

OPINION

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THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

Good governance is frequently bland

Few people outside the Oregon Capitol care about much of the Legislature's work.

Most legislation is tedious — making fixes in laws and regulations, adjusting the state budget, correcting spellings such as for the central Oregon community of Terrebonne, and the like.

Such legislation rarely makes headlines. But it comprises the nuts and bolts of governance, and it was the essence of the 2018 Legislature.

Legislative sessions in even-numbered years are short — limited to 35 days — because they're designed for fix-it and budget-balancing bills, not grand visionary legislation. And the 2018 Legislature, which adjourned after only 27 days, largely succeeded in that mission.

The so-called Clean Energy Jobs legislation — a top priority for many urban Democratic legislators but, according to polls, not most Oregonians — was put off until 2019, when the Legislature will



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

The state Legislature adjourned on Saturday.

meet for up to 160 days.

The state Senate continued to act as a brake on the House, letting a number of contentious House-passed bills die quietly, including one that would have required school districts to negotiate with teacher unions over class sizes.

The Legislature faced up to its dismal record on sexual harassment and pushed

Roseburg Republican Sen. Jeff Kruse to resign.

Gov. Kate Brown had a modest agenda, and the Legislature went along with it.

Slight progress was made on improving government efficiency and on paring the huge costs of the Public Employees Retirement System.

Far-reaching gun legislation was set aside in favor of a bill that expands the definition of stalkers and domestic abusers who may lose access to firearms.

Most bills that passed did so on a bipartisan basis, many on unanimous or near-unanimous votes. Among the exceptions were the Democratic majority's bills to partially disconnect Oregon income tax regulations from the federal tax reforms that became law in December. The wisdom of the state legislation, or lack thereof, likely won't be known for some time.

And despite legislators' sometimes heated public rhetoric on taxes, immigration and a few other issues, this was a legislative session that largely worked well behind the scenes. Republicans and Democrats collaborated to make an early adjournment possible.

Oregon history books may pay little heed to the 2018 Legislature, and that's OK. Good governance is frequently bland, often tedious ... and supremely important.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US Rep. Bonamici a leader on climate change

I wanted to take a moment to clarify an area where I misrepresented the leadership position and forward action that Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici has taken on climate change in my interview ("Climate change group searches Clatsop County for help in Washington, D.C.," The Daily Astorian, March 7, 2018).

What I intended to share was that we have been so impressed to see the congresswoman shift from having climate change be one of many issues important to her, to being a leader on this issue in the House. We so appreciate that she joined the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus early on (over a year ago and as the first CSC member in the Pacific Northwest) and was one of the speakers representing the caucus on the House floor last fall.

I would also like to clarify that she has not been silent nor on the fence about climate change whatsoever during her time as representative. Quite to the contrary, since being elected to office in 2012, the congresswoman has been a stronghold for action on climate and the environment. Her 97 percent Oregon League of Conservation Voters scorecard in 2012 is testimony to that, as well as her 96 percent score in 2013.

Speaking out publicly in support of President Barack Obama's plan to address climate change in 2013, as well as her letter to the International Trade Commission to stop the flood of Chinese subsidized solar panels, also makes her forward position very clear.

My deepest apologies for being less than clear on an issue and about a leader that deserves all possible clarity and laudability.

TAMARA STATON
Regional Coordinator, Greater Pacific Northwest Citizens' Climate Lobby

County stepping into 21st century?

I love it. And I can't stand it, too. The Feb. 21 issue of The Daily Astorian offers the possibility that Clatsop County and our dear state of Oregon can truly, finally step into the 21st century.

Fist bump to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for ending the publicly subsidized celebration of the American Civil War, a bloody, political, financial and moral waste over a cruel, failed cause ("Civil War re-enactment will relocate from Fort Stevens State Park after 27 years"). Our Civil War history deserves acknowledgment, not a party-like celebration.

High five to Richard Elfering for acknowledging a valuable counterpoint to the old saw of "lock 'em up" ("We need a treatment center, not a new jail"). Only true criminals deserve jail; people with mental issues deserve treatment — not deprivation. Thank you Richard, for a well-stated piece that should be printed in the voters' pamphlet at election time opposite the jail bond measure. We need to spend our precious tax dollars helping people, not punishing people.

Praise the lord that someone has stepped up big time to address homelessness here with a shelter, to come in July — late, but welcome ("New Astoria homeless shelter could open in July"). Alan Evans and Helping Hands have tirelessly and thanklessly grappled with homelessness and people struggling to return to society in Clatsop County. Bless you, Alan.



Then, in this same paper, we have Sen. Jeff Merkley representing our state — yes, east and west — asking questions and taking public comments ("Guns a hot topic at Merkley town hall in Seaside"). A man of integrity and basic decency, speaking for us while asking what we think about the state of our political life, all in a mature, intelligent manner and forum at the Seaside Library.

Thank you, Daily Astorian, for all of this.

RD SMITH
Gearhart

Environmental groups represent wide interests

In an editorial recommending the relocation of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) headquarters to the west, The Daily Astorian speaks of opposition to this from lobbyists for "environmental special interests" ("BLM big-wigs should move west," March 2).

I would suggest that environmental organizations, generally speaking, represent wider, long-term interests than do those who want to profit from drilling or from running cattle on publicly owned land.

ROBERT ADAMS
Astoria

Who is in the dark?

The Clatsop County Commission opted out of the Linn County lawsuit based on what Chairman Scott Lee called "the overwhelming message from public testimony in favor of balanced forest management." Balanced forest management is precisely what the Linn County lawsuit against the state seeks to undermine in favor of more timber harvest. Think more and more state land being clearcut.

In the Feb. 22 article in The Daily Astorian "Port, schools seek legal representation in timber lawsuit," Dirk Rohne states that the commission's vote to opt out of the suit did nothing except leave the county "in the dark" regarding progress in the lawsuit. He suggests that

only the counties who voted to stay in the suit will be in a position to shape forest policy recommendations to the Board of Forestry (BOF) through participation on the Forest Trust Land Advisory Council (FTLAC).

Rohne got that exactly backwards. Not only did our commissioners send a strong message to the BOF with their vote, our forest representative Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan is attending all BOF meetings, where she has directly represented Clatsop County's position for balanced forest management. Meanwhile, the FTLAC has virtually quit meeting in apparent concern that they might make comments that are supportive of the state in the lawsuit. Furthermore, the three Clatsop County tax districts that lawyered up will have no sway over forest policy via counsel, in light of the state's declining a settlement.

ROGER DORBAND
Astoria

Thanks for supporting Cannon Beach Academy fundraiser

Thank you. Recently at the Coaster Theatre we had a fundraiser for the Cannon Beach Academy that was also a tribute to Bill Steidel, an artist and leading community member. This truly amazing evening was the result of the contributions of so many wonderful people.

The talents of Bob "Bobcat" Rice on guitar and gitja (you really have to see this one), Cami Lira on vocals (and an occasional kazoo), and Margo Dueber (on vocals and the other kazoo), came together and their patience and hard work had a huge impact on the success of the evening.

Ryan Hull, our audio/visual guru, put an amazing presentation behind the music. Merrill Lynn Taylor and Jack Shields offered their years of experience in helping shape the evening's format and focus. George Vetter, photographer extraordinaire, provided some amazing photography that Ryan utilized in the presentation. Patrick Lathrop and Jenni Tronier

at the theater offered excellent advice and assistance.

Bill's songs of history, love, humor, tragedy and hope wove magic through the evening, and the audience added to that tapestry by singing right along with us — the type of community event that makes Cannon Beach the special village that it is.

PAUL DUEBER
Cannon Beach

County listened to public on timber lawsuit

Port Commissioner Dirk Rohne criticizes our County Commission's decision to opt out of the Linn County lawsuit ("Port, schools seek legal representation in timber lawsuit," The Daily Astorian, Feb. 22) stating that "elected leaders have a fiduciary duty to participate in issues that could affect constituents."

That makes me wonder why Rohne didn't choose to participate in the decision, but instead let the issue float undecided until after he left the commission. The class action suit had certainly been apparent for some time, and the public comment on the Linn County lawsuit was held while Rohne was still serving on the commission.

More importantly, the county commissioners did participate actively, and made their majority decision after more public input than any other county issue in years. Chairman Scott Lee and Commissioners Sarah Nebeker and Kathleen Sullivan didn't just vote, they each explained their views and their reasoning on how the lawsuit might impact our county. Clearly, one factor they considered was voluminous input from Clatsop residents over a period of months.

The Port's choice to hire legal counsel is certainly theirs to make, but it's unfortunate that it seems to require denigrating the county commission's very deliberative and public process on this issue.

HELEN WESTBROOK
Astoria