

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Make your views known on state budget

Oregon legislators are to be commended for going outside Salem to hear from real people about the state budget and other issues. But lawmakers should go further, adding more rural perspective to the urban voices that seem to dominate at the State Capitol.

The road-trip public hearings are a start.

“Your input is critical to how we make final budget decisions,” Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, told the budget-hearing audience in Coos Bay last Saturday. “We need to hear from you about your needs and your priorities and your ideas on the way that state funds can be best used.”

Johnson co-chairs the Legislature’s Joint Ways & Means Committee, which will write the state’s 2019-21 budget and has had numerous hearings at the Capitol already on budget bills. The committee will be in Pendleton on Friday and Redmond on Saturday, wrapping up its four-city tour on March 21 in Portland.

Those visits are valuable, although they provide limited exposure to the “real-people” perspective outside the Capitol. Only a few dozen people can be heard during the two-hour budget hearing in each city. Each person testifying is strictly limited to two minutes. But when people speak from



Dick Hughes

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, co-chair of the Joint Ways & Means Committee, opens a state budget hearing in Coos Bay.

the heart, instead of reciting talking points prepared by interest groups, their stories can resonate with legislators.

The Legislature’s Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction also visited four towns this year, held hearings at the Capitol, and took remote testimony by video for an hour each from Baker City and Newport. House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said the feedback will result in changes throughout House Bill 2020, known as Clean Energy Jobs, while holding true to the concept of a carbon cap-and-trade system.

Progressive Democratic majorities control both the House and the Senate. It is not realistic to expect that a few rural hearings will cause Democratic leaders to suddenly

reverse course on an issue. But rural voices can be a moderating influence, affecting both what goes into the final legislation and what is left out.

Urban legislators say they care about rural Oregon. Their interest and commitment seem genuine. But rural needs and rural perspectives often are far different than those of urban constituents. To really know rural Oregon, it’s not sufficient to simply make a few visits every couple of years.

This is the 21st century. Technology prevails. The Legislature should make video conferencing and other methods of remote testimony for individuals a common practice.

Few farmers, ranchers, commer-

TIPS FOR TESTIFYING

Arrive early. Sign up to testify before the legislative hearing starts.

Know what you want to say. Focus on one or two things.

You don’t have to use all your time, but know the time limit and don’t break it.

Speak from the heart. Brief stories, backed by facts, can be compelling.

Be respectful. Alienating legislators will not help your cause.

If it is a large crowd and your name is not called to testify, don’t despair. Anyone can submit written testimony by email to the legislative committee by a specified deadline, although it’s unknown how many committee members read that testimony.

The email address for state budget testimony is waysandmeans.budget@oregonlegislature.gov. Include your town or area of residence in the subject line.

cial fisherman or other rural residents can afford to make hours-long drives to Salem, only to testify briefly. But through technology, they could step away from work, home or school long enough to have their say.

For now, we have the committee field trips. We are disappointed that a hearing was not scheduled for the North Coast. Despite their drawbacks, we encourage you to attend if possible.

You’re an Oregonian. It’s your Legislature. Make your views known.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Some practical advice

Never regard something as doing you good if it makes you betray a trust, or lose your sense of shame, or makes you show hatred, suspicion, ill-will or hypocrisy, or a desire for things best done behind closed doors.”

That’s something I wish I’d said or written. But it’s an admonition declared 1,859 years ago by Marcus Aurelius, a second-century Roman emperor who fell in love with philosophy.

Marcus Aurelius wrote about everyday life topics such as learning from mistakes, minding your own business, and controlling anger. Sound timelessly relevant?

Regarded as the last of the Five Good Emperors, Aurelius also pondered the wisdom of keeping the number of our commitments as low as reasonably possible, perhaps an early warning about multitasking.

The Stoic advised us to ask ourselves: Do I really need to say or do this? Rather, he suggested, it is better to do a few things well, and to speak only when necessary.

I’m convinced that Marcus Aurelius’ wisdom, behind what I’d call “economy of action,” has not faded in its journey across the millennia.

And as devoted worshippers at the altar of consumption, we want more and to do more, only to eventually realize how wrongheaded our decisions were.

Yes, Marcus Aurelius’ advice still resonates with me. He reminds me that more is not always better than less. Indeed, less can give us more of what we really need — of what really matters.

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park, Washington

Let’s get this done

Gearhart is making a survey of its residents for considering a site for the new fire station. It is important for all of us to complete the questionnaire so that the decision can be made with the most information on public preference.

The present fire hall is 61 years old, having been built in 1958 by then fire chief Bruce Maltman and members of the Gearhart Firefighters Association, and constructed mostly of cinderblock. Over the years, it has deteriorated, and continues to do so at the mercy of strong winds and bad weather.

There are three possible sites being considered: the present location, the park at the end of Pacific Way, and the High Point location.

I would like to recommend High Point because it is the best choice because of its height and the neighborhood. It can

be constructed while maintaining current uninterrupted fire safety.

I would like to be clear that we need this new station badly, and we need need a vigorous support effort on the part of all of us to get it.

Our volunteers have worked hard with deteriorating facilities. We all need to give this our wholehearted support. Please return your completed questionnaires. If you don’t have one, please let them know at City Hall.

Let’s get this done.

KENT A. SMITH
Gearhart

Thanks for support

We would like to thank a number of people and groups that helped make this past basketball season so enjoyable and successful.

It is quite humbling to be embraced by a whole community, and we can’t begin to express our gratitude to all our supporters throughout the season and into the league and state playoffs. As we headed to state, that support blossomed even more.

In particular we want to thank our school leaders and administrators, from Superintendent Sheila Roley to Principal Jeff Roberts, Assistant Principal Jason Boyd, and our athletic department of Aaron Tanabe and Kerri Boutin. For four years or so, we have been adopted by Kenny and Cathy Hyde, whose kindness and generosity is amazing.

All of our parents were so supportive this year, and throughout their daughters’ careers, from team dinners, to goody bags for state, to financial donations and emotional support.

Special thanks go to Bruce’s Candy Kitchen and the Truax, Taylor and Bennett families, Cousins’ Restaurant and Patrick and Lisa Nofield; Mike and Jody Falleur and Larry and Janice Zagata, who all donated monies and foods for our journey to and from Baker.

The cheerleaders’ support is always awesome, and we would like to thank the band, as well as Steve and Alice Olstedt for their support, both behind the scenes and at the front table.

Finally we want to congratulate our boys for such an awesome run. Though we know they’re disappointed, they made four state finals in four years with two titles: Oregon an achievement. We are proud to pound the hardwood with you, and appreciate your support of us. Thank you all.

MIKE HAWES
MARLA OLSTEDT
Coaches, Seaside High School
girls varsity basketball



WHERE TO WRITE

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War with Venezuela?

The U.S. continues its effort to overthrow the elected government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro with the announcement that it is pulling out its last diplomats. The Daily Astorian has noted that the U.S. has led an international effort to replace Maduro. That effort has included statements that all options are on the table, signaling that American military action is possible.

Oregon should be proud that two of our five U.S. representatives, Earl Blumenauer and Peter DeFazio, are original co-sponsors of House Resolution 1004, which would prohibit unauthorized military

action in Venezuela. With passage of this act, any military action must be authorized by Congress before the action starts.

The US Constitution gives Congress responsibility to declare war. The failure to observe this constitutional requirement or to even make a declaration of military action has resulted in a series of endless wars made by the U.S. upon the nations of the world.

We need to demand that U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici join Blumenauer and DeFazio in their opposition to unauthorized war in Venezuela. Give her a call today at 503-469-6010.

DAVID DELK
Astoria