

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Super-Minority To Stupor -Minority

REPUBLICAN RECALCITRANCE: PART 2

There's five weeks left for the Oregon Legislature to complete its sole constitutional duty: present a balanced budget for Gov. Kate Brown to sign by June 30. The odds aren't looking good. I think we're FWOAK. By that I mean, as the Urban Dictionary describes it, we're being roughly abused and taken advantage of. I'm just sayin'.

You remember the "Denver Omelet Deal" I described recently regarding Herman "Bat Shit Crazy" Baertschiger, that so-called Oregon Republican Senate leader and total Trump-toady lickspittle? Well, to end his Oregon Senate walkout the Democrat leadership offered to kill Sen. Floyd Prozanski's omnibus gun safety bill SB 978 and the vaccination bill HB 3063 in exchange for passage of HB 3427, the \$2.4 billion school funding vehicle.

The Bat Shit contingent agreed, came back to Salem and granted the Democrats the quorum they needed to continue the business of the state. There's no small irony that the subsequent announcement of a record \$1.4 billion kicker rebate tore a large hole in that \$2.4 billion increase for schools.

When the deal was announced, there was no mention that there were several other bills in the House and Senate dealing with gun safety and vaccinations that could be used as vehicles instead of SB 978 and HB 3063. So we may still see some action this session, and if we do I wonder how the Republicans will react. Shits and giggles? Or dynamite?

When the deal was announced, House super-minority leader Carl Wilson praised the Bat Shitters for their walkout. He said that the strategy improved their bargaining position. So he's continued his Republican House strategy of forcing Democrats to read each bill into the record word for word, bringing progress to a halt. They are behind schedule already.

All of this uncertainty brings us to PERS. In order to appease Republicans, Democratic leaders also offered up a cobbled-together set of reforms guaranteed to screw public employees. And those folks ain't happy. The workers reasonably see this round of PERS reforms as nothing more than cuts to their wages and benefits. They rightly feel they're being singled out to pay a debt owed by every Oregonian. And, of course, like most PERS reform, they know the proposed reforms won't address the "legacy" costs of the unfunded liability... because it can't be done.

My good friend Rep. Paul Holvey is co-chair of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction, where the PERS reform bill resides at the moment. It will then probably go to the House Committee on Rules. Holvey is also the chair of that committee. The vice-chairs are House Democratic leader Jennifer Williamson and House Republican leader Wilson — the aforementioned knuckle-dragger.

I do not envy Paul's job. I had a similar message to deliver to public employees in 2003, and they weren't happy back then, either. I shared with Paul my advice to my fellow Democrats at the time: Vote however you feel like you have to, I won't take it personally.

Speaker Tina Kotek appointed Holvey to serve as chair of these committees for a reason. He is one of the most respected voices of organized labor in the Legislature. Tina also appointed herself and House Revenue chair Rep. Nancy Nathanson to the Capital Construction subcommittee.

Those three people are going to face some serious wrath from some public sector hounds of hell, I can tell you from experience. Committee assignments, especially for these critical committees, carry with them an assumption of loyalty to the Democratic leadership. So far as I can tell, Tina is doing a good job. As a lobbyist told me recently, Tina's playing chess while Sen. Peter Courtney and Gov. Brown are playing checkers.

If Paul has to carry this bill forward, he will have a lot of Democrats coming to him privately in the next week or so begging for cover from him. When that happened to me 16 years ago, I told my colleagues to vote as they saw fit, I didn't expect them to vote for it.

In 2003, Courtney and Lenn Hannon were co-leaders of a Senate deadlocked at 15 members from each party. They appointed Republican John Minnis and me as co-chairs of a joint PERS committee. And even though it was a tough vote for him, Courtney voted for the 2003 PERS reforms. Brown was the Senate Democratic leader that session. She voted against the reforms. She obviously had an ambitious political career in mind. I'm just sayin'!

Labor forgives, but it never forgets. I don't envy Holvey. Stay tuned. ■

Former state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is former legislator and a retired state employee.

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More coming up at The Shedd...

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| 6.3 Chamber Music Amici: | 7.24-8.3 Oregon Festival of |
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| 6.18 Shedd Choral Society: Brahms | 9.13-29 MUSICAL: Annie |
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