

Let the people decide

Once again proposed cap-and-trade legislation has led to a walk-out and no-show of Republican legislators, denying a quorum in both the state Senate and the House of Representatives.

These legislators mostly represent the rural areas of Oregon, whose residents say they and their businesses will be hurt by the proposed legislation.

Senate Bill 1530 would set limits and shrink the state's greenhouse gas emissions in a move to address global climate change. Some reports say that Oregon contributes a very small percentage of emissions, making the current proposal inconsequential in the overall aim of reducing greenhouse gases.

Opponents of the bill say it doesn't make sense to disrupt life as rural Oregon knows it so that residents of the state's largest cities can feel good about doing something about the environment. As is generally the case, rural Oregon and city Oregon are talking past each other. City Oregon has a population that is more liberal than their fellow state residents. Oregon's large cities elect the Democratic legislators that comprise supermajorities in the Senate and the House.

Until Republicans can capture some of those city and suburban seats and get past this supermajority era in the legislature, the Democrats will continue to push through bills that are anathema to rural Oregon.

The tactic of denying a quorum

in either of the legislative chambers has been used before here and in other states. It worked last year when Republican Senators walked out over cap-and-trade in 2019. They used the only weapon in their arsenal. It is politics, but it is this kind of politics that make many citizens dislike officerholders.

The main problem for the short legislative session (which is mandated for 35 days only) is that other important issues will not get the hearings they need, including providing emergency relief funds for victims of the recent flooding in Umatilla County.

The best course of action is to drop the cap-and-trade bill for now, address it again in 2021 when there is time to hear from proponents and opponents alike and then recommend the issue to the voters.

Cap-and-trade is too contentious of an issue and a potential disaster for rural Oregon not to let the voters make the final decision. Waiting to let voters to decide the issue in the November 2022 general election is not too much to ask.

Debating a re-introduced cap-and-trade bill in January 2021, hearing the same arguments pro and con doesn't matter. Yes, legislators are elected to do the people's business. Some issues—such as cap-and-trade—are so big and complex and affects so many lives, that getting assent from the governed is warranted.

Let the people decide.

—LAZ

editorial

More than cap-and-trade

As of Wednesday, Feb. 19, the legislature is over half way through the 2020 short session. I'm sure you've read about the fireworks happening at the Capitol, including the House Republicans deciding not to prolong the day floor session into a night floor session on earlier in the week. The intention being to slow down the pace of the session, allow time to fully vet legislation, and ensure Oregonians are able to be a part of the process. Clearly, the largest point of contention is the Cap-and-Trade bills, SB 1530 (the Senate version), SB 1574 (the Governor's version), HB 4159 (House version), and HB 4169 (Speaker Tina Kotek's version). Earlier this session, both proponents and opponents each had rallies at the Capitol. The opposition to these bills has been astonishing. Never in my life have I seen a grass roots group come together so quickly. Truckers from all over the state circled the Capitol for a full day. Both opponents and proponents have been extremely respectful at both rallies and have done a great job sharing their passions in a respectful way. This is what the political process is all about. It is important the legislature continues to take the necessary time to ensure all

voices are heard and the best possible legislation moves forward.

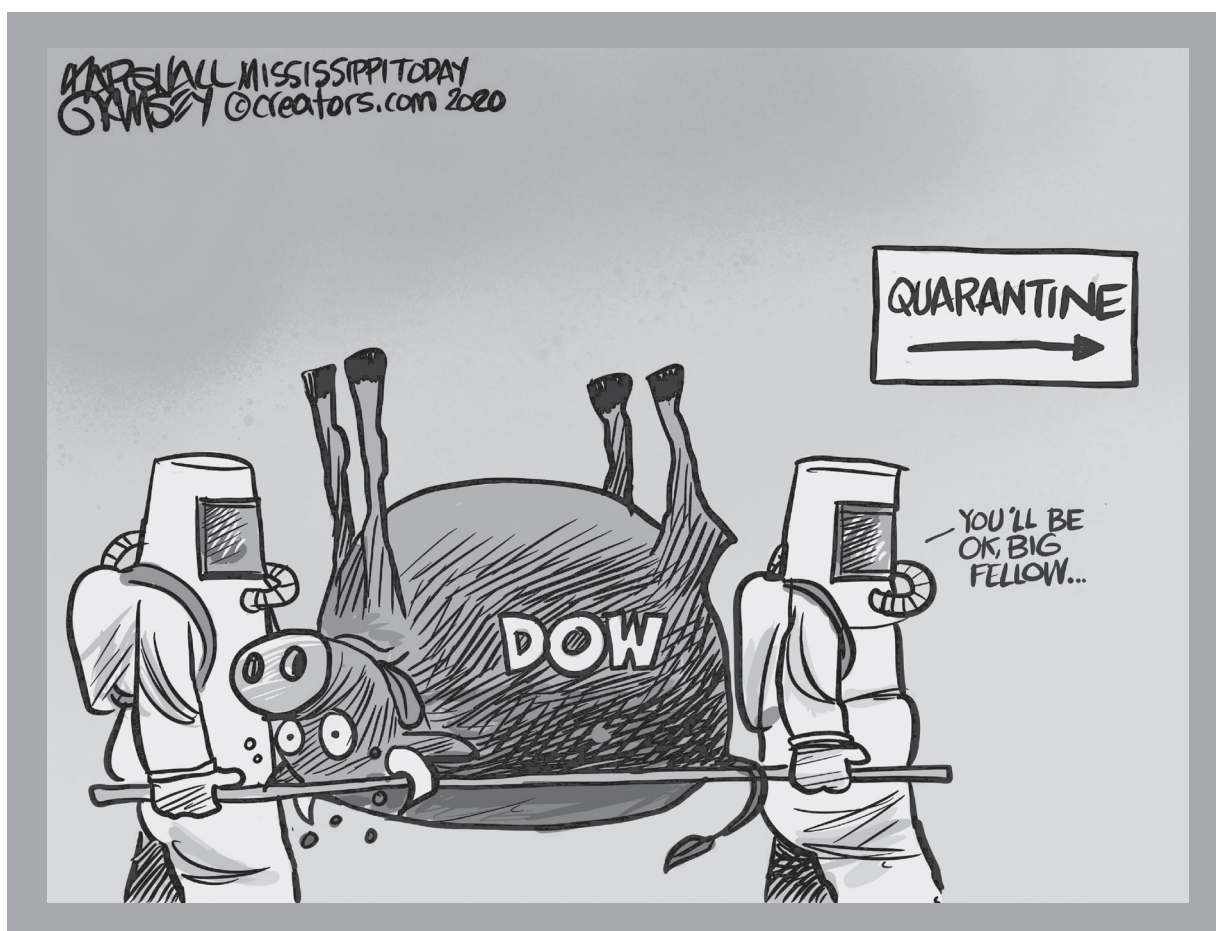
Not all bills have been controversial and complicated. My two bills, HB 4013 (relating to kratom) and HB 4014 (relating to land use) have both moved forward to the Senate side with unanimous support. On Feb. 20, the Senate Committee on Judiciary held a public hearing and possible work session on HB 4013, and the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources will be having a public hearing and possible work session on HB 4014. I really hope to see both bills move forward as they are small fixes with unanimous bi-partisan support.

The rest of the session remains unknown. As of now, the House Republican caucus will continue to not suspend the House Rules, which means each bill must be read section by section (as specified in the Oregon Constitution). At any moment, it feels the tension in this building is so thin, we're just hanging on by a thread. The great thing about this process, is every legislator is doing what they believe is best to represent their district.

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from the capitol
By BILL POST



Trump's own criminal justice reform

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

For decades, a small cadre of reformers pushed whichever president occupied the Oval Office to use his pardon power more frequently and put a lid on draconian federal sentences that put low-level and midlevel offenders away for decades, even life.

The problem they face on the week President Donald Trump issued pardons and commutations to 11 nonviolent offenders is that they got their wish—except for the Trump part.

It's odd because, in his fashion, Trump relates to the prison community, as was clear when the president presided over a graduation ceremony for 29 ex-offenders who participated in the Hope for Prisoners program in Las Vegas last week.

He didn't speak down to the graduates, as politicians have been known to do. Trump spoke as if they were in the same boat: "To every returning citizen here today, I know that there are some in our society who want to tell you what you can't do. They're going to tell you what you can't do. It's one of the reasons I wanted to be here."

Trump has a healthy distrust of federal prosecutors. Of course, most want to lock up bad guys to protect the public, for which voters should be

grateful. But they often do so with a chilling ruthlessness.

They've been known to put away low-level nonviolent drug offenders for decades, even life without parole, while giving deals to kingpins who knew how to game the system. I've talked to career prosecutors who defended putting away nonviolent drug offenders for life in prison—because bad laws said they could.

No doubt Trump's distrust of the criminal justice system has been stoked by special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe, which, after more than two years, found no coordination between the Kremlin and Trump Tower. The investigation dragged on far beyond the point when Mueller and company should have realized they didn't have the goods they sought.

It was deliciously ironic to hear former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe complain after he learned the government would not charge him for making inaccurate statements to the FBI, "it is an absolute disgrace that they took two years and put my family through this experience for two years before they finally drew the obvious conclusion and one they could have drawn a long, long time ago."

If only Mueller's team thought two

years was too long for the country to wait for its probe to end.

A true criminal justice reformer would call for an end to criminalizing politics and disagreements. Trump embraces criminal justice reform, and then grins at rallies when his base chants, "Lock her up."

The New York Times reported that all 11 Trump pardon recipients had connections with Trump or Fox News. Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was a contestant on "Celebrity Apprentice." Former New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik had friends on Fox News. The family of Texas businessman Paul Pogue had contributed more than \$200,000 to reelect Trump.

I perused the list and didn't see any miscarriage of justice, per se. It's refreshing to see a president who is not afraid to recognize people who have served their time and turned their lives around or to reduce draconian sentences for nonviolent offenders. This is what criminal justice reformers have wanted for decades.

But there's no path for 14,000 applicants who have asked for clemency the old-fashioned way. And I can't shake the feeling that it's more about Trump and his feelings and who he likes than justice.

(Creators Syndicate)

other opinions

gene h. mcintyre

Proposed budget cuts will hurt economy

Monday, Feb. 24, the Dow began the week down 800 points. Meanwhile, the S&P slid 2.7 percent and the Nasdaq sank 3.2 percent. The low for the day was down 997 points. This is fearsome stuff that we haven't seen for a while. What's going on?

Coronavirus is already making itself financially felt throughout most of the globe. First reported in China, where it originated, it's now in places as far-flung as South Korea, Iran and Italy. Deaths attributed to the virus are common and exponentially-growing in number.

Also underway is President Trump's proposed 2021 budget, already receiving negative reactions because it is full of outdated plans that would add to the Coronavirus' financial impact as it will weaken the economy and undermine our nation's ability to grow and prosper. Ultimately, by analysis, it will result, if implemented, in a national calamity.

What's so threatening about it? For openers, it proposes massive and immediate cuts to the kinds of public services, protections and health care that help to strengthen short-term economic growth. According to a report by the Brookings Institution's Hutchins Center Fiscal Impact Mea-

sure, government investment has been directly supporting overall economic growth for the past two years. Our federal government was contributing the most to the nation's Gross National Product (GNP) over the past two years while to reverse that impact means to further limit growth that has recently slowed.

The proposed Trump administration cuts are so deep, so significant and so destructively targeted that they could be large enough to push the U.S. into serious recession. Programs such as Medicaid, food stamps and tax credits for low income families tend to have a positive impact throughout local economies while those are the main victims of President Trump's budget: It seeks to cut or eliminate around \$335 billion in the next four years. These cuts would effectively reduce economic activity and push growth potential for America to well under 1 percent over the next year and longer through painful economic contractions.

A key to economic prosperity is improving opportunities, as workers and consumers drive growth and prosperity. When those who work have the support to do their best, they have

proven themselves able to innovate, create and improve everything around them. Trump's budget wrecks havoc with the foundations of our society: education, health care, research and development.

Disappointing to an overwhelming majority of U.S. citizens and helping the wealthiest Americans, Trump's budget includes an extension of the one-sided tax cuts. If extended, the richest 0.1 percent of Americans would receive additional tax cuts of about \$100,000 per year. Meanwhile, cuts to public services for all who need help, would simply add significantly to the inequalities of the current American way of conducting the nation's business: bad for our economics and our efforts to raise morale and opportunity among those left out of the American dream. Extreme inequality pulls the economy down and limits consumer buying to the few who can afford it.

What's the bottom line on the consequences of Trump's proposed budget? In all likelihood, Trump's budget would yield the opposite of what so many of us want and need as it will produce less and weaken the U.S. economy overall.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer. He shares his opinion frequently in the *Keizertimes*.)

Where are you America?

To the Editor:

I, for one, have been asking why we have to be a registered Republican or Democrat to have our voice heard around this country?

Oh sure, you can register as an "independent" or as they like to call it "unaffiliated" voter, but who really cares besides you? Your candidate will never have a primary or join in any debate or win an election. That is why many in power today started out as independent thinking people but switched to one of the two parties because they knew they didn't stand a chance. Why?

What about those of us who are

letters

fed up with both parties? People don't have to ascribe to the ideas of either of these parties to be great candidates and exceptional leaders. In fact, I don't think either of these parties resemble anything near what they represented in the beginning. We need at least four or five political parties that all have the chance to nominate, support, have debates and vote for primaries as well. What about a Tea Party, Libertarian, Independent and, yea, even a Socialist party? At least we would know who or what we were voting for. My personal feeling is that the president of the United States should not belong to any political party at all. That would be new and different, don't you think?

By the way, coming from someone who was around before dial telephones, do you really want America to become a socialist country? Do you have any idea what that is? Study it. Do you really want the government taking over your life and telling you what you can and can't do, can or can't buy or own, and worse yet, what you can believe? Check it out. What has happened to education in this country? I guess it has gone the way of all good and noble things like truth, manners, respect, kindness, etc.

I don't know how things work in big government, but it seems to me like there are those out there who do know how to get things like this done. Where are you?

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