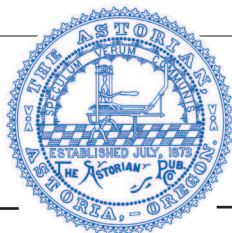


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

We are not filled with hope about session

If the Oregon Legislature intends to pass tax and spending reforms in 2019, the work should have begun months ago.

That was the message from veteran legislators at the recent Oregon Leadership Summit. It echoed what Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders said in June — in the 2019 Legislature, focus on structural budget and tax reforms.

Yet Brown told the Leadership Summit this month that she wanted to achieve such reforms a year earlier — in the 2018 Legislature. She said her staff was working on “options to solve the structural deficit issues Oregon faces, not just for the short term but for the long term.”

Still, we wait. With that 35-day legislative session starting in February, Brown has yet to show her hand.

Which reinforces why four veteran legislators — Democrats and Republicans — were skeptical about the state soon being able to make progress on tax and spending reforms.

The four lawmakers steered the massive transportation-finance plan through this year’s Legislature. The Democrats — Springfield Sen. Lee Beyer and Coos Bay Rep. Caddy McKeown — chaired the special transportation committee. The Republicans — Dallas Sen. Brian Boquist and Ontario Rep. Cliff Bentz —

served as vice chairs.

Their collaborative success might provide a guide for handling revenue and budget reform, which is why the summit’s organizers asked them to speak. Yet the lawmakers warned that financial reform would be far more complicated, difficult and potentially divisive than the state’s transportation package, far-reaching as it was.

Three approaches were key to the transportation plan:

First, the four legislators operated as a bipartisan leadership team, instead of the Democrats controlling the outcome. The four trusted and respected each other, even when they disagreed, sometimes vehemently.

That team approach recognized political practicality — the majority Democrats would need minority Republican votes for passage. Widespread bipartisan support also would deter critics from trying to overturn the transportation plan through a voter referendum.

That approach also reflected the leadership quartet’s commitment to a transportation plan that would overcome ideological and geographical differences. Maybe it’s noteworthy that three of the four came from rural regions — none represented the Portland metro area, and none was considered an ideologue.

Second, the negotiations involved

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AP Photo/Gillian Flaccus
Gov. Kate Brown has yet to show her hand on tax and spending reforms for the upcoming legislative session.

months of work — or years, if you count past iterations of transportation plans.

Third, everyone had a say. Scores of individuals and interest groups from throughout Oregon participated in work groups. They could not reasonably claim

they had not been heard.

In contrast, the 2018 Legislature is only weeks away and Oregonians know little about the governor’s and legislative leaders’ plans for genuine tax and spending reforms. We are not filled with hope.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Real heroes

As we end this roller coaster year, I’m looking for heroes to emulate. But I’m troubled by our careless, often-irresponsible use of that word, “hero.” I believe we’ve trivialized, cheapened, and overused the word “hero,” and stretched the meaning to include anyone caught in harm’s way.

Truth is — victims find themselves in harm’s way; heroes put themselves in harm’s way. Think about genuine heroes, like World War I Sgt. Alvin York, and World War II 1st Lt. Audie Murphy, and unlikely hero Oskar Schindler, a German businessman who at great risk helped save the lives of 1,100 Jews. Those heroes articulated our aspirations, exemplifying courage, selflessness, and grace.

True heroes are role models for others, committing brave deeds and selfless acts, choosing to sacrifice to benefit or save others. The small-town doctor who charges \$5 a visit may be beloved, but he’s not necessarily a hero.

Of course I admire and respect people who commit courageous acts. They deserve to be called gallant, intrepid, noble and valorous. But the real heroes of 9/11 weren’t those ordinary citizens who displayed two flags on their vehicles or wore New York Fire Department hats. Patriotic, perhaps. Heroic, no. The real 9/11 heroes were those courageous first responders who knew full well the likelihood of perishing in the inferno.

I don’t know about you, but that’s what “hero” means to me.

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

Failing the people

No institution is failing the people more than the House of Representatives; representatives in name only. The House has become a second Senate, behold to the powerful and elite.

The House was meant to amplify the voices of ordinary voters; make them dangerous to ignore. Do our endless wars, and a vastly unpopular tax reform, give evidence of a government afraid to ignore its people?

Initially, two means were used to ensure representatives were agents of their voters: small districts and short terms of office. We still have two-year terms, but the vast increase in district sizes, from 10,000 to 710,000, has diluted representation to nothing.

Americans know of first 10 amendments, the Bill of Rights, but few know they were actually the latter of 12 proposed amendments, approved and sent out for ratification, by the first U.S. Congress, Sept. 25, 1789. The second proposed amendment of the 12 didn’t complete its ratification until 1992 (the 27th Amendment); an over 200-year journey. This leaves only the first of the 12, waiting to,

again, be propelled into the light of the people’s minds for debate and consideration.

Article the First, known now as the Congressional Apportionment Amendment, describes the methodology for increasing the number of representatives as the population grows. The First Congress expected both the population and the number of representatives to grow, and defined an equitable way for that to occur. Without this amendment, population growth undermines the people in their own institutions. They grow weaker as their numbers increase. One person cannot represent 710,000 people.

At 48, I’ve never had a meaningful exchange with my representatives; to do so would be to rob someone else of theirs.

“Thank you for calling, the message box is now full.”

M. A. “SASHA” MILLER
Astoria

Theft forgiven

To the person or persons who felt it necessary to steal two star showers off the lawn of a retired couple in Hammond on Friday, Dec. 15: We thank you for leaving the third

one. We hope that you enjoy them, unless someone decides to steal them out of your front yard.

If you needed one or two of these so much that you had to steal them, we would have gladly given one to you.

God loves you, and we forgive you. Merry Christmas.

DENISE DAVIS
Hammond

Adopt a pet

While volunteering at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter, I met a dog named, Bodie. He is a hound, and runs as fast as any greyhound I’ve seen.

When I first took him out for a walk, we stopped in the pvc play area, where we take the leashes off the dogs, and let them chase tennis balls and run free. There is a nearly 6-foot tall fence around it to keep the dogs from getting out. I took Bodie’s leash off, and went to grab a blue tennis ball chucker.

I turned around and saw Bodie sitting at the foot of the fence facing up at the top corner. Before I could take another step, he jumped to the top of that fence with his front

feet hooking over it, kicked and pulled his hind legs over it, landed on the ground and started sprinting towards the street. He ran to the first car he could find, and stopped to get attention from the people inside while we came to round him up. That dog wanted to be free.

There are a lot of great dogs at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter who would love a good home, attention, kids to play with, and a yard or sidewalk to become their new exercise location.

What a good Christmas it would be for one of these dogs to have a family. Come to the Clatsop County Animal Shelter and adopt a pet today.

CHAD JOHNSON
Gearhart

Robin Hood?

I have one sentence in regard to the Robin Hood story in “We are heading in the right direction as a nation” (The Daily Astorian, Dec. 13): Roger Ailes, Bill O’Reilly — the “No Spin Zone” — get it?

JEFFREY CAMPBELL
Astoria

