

OPINION



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editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

GUEST COLUMN

Be careful which laws you pass

The hallways of the state Capitol are buzzing with lobbyists, activists, citizens and legislators all pursuing good intentions for the 2019 legislative session.

Get ready to lower your expectations. Or, in the words of that other Gov. Brown (Jerry, not Kate): nemo dat non habet.



BETSY JOHNSON

My mother taught Latin, so I can appreciate the former California governor's use of that ancient language to communicate without political spin. He was saying: No man gives what he does not have. In other words, the state cannot give what it does not

have.

Brown used that Latin phrase in 2011 after he entered office and faced a \$27 billion deficit. He retired recently, and the national media reviewed his career. In particular they noted that while he inherited a deficit, he left his state with a \$14.5 billion "Rainy Day" reserve fund and a \$14.8 billion discretionary surplus.

"The first test of all of us, and government is no exception, is to live within realistic limits," Brown has said of his budgeting philosophy.

A budget is an articulation of where priorities rest. The centerpiece of Oregon's 2019 legislative session will be its 2019-2021 state budget.

Gov. Kate Brown submitted an aspirational budget of \$23.6 billion. The co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee — myself, state Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Portland/Beaverton) and state Rep. Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis) — will submit ours.

In one day last month in Salem, state Sen. Steiner Hayward and I sat in a conference room and heard budget requests from various groups. In total, on that one day, those requests added up to about \$750,000,000. That's three-quarters of a billion dollars. In one day.

So many people want so much stuff, and they want the government to pay for

it. To give you an example of how this translates in the budget process, representatives of a beloved Portland not-for-profit came to us and asked for \$500,000 to fix their boiler.

The organization educates deaf students and does laudable work, but it was fair to ask them: Why didn't you save in anticipation of fixing your boiler? Can you raise funds for a matching grant? What about your alumni and their families — can they contribute?

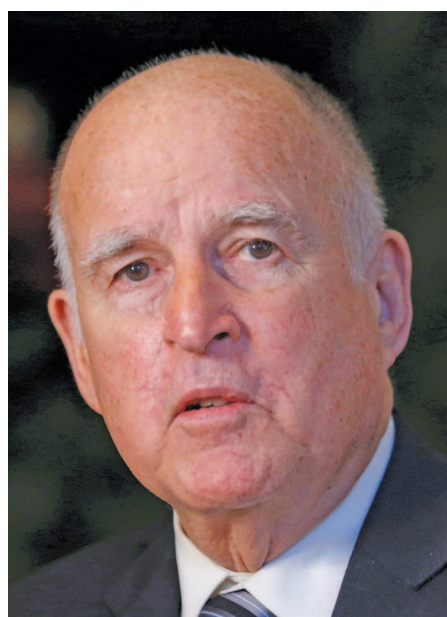
This is not to single out one institution. It is representative of the kinds of requests and expectations we receive. Many times it's as if those with the need haven't considered any other alternative besides asking the state.

Looming over the 2019 legislative session is the approximately \$25 billion unfunded liability of the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS). And looming over that is the volatile nature of the investment world, which is linked to many retirement accounts. Yet the requests for government funding keep coming.

Shortly after Gov. Kate Brown was re-elected in November, she announced work would begin on developing tax and fee increases to raise billions of dollars. Unless there are accompanying restraints in spending, there will be no change in Oregon's financial condition.

Aside from the budget, thousands of bills will be introduced this session. Only a fraction will pass, but proposed bills consume much time. A few that stand out:

GUNS: One bill would require Oregon residents to have a permit before obtaining a gun; another would require gun owners to secure their firearms in a locked container or with a gun lock; still another would restrict ammunition purchases to 20 rounds every 30 days. There are many others, but expect the focus to be on those bills pushed by a group of urban high school students inspired by the protests following a school shooting in Parkland, Fla. I hope these high schoolers take time to talk to their rural counterparts about the legitimate uses



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

California Gov. Jerry Brown inherited a \$27 billion deficit and left office with a \$14.5 billion "Rainy Day" reserve fund and a \$14.8 billion discretionary surplus.

of firearms.

HOUSING: Because of the enormous pressure to do something about housing, there is a proposal to institute rent control across the state. Variations also include restricting no-cause evictions. Tenant groups and landlords are already haggling over details. To increase variety and availability of rental units, there is a proposal to end single-family zoning and allow duplexes, triplexes and similar multi-family units to be built in residential neighborhoods.

CAP AND TRADE: This issue has been debated for several sessions, yet it is unknown how it will impact Oregonians. Cap and trade attempts to control carbon emissions by setting a cap on the amount of pollution a business or organization may produce — but allows a trade by which a business or organization can purchase more capacity for carbon emissions elsewhere. Ultimately, it increases the cost of energy and presumably reduces the demand. It sounds worthy but runs counter to a concept currently popular —

equity. The poor and working class will likely be hit harder with higher fuel and energy costs.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM: There will likely be an attempt to eliminate the death penalty by redefining aggravated murder. At the same time, there will likely be legislation to elevate hate crimes to a higher level of offense and increase punishment. Meanwhile, there will be bills with the intent to keep more convicted felons out of prison. A big-picture look at these bills will reveal disturbing contradictions. Many of these proposed reforms sympathize with criminals who steal, assault and kill and give law-abiding residents more reason to arm themselves.

It's a reminder that all lawmakers need to weigh the unintended consequences of bills before we pass them. The day the legislative session officially opened, the state of Oregon was hit with a lawsuit alleging that students with behavioral problems were being excluded from class.

In 1975 Congress, acting with the most compassionate of intentions, passed a law called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Who could be opposed to helping the handicapped? Later the law was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act with the catchy acronym IDEA. All children considered disabled would be guaranteed a public education.

Over the years this law has been manipulated and litigated to the point where the definition of disabled has been enlarged. A child deemed disabled who hurts others or destroys property still has a right to an education. The schools must find a way. Some states are now spending billions trying to meet the requirements of a law that has mutated into something unrealistic and harmful to all students.

There's a lesson here for lawmakers. Be careful which laws you pass. Your constituents will be forced to live with — and pay for — the consequences.

Betsy Johnson represents District 16 — which includes Clatsop County — in the Oregon Senate.

LETTERS

Welcome to Astoria

I would like to welcome Mr. Mark Hollander and his new hotel to Astoria. Those 60 new rooms are something us here in Astoria cannot live without. I am glad that your building abides within the codes the city laid out for new construction. I can hardly wait until it is built.

I imagine a Sunday morning in July, after those 60 new room occupants take 60 showers and flush 60 times, they pile into 60 cars and plow onto Marine Drive, with all the cars that leave all the parking lots along scenic "hotel drive." If you want to get to the new co-op, you had better walk.

Codes could have been changed last year to limit size and height of riverfront construction, but empirical knowledge dictated that the council should focus on curbing homeowners from renting an extra room in their home. Last count: approximately 44 Airbnbs in Astoria ("Moratorium possible on homestay lodging," The Daily Astorian, May 11, 2017).

That amounts to 44 rooms that would accommodate 44 tourists, and they don't block anyone's view. These rooms have zero new impact on our infrastructure. We have been flushing these 44 toilets for decades. Their 44 cars are dispersed throughout the neighborhoods, not adding to the gridlock on Marine Drive.

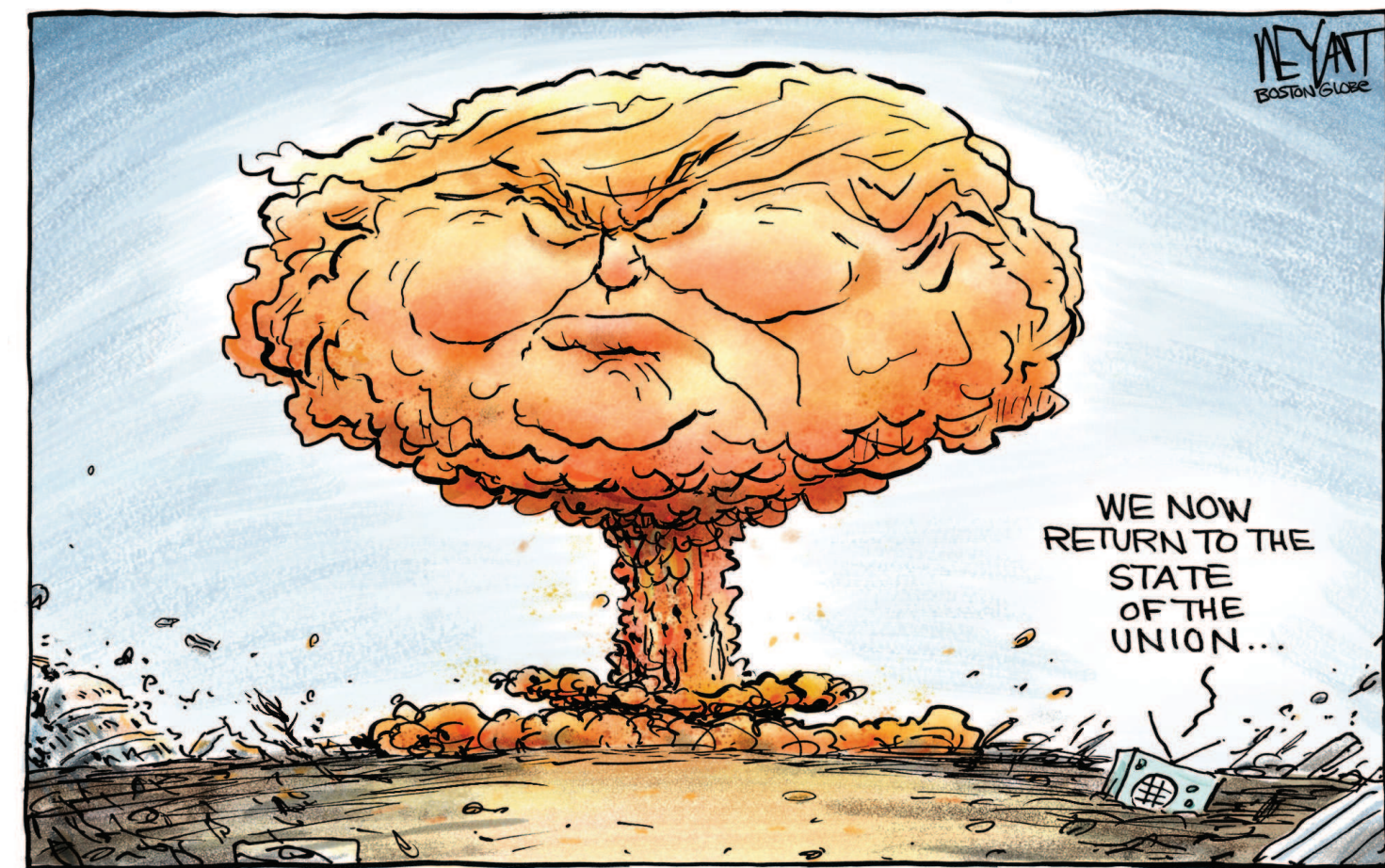
Last year's council thought that anyone who had an opinion also had a financial interest in homestay lodging. Maybe, but what's so wrong with local homeowners making a few tourist dollars to help pay their taxes? Would you rather give all the money to Mr. Hollander? Mr. Hollander doesn't even live here.

JOHN GINDER
Astoria

Truth suffers under Trump

Does saying that God wants the presidency of the U.S. to be filled by a chosen one really matter? The White House press secretary, Sarah Sanders, recently thought so when she said in a Christian Broadcast News interview on Jan. 30 that God "wanted Donald Trump to become president. And that's why he's there."

It appears to be her opinion and not a fact. In my opinion, no god of merit would install such a liar in a position of such power. The fact is that truth has suffered under President Trump. It's been crucified and buried, but it is not dead. Truth has life



everlasting, and will come again.

America is not the kingdom of a god. The president is not placed in position by divine right. The presidency is a seat of consent by the governed. The right to govern lies in the authority of the people; the same people who must demand truth from those it elects to serve the nation with integrity.

The fact that Trump is in the White House because he was elected by the governed means that the governed can return the White House to one who would restore truth in its hallowed halls. Now that really matters.

DARRELL CLUKEY
Cannon Beach

Logging causing low streamflows

The recent low streamflows during summer months that are hampering the further development of properties at Falcon Cove are not just a function of climate change shortage of rain during critical months, or summertime overuse of existing supply.

The meticulously conducted 2016 Perry/Jones study (bit.ly/2BkcZVW) by scientists from Oregon State University demonstrates that low streamflows during

summer months are directly related to past and ongoing logging. A scan of the hills east of Falcon Cove shows heavy logging over many years.

The Perry/Jones study used paired samples in experimental forests, primarily in the western Cascades, to compare mature and old growth parcels with replanted plantation sites. The study found that stream flows from the plantations parcels during summer months were 50 percent lower than those coming from mature stands. What was most shocking was that the same 50 percent water loss persisted, even when replanting had taken place 50 years earlier.

The Perry/Jones study was corroborated in 2017 by Christopher Frissell, lead scientist for Frissell and Raven, a highly reputable hydrobiological and landscape firm (bit.ly/2HPGXYY). He concluded, "The great majority of forested watersheds in the Pacific Northwest are likely experiencing severe, but previously unrecognized streamflow deficits caused by past and ongoing logging."

In light of these findings, residents of Falcon Cove who have to truck in some of their water during the summers might consider getting the timber companies to foot some of the bill.

ROGER DORBAND
Astoria

Look on the bright side

There's a whole lot of whining going on as we Americans undergo a whole lot of political/social/economic angst.

But must that be so? Can't we tone down our misery and look on the bright side a bit more? We've recently enjoyed a few days of sunshine, less rain, and occasional good news, reported in The Daily Astorian and elsewhere.

I say: Try some random acts of kindness, seek out the positive, and try to smile more. Who knows? You might be able to persuade your spouse, partner, boss, coworker, neighbor, doctor or dentist to treat you with slightly less contempt.

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

Video told part of the story

After looking at the news lately, I hope the high school children in Clatsop and Tillamook counties do as well as the Covington High School children. People only get one quarter of the video to make them look smirky. If their hats would have been "Hope and Change," they would have been the heroes, not the Native American who got in their faces.

DALE E. ANDERSON
Nehalem