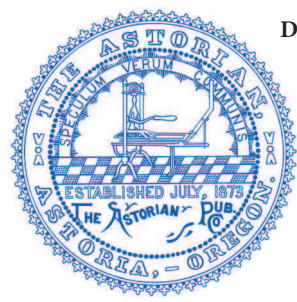


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



DAVID F. PERO, Publisher & Editor

LAURA SELLERS, Managing Editor

BETTY SMITH, Advertising Manager

JEREMY FELDMAN, Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM, Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN, Production Manager

CARL EARL, Systems Manager

OUR VIEW



AP Photo/Don Ryan
Gov. Kate Brown, shown here in Salem in January, is facing a defining moment as the legislative session enters its final weeks.

A defining test of leadership for our governor

Gov. Kate Brown faces a legacy-defining challenge as the Legislature enters its final weeks: standing up to public-employee unions and her other traditional supporters.

The success or failure of this year's legislative session may well hinge on the Democratic governor's willingness to defy the unions and other prospective supporters of her 2018 re-election bid.

Brown deserves credit for criticizing the strong-arm tactics of Service Employees International Union Local 503 last week, as well as for prodding the business community toward compromises on tax and budget issues. But, publicly at least, she was a late-comer to the debate.

This becomes a defining test of Brown's leadership. Taking a seat at the political table is insufficient. Demanding action by others is inadequate. Can — and will — she emerge as a determined, decisive and effective leader?

Much of Oregon's economic future is at stake. The Legislature is struggling to improve the state's transportation system, reform state spending, better stabilize the pension system and adequately fund state services.

And never before in a legislative session have all those big issues been so intertwined, as state Sen. Betsy Johnson and other veteran legislators have noted.

And that complexity emboldens partisans who threaten to thwart progress on all issues if they don't get their way on one issue.

The prime example arose last week. The SEIU threatened to sink the Legislature's transportation-infrastructure package unless lawmakers also increased taxes on businesses to pay for state services. Brown aptly described that as cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.

It is unconscionable that unions and the business community learned little from last fall's bitter defeat of Measure 97, which would have instituted a gross receipts tax — a form of sales tax — on corporations. Neither side has shown much willingness to compromise.

Brown is more pragmatic. So is the state Senate.

But Brown must persuasively stand up to those union leaders and House Democrats who insist on passage of a corporate tax increase or they'll torpedo the transportation package.

Hearings began today on the latest corporate tax proposal from House Speaker Tina Kotek and Sen. Mark Hass, but there aren't enough votes for it to pass the Senate. A more realistic compromise is needed.

And Brown must stand up to those Democrats, including Kotek, who are unwilling to modify the controversial low-carbon fuel standards.

Republicans have demanded some assurances on controlling the program's costs. That is a reasonable condition for their supporting the transportation package.

Furthermore, Brown must stand up to unions and Democratic legislators who will accept only tepid changes in the Public Employees Retirement System.

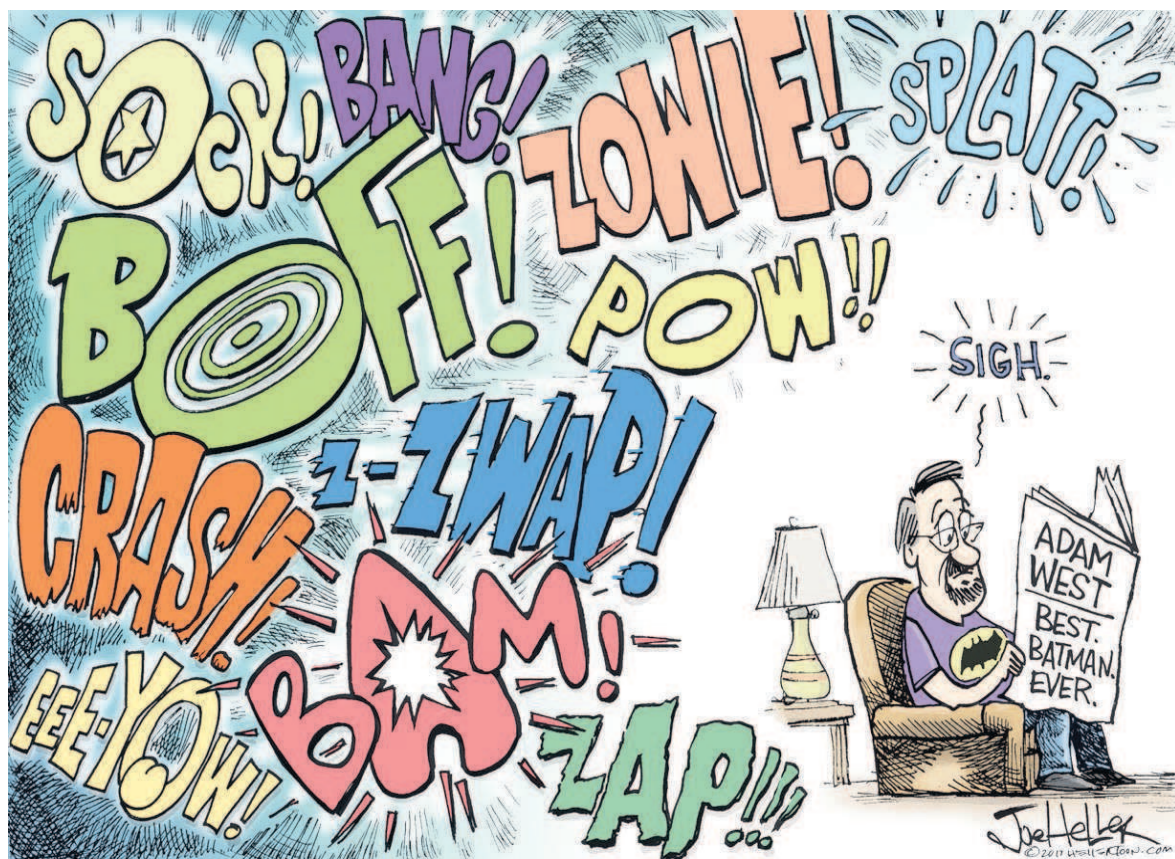
Lawmakers recently unveiled a PERS cost-sharing proposal. The concept is good; but as currently designed, any savings easily could be undone in the collective bargaining process.

It is not easy to stand up to longtime friends and allies, especially when counting on their future political support.

But that is what Oregonians sometimes need from their governors. Tom McCall did that on environmental issues. Vic Atiyeh did that on taxes.

Now it's Kate Brown's turn.

It is not easy to stand up to longtime friends and allies, especially when counting on their future political support.



GUEST COLUMN

A courtly night in the nation's capital

By DON HASKELL
Special to The Daily Astorian

The first time I wore a tuxedo and held an adult beverage in a conference room of the U.S. Supreme Court was 35 years



ago. The second time was earlier this month. I wore the same tuxedo, but held a glass of wine instead of bourbon.

The occasion was the cocktail hour during activities of the Supreme Court Historical Society, which I joined over 40 years ago while I still practiced law in downtown Chicago.

Annual meetings of the society are always black-tie affairs held in nonpublic areas of the perfectly symmetrical Roman temple-styled Supreme Court building in Washington D.C. The building was designed to show the law's majestic authority and power in a democracy. And its design and construction in the 1930s and 1940s does that in spades. The neoclassical-style building is encased in gleaming white Vermont marble that almost blinds with luminosity in the sunshine. Its tall pillars around the main entry, its imposing steps and solid bronze doors are meant to awe, if not to intimidate. But they appeared to do both to the tourists I saw.

The business meeting of the court's historical arm preceded cocktails and dinner. The meeting, also black tie, was well attended and filled all the seats in the courtroom where the nine justices hear oral arguments. As does the entire building, the courtroom exudes power and awe with the room's massive pillars of white marble, royal red draperies, 20-foot ornate ceiling, and a slightly raised bench for the justices. Immediately in front of the bench are the lawyers' tables. And surprisingly close to the justices is a lectern where nervous lawyers are grilled by the justices about the law and facts of the cases the lawyers bring to them.

After too-long speeches by the historical society's officials and a perfunctory election of officers, Chief Justice John Roberts, standing by the lectern, handed one of two small marble blocks to members who had given extra effort to the society. After each recognized member had their picture taken with the Chief Justice — both holding the small block of marble — the member promptly handed

the marble block back to the Chief Justice.

The society's president had explained earlier to the group that "the real" marble engraved blocks were not yet finished. Thus, it became necessary to use a faux memento so that members honored that evening could have their picture properly taken shaking hands with the Chief Justice. And she also explained that two marble blocks were available in case a member absentmindedly carried one away after the photo was taken.

To me, a highlight of the dinner was the lack of speeches. After all, it was promoted by the court as a social occasion. But the lack of speeches was still a pleasant surprise.

When the meeting adjourned, the cocktail hour began in the large east and west conference rooms of the Supreme Court. The large rooms, equivalent in size and decor, are across a wide marble hall from each other, and are designed for social and business gatherings of the court. Their walls are covered with gorgeous dark oak paneling, and the rooms' 20-foot high gold-leafed ceilings make the rooms look especially distinguished. And most noteworthy are the large portraits of all of the Supreme Court chief justices who've held the office since America's founding.

Both conference rooms open onto their own inner courtyards, replete with trees, benches and fountains. But the white marble walls were noticeably dull in appearance due to lack of sunlight.

A memorable end to the evening was the fancy dinner held in the main reception room of the Supreme Court building — the

Great Hall. This awe-inspiring room is huge, with marble walls and floor and massive marble pillars around all sides of the room. The Great Hall was designed as the grand approach to the courtroom at one end of the hall. But it's also large enough to comfortably hold 26 tables of 10 guests each.

The dinner began with raised glasses and a most respectful toast "to the President of the United States." No one did anything disrespectful to President Donald Trump, as seems to be the thing to do these days by so many folks who are still disgruntled by the election. And the dinner ended with a tear-provoking rendition of "America the Beautiful," sung by a highly professional vocalist.

As an interesting and touching three-generation sidelight, the vocalist was accompanied on the piano by her mother. And the singer's 12-year-old daughter turned the pages of the music her grandmother played for her mother!

To me, a highlight of the dinner was the lack of speeches. After all, it was promoted by the court as a social occasion. But the lack of speeches was still a pleasant surprise I hadn't remembered from the first time Carol and I attended the dinner 35 years ago.

Before we arrived, I thought Neil Gorsuch, the newest justice, was going to attract the most attention. But his absence was the most noticeable thing about him. The most noticed justice was the only woman justice who attended, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a tiny, hunched over and remarkably frail-looking woman. I find it so sad the political situation is such today that it makes Justice Ginsburg, a year younger than me at 84, feel herself unable to experience the joys and freedom retirement would bring to her in her remaining years.

The only cloud over the whole affair was the distance Carol and I — both in our 80s and both in formal attire, and she in ill-fitting shoes — had to walk to find a taxi back to the hotel. But that cloud quickly dissipates when we remember how we saw the third branch of our federal government up so close in a social setting where everybody, including Supreme Court justices, were as congenial and as down to earth as Oregonians are.

Don Haskell, a retired attorney who served on the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, lives in Astoria.

WHERE TO WRITE

• **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D):** 2338 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C., 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. Fax 202-225-9497. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005. Phone: 503-469-6010. Fax 503-326-5066. Web: bonamici.house.gov/
• **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D):** 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Web: www.merkley.senate.gov
• **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D):** 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Web: www.wyden.

senate.gov

• **State Rep. Brad Witt (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court Street N.E., H-373, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/witt/ Email: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

• **State Rep. Deborah Boone (D):** 900 Court St. N.E., H-481, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.deborah_boone@state.or.us District office: P.O. Box 928, Cannon Beach, OR 97110. Phone: 503-986-1432. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/boone/
• **State Sen. Betsy Johnson (D):**

State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., S-314, Salem, OR 97301. Telephone: 503-986-1716. Email: sen.betsyjohnson@state.or.us Web: www.betsyjohnson.com District Office: P.O. Box R, Scappoose, OR 97056. Phone: 503-543-4046. Fax: 503-543-5296. Astoria office phone: 503-338-1280.

• **Port of Astoria:** Executive Director, 10 Pier 1 Suite 308, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-741-3300. Email: admin@portofastoria.com

• **Clatsop County Board of Commissioners:** c/o County Manager, 800 Exchange St., Suite 410, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-325-1000.