concerns with state agencies, their congressional representatives and officials in the local communities where the project has implications." ■

KNIGHT RIDER

UO President Michael Schill focuses City Club speech on Phil Knight-funded campus addition

During University of Oregon President Michael Schill's City Club of Eugene speech Jan. 11, he suggested that a college town and its university share a relationship much like marriage.

To extend Schill's analogy, when the Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact gets established, the UO will be bringing home the bacon.

During the not-so-official "State of the University" at City Club of Eugene, Schill had a lot to say about the future of the UO. However, what stood out in his speech was the importance of getting the Knight campus funded and built. This priority left a handful of UO students in the audience with questions.

The new campus would add \$80 million to the local economy. Schill added that the Knight building would catapult the UO's research capabilities — as well as create new jobs.

"It will be stunning," he said in his speech. "Thirty new faculty members, principal researchers and their teams will put forth 750 ongoing, high-paying jobs."

Calling the campus addition "recession proof" raised some issues for Michael Magee, president of the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF).

"So far [UO] has been able to get a small amount from state bonds to cover it, but in the case of economic downturn or recession, it's unclear to me that those bonds will be forthcoming," Magee said. "We're already seeing that the state funding is more and more drying up. What does it mean to be 'recession proof' if you have to come up with half a billion dollars off of something like raising tuition?"

Half the funding for the campus addition came from Knight. That means UO has to find additional funding sources to finance it.

UO has already identified these donors, Schill says.

"A lot of what happens in the local economy is, if it turns bad, projects don't get done," Schill told *Eugene Weekly* in a post-City Club interview. "This will get done regardless —

it's already funded. We don't rely on financing it. There's a gift commitment. The money's coming in. We're doing it."

He adds that the project isn't market-driven. If the economy slows down, it won't stop the UO from completing the project.

However, Magee poses some skepticism about the project, noting the ties to private money could be problematic.

"The Knight campus is so STEM-focused," Magee says. "The stated goal of the Knight campus is to bring in more private money. As for private industry to give money for researchers such that they can create products to be marketed."

Magee added that Schill's focus on increasing the amount of STEM-focused research poses a question of what to do about funding those areas of research, such as humanities and social sciences, which aren't as profitable but would serve the public interest.

Magee calls the Knight building a "money sink" and shows the UO has some mismanaged priorities, which stand out as higher education sees dwindling support from Gov. Kate Brown's proposed budget.

Schill tells *EW* that he is concerned with the Brown budget proposal. In the proposed budget, higher education will not see an increase in state support.

UO is currently negotiating with GTFF and will begin negotiations with SEIU later this year. Dwindling state support could become a point of leverage when negotiating.

"The best thing we can all do is to make sure the state funds higher education. We're in for zero increase," Schill says, adding that higher education is at risk right now.

However, Magee says Schill shouldn't be so focused on the Knight building when it's clear the state budget wouldn't have enough funds to go around.

"At the end of the day, it's all about priorities," Magee says. "Whatever funding they are getting is going toward this half-a-billion-dollar sinkhole called the Knight campus." ■

A longer version of this story is online at eugeneweekly.com.