

OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Bills will test commitment to collaboration

As the Oregon Legislature prepared to start work this week, its leaders were saying all the right things about working together, respecting rural Oregon and doing what was best for the state as a whole.

But, as the saying goes, “only time will tell.”

In the Oregon House, the Democratic and Republican leadership have a more collegial relationship than in the past. In the Senate, it seems prickly.

Democrats gained supermajorities in the House and Senate, which enable them to pass tax increases without needing any Republican votes — if all Democrats stick together, which is never a sure thing. Some legislative issues, such as potential changes in sentencing laws, have an even higher threshold for passage. In any case, Democrats cannot conduct business unless enough Republicans are present for a quorum.

Through the leadership of Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, the Senate has acted as a moderating influence on proposals emanating from the more liberal House. But the November elections swung the Senate to the left, and Courtney worries about how he will balance



Gov. Kate Brown greets people at her inauguration.

Michaela Roman/Statesman Journal

the expectations of progressive Democrats with the need to work collaboratively with Republicans.

“We cannot do this, Democrats, without Republicans. You gotta understand that,” Courtney said at the annual Associated Press legislative preview on Friday. “We cannot do this without Republicans. Without the elephants in the room — another way to put it — the donkeys can’t do it.”

The question is whether the 90 legislators, as well as Dem-

ocratic Gov. Kate Brown, will give more than lip service to that collaboration.

The early signs are positive. They almost always are at the start of a legislative session.

Legislators went through civility training last week. Equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans will serve on the joint legislative committee charged with improving the State Capitol culture and overcoming the specter of sexual harassment. Courtney appointed

non-urban and urban senators — Democrats Betsy Johnson of Scappoose and Elizabeth Steiner Hayward of Beaverton — to jointly serve as the Senate’s budget leaders. He has introduced Senate Bill 2, with Republican Sens. Bill Hansell of Athena and Cliff Bentz of Ontario, which could be a breakthrough in providing greater land-use flexibility in Eastern Oregon.

It might also be a good sign that legislators are still trying to write the carbon cap-and-invest legislation, which progressives demand and conservatives dislike. Some Democratic legislators had long ago insisted that the legislation, known as Clean Oregon Jobs, was ready. Republicans have strived to make it less onerous for businesses and consumers.

Most bills passed by the Legislature are routine and have bipartisan support. Few of those will make headlines. But many contentious proposals — from taxes to firearms — likely will pit business vs. labor, rural vs. urban and minority Republicans vs. majority Democrats.

Those are the bills that will test legislators’ commitment to collaboration, to civility — and to the whole of Oregon.

LETTERS

No longer acceptable for schools to discriminate

Vice President Mike Pence is offended by the negative response to his wife, Karen Pence, teaching at an anti-LGBTQ Christian school in Virginia — a school where she also taught years ago (“Karen Pence teaching at school that bans gay students,” The Daily Astorian, Jan. 16).

While the school’s policy is technically legal, it requires staff and parents to sign a document stating that only heterosexuals are acceptable, and only male/female marriage is acceptable. Legal does not make it moral, fair, tolerant or exemplary.

The school vilifies and does not accept LGBTQ staff, students or parents. Change anti-LGBTQ to women — no female staff, students, parents. Or African-American — no black staff, students or parents. Or Asian — no Asian staff, students or parents. Or Muslim — no Muslim staff, students or parents. No Jewish, Catholic, Native American or Hispanic staff, students or parents.

There was a time when it was acceptable to discriminate against all these groups and more, but no longer. As Americans we aspire to create equality, diversity, fairness, and tolerance. Vice President Pence and his wife represent the values of their extremist Christian sect, violate the separation of church and state, and do our nation a disservice.

It is the public that should be offended by the Pences’ behavior.

TERESA DeLORENZO
Knappa

Welcome to two new faces in public affairs

The city of Astoria received two surprises to start the year. If you attended recent Astoria City Council meetings, or Design Review Committee meetings, you may have noticed two faces new to public affairs. Both are women, and each would be considered among the younger members of our governing community.

Sarah Jane Bardy, a member of the Design Review Committee — and, more importantly, a community member with a passion for the way Astoria proceeds into the future — made her feelings clear when she spoke to the City Council, and very directly reminded them that a vote in favor of the proposed Fairfield Inn and Suites was in defiance of the Planning Commission and the Design Review Committee in respect to the height of the building and its visual mass.

For her remarks, Ms. Bardy was privately and publicly chastised by the mayor, but this dressing down may work in her favor (“Design Review Committee member confronted by Astoria mayor over hotel comments,” The Daily Astorian, Jan. 8). Previously she was unknown, but now we recognize her commitment to the city’s future; she has pas-



sion and she is unafraid to speak.

Another appearance was Jessamyn West for appointment to the recently vacated Ward 4 position for City Council. The sitting councilors listened to several applicants and unanimously chose Ms. West. A grassroots community member who, along with partners, organized the purchase of the Odd Fellows hall in downtown Astoria. Their plan is to lease one floor of the building to a local theater, and another to the local dance and movement community.

Welcome, both of you.

JIM STOFFER
Astoria

Help out Coast Guard any way you can

It really does not matter your opinion of “wall” or “no wall,” we are not the ones to solve the shutdown until the ballot box gets our envelopes, and we must all vote to have our voices heard.

Approximately 1.5 in 10 of us, maybe more, are not getting paid a dime here in Astoria because they are Coast Guard employed, yet still must go to their duty station and perform their jobs. We are a “Designated Coast Guard City,” which is a great title for a community to have, and we must celebrate it in good times and bad.

Right now it’s bad. Let’s help them out in any way we can, with a donation or products. Items we use every day without thought are now important: laundry soap, dog and cat food, toilet paper, gas for the car, let alone food. The Lower Columbia River Chief Petty Officer Association (CPOA) is set up to receive monetary donations that will go to where it is needed

the most, along with pop-up food pantries.

We are a community that has many opportunities to donate and volunteer to (i.e. the animal shelter, the library, the Liberty Theatre, the Scandinavian Heritage Park, etc.) but these are folks who help others in need, and save lives. Ask a fisherman who they want help from when their vessel is broken down 60 miles offshore in bad weather. Now is the time to help them. Their services are appreciated.

Donations can be mailed to Lower Columbia River CPOA, P.O. Box 34, Warrenton OR 97146.

PAT WILSON
Astoria

We are a Coast Guard community

I know exactly what this government shutdown means. My daughter, son-in-law and their three children serve in the Coast Guard where they have no close-by family, there is no base housing and the cost of living is very expensive. You do the math. Think about what the impact would be on you were you in their shoes.

It seems like every week there are stories of Coast Guard searches and rescues, of boats being towed to safety, illegal drug shipments seized, illegal immigration attempts thwarted and other maritime responsibilities being faithfully fulfilled. They are always there for us. It is our turn now to be there for them.

Recently, I have seen several local businesses do their part to assist our Coasties. As an example, the Main Street Market in Warrenton is offering those affected by the shutdown interest-free charge accounts

for food purchases. Kudos to them. I am challenging every North Coast and Long Beach Peninsula business to pitch in. If the basic humanitarian aspect isn’t enough to convince you to help, remember — the economic vitality of this entire region depends to one degree or another on our Coasties.

I am also challenging The Daily Astorian and every local radio station to seek out and maintain an ongoing list of every business and what they are doing to let our Coast Guard families know where they can find assistance.

We are a Coast Guard community. It is time for all of us to step up.

BILL GRAFFIUS
Gearhart

Killing sea lions won’t solve the problem

It’s so sad that sea lions are going to be killed (“Oregon starts killing sea lions at Willamette Falls,” The Daily Astorian, Jan. 10).

Our areas have been overfished. The fish population is low, due also to so many dams up our rivers. The dams were designed and built with no way for fish ladders. So, as is usually the case, humans put the blame on anything besides themselves.

The balance of nature has been pushed out of whack, and killing isn’t going to fix the full problem. The sea lions are living with nature.

Many love the sea lions in Astoria. This is all just so sad.

ROBIN RODGERS
Astoria