

OPINION



the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

GUEST COLUMN

Weather, tech glitches disrupt Legislature

With the Oregon Legislature running at half-speed last week due to the ice storm, we'll start by talking a bit about what is, or isn't, happening at the Capitol. Then we'll catch up on other tidbits of news and reader comments.

The Legislature canceled activities because so many Oregonians — including lawmakers and staff — were without power, internet or phone connections. Travel also remained challenging in some regions.



DICK HUGHES

Due to the COVID-19 protocols, legislative committees are operating this year via videoconference. Lacking electricity at home, state Rep. Brian Clem, D-Salem, had to use his Capitol office to lead Wednesday evening's hearing on wildfire recovery. Some members of the House and Senate wildfire committees were unable to participate due to the ongoing power outages.

The public hearing lasted 4 1/2 hours. "It's truly the best part of the job when we get to interact with real people. It recharges the batteries," Clem said at the end.

Technology problems plagued the virtual hearing, which was for southern Oregonians to talk about the aftermath of the Almeda, South Obenchain, Two Four Two and Slater wildfires.

"It was just quite an evening for the heart and the mind tonight. The breadth and the depth of this testimony was amazing," said Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, who chairs the Senate wildfire committee. "Really, I feel very badly for the frustration we may have caused with our technical problems."

Golden noted that the Almeda fire started about 600 yards from his house but the flames headed the other direction.



Statesman Journal

Icy conditions hit Salem last week.

Rep. Lily Morgan, R-Grants Pass, encouraged her colleagues to read the written testimony that also had been submitted, including one person's story about being dinged for new utility bills on a home that had burned.

Weather disrupts legislative schedule: With the House canceling its Feb. 16 floor session, the vote on whether to expel Rep. Diego Hernandez, D-Portland, was moved to Tuesday. Hernandez, who unsuccessfully filed suit over the legislative investigation into allegations against him of sexual harassment and creating a hostile workplace, told Oregon Public Broadcasting on Sunday that he is resigning.

The Senate canceled most of its committee meetings on Wednesday, and the House also canceled some.

Sen. Chuck Thomsen, of Hood River, the Senate Republican deputy leader, joined House Republican Leader Christine Drazan, of Canby, in urging the Legislature to pause all committee meetings and other work until Oregonians regain power and internet service.

"This entire 'remote session' depends on the public's ability to access their state Capitol through electronic means. With over 150,000 still without power

and even more without internet, the public's involvement in their government is actively being denied," Thomsen said in a statement.

On Thursday morning, the Senate had an 11-minute floor session for the introduction of more than 30 new bills. A bare quorum of senators was present.

"It appears that no part of our state has not been affected by some kind of catastrophe this year. That includes some of the members of this body who have been hit and hurt very, very badly, and our constituents. Yet you found a way to be here today," Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, told his colleagues.

When Oregonians see their government continuing to function during these challenging times, Courtney said, "It's like, 'Well, we're still going. We got hope.'"

Catching up: A previous column discussed the need for state officials to more adeptly involve local leaders and influencers in promoting compliance with COVID-19 protocols. Former Gov. John Kitzhaber said he made the same points nearly a year ago in a letter to Gov. Kate Brown.

The five-page letter provided analysis and a host of recommendations on con-

fronting the pandemic, including working with communities "to prevent panic, hoarding and blame."

Kitzhaber wrote: "The best bulwark against these things is close communications with communities through trusted messengers — ensuring people that they are not alone, keeping them apprised of what is going on and, especially, how they can help and support one another."

"Oregon already has a network of community-based problem-solving and delivery structures, including: watershed councils, regional solutions teams, early learning hubs and coordinated care organizations. We should be activating these groups to participate in a coordinated, well-thought out message of reassurance, of what to be concerned about; what not to be concerned about; and of the steps being taken and progress being made to address the virus itself, as well as its economic and social consequences."

Which offense is worse: Under Measure 110 approved by voters in November, possession of small amounts of illegal drugs is now a civil violation punishable by a \$100 fine.

A reader notes that in contrast, Senate Bill 592 would make it a Class A misdemeanor — punishable by 364 days in jail and a potential \$6,250 fine — to use a lead weight for fishing or a lead shotgun pellet for hunting.

Trees down, windows open: Trees on the Capitol grounds and around state buildings in Salem suffered significant damage in the ice storm.

Meanwhile, crews are gradually removing the plywood that had covered the Capitol's first-floor windows as protection against potentially violent protests last month. House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said the Capitol facilities staff has developed a system for quickly reinstalling the plywood if needed.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Two words

Two words. Two very simple words.

That's all it would have taken. There would have been no violence. No bloodshed. No death. No impeachment trial. No threat to our democracy.

No embarrassing, shameful, frightening day for the world to watch. Our nation would have moved forward with pride, dignity and hope.

Two words ... I lost.

TIMOTHY J. BISH
Astoria

So glad

"Thank you" goes to those volunteers who set up the Clatsop County Fairgrounds in Astoria for vaccine shots.

We were notified to arrive at 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 11. The trip was about 15 minutes from Astoria. The parking was close to the entrance.

The building was set up in an excellent way. The volunteers were plenty, pleasant and helpful and the line went pretty fast and good.

The vaccine had arrived. They had areas for shots and areas where they were filling syringes. It was heated, and our drug manufacturers had shipped enough vaccine. Everyone worked so well together, it took us maybe 20 minutes to go through the line.

What a wonderful place to live, where we have so many people who care and show up and help. The parking was good, and lots of people showed up. I am so glad we live in this area. Thank you to all those who volunteered.

NELSON TAYLOR
Astoria

Wishing

Just wish the Seven Deadly Sins included hypocrisy instead of pride.

DONNA LEE ROLLINS
Astoria

Responsible

Practically and morally responsible for the events of the day, is how Sen. Mitch McConnell described President Donald Trump's culpability in the certification insurrection.

Trump flags flown by MAGA-clad Republicans flooded the U.S. Capitol. Shouting murderous threats, Trump supporters called for Vice President Mike Pence to be hanged, and for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to be shot. A preponderance of audio and visual evidence recognizing Trump's

complicity requires no divine insight, only mortal common sense.

Having lost the election, and without any apparent intention of governing in a classic democratic sense, Trump aided and abetted a treasonous insurrection against constitutional process.

Nevertheless, with flags and placards, Trump supporters — who seem to endorse violence as an acceptable recourse to the democratic process — continue to exhibit their fealty to personality rather than constitutionality.

Consequently, Americans who embrace democratic propriety over totalitarian rule will continue to eschew these public symbols of authoritarianism.

Disingenuous claims that Trump called for peaceful protestations amid the chaos of insurrectionist rioting are laughable. Hackneyed defenses and weak-kneed rebuttals of Trump's actions fall far short of the reality of the day.

Evidence from that day clearly show Trump calling for rallygoers to march to the Capitol to fight like hell to overturn the results of a free and fair election. There is no doubt a monthlong campaign of dishonesty orchestrated by Trump, surrounding the

question of election fraud, culminated with insurrection on Jan. 6.

These seditious acts against democratic normality will leave forever a lingering black stain on American democracy.

MITCH and DEBBIE GRAMSON
Astoria

History lesson

A history lesson recently unfolded in real time; the dramatic and graphic images we all saw, heard or read about were shocking. And sad to say, it occurred in our country. It was not a peaceful protest, it was an insurrection, i.e. a revolt against established authority, an uprising, mutiny, sedition.

Shame on those who participated in the deaths of five people; shame on those who destroyed public property and hurt those working to keep others safe.

Shame on those who condone these insurrectionists vandalizing and violating our nation's Capitol as Congress was carrying out "the people's business" of democracy. This is not patriotism, it can only be called a shameful act.

Something to keep in mind when consid-

ering these despicable actions: "Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." — Voltaire

LaREE JOHNSON
Astoria

Feeling pain

To those on the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board, I understand your decision not to open the Broadway Middle School, now vacant, as a shelter for the homeless, and I feel your pain in doing so.

Yes, there are people in Seaside who are homeless, huddling in doorways, under stairways and in makeshift tents, in temperatures in the 20s and 30s, in snow, ice and rain. But they are not your concern.

Sure, the middle school is vacant and could, at least during these cold weeks, provide them shelter, but this would only get in the way of a plethora of future possible uses. It's your job to look at the broader picture. It's not your job to look into the faces of Seaside's homeless, and to see their pain.

JULIA SNYDER
Astoria



"Look--we'll whistle when it's \$15 an hour."

KUPER
PoliticalCartoons.com