

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

Work group to examine Oregon chicken rules

For decades, I watched as legislators punted when a difficult issue defied resolution: They appointed a task force.

Ah, a task force! As if lawmakers had accomplished something instead of doing nothing.

Until the digital age arrived, all those let's-at-least-convene-a-task-forces were a boon to the bookshelf industry. The

resulting reports had to gather dust somewhere.

Purposeful task forces do have value. They come with all the trimmings of official legislatively decreed goals, membership, staffing and budgets.

However, in recent years, there's been a shift from sometimes-questionable task forces to informal work groups. Task forces can take months to formally create, have limited membership, and can cost \$10,000 to \$20,000 to staff and run. In contrast, work groups can be put together quickly at little or no cost and with whatever participation is deemed appropriate. The idea is to get divergent stakeholders together, try to work out key differences and agree as much as possible on legislation.

Work groups also have operated out of public view — a plus or minus depending on one's perspective. Some work groups succeeded brilliantly, such as recently finding common ground on housing legislation. Others failed famously, such as on mandatory overtime for farmworkers.

In the current interim between legislative sessions, a bunch of work groups are underway, along with various public task forces.

Another kind of work group also is unfolding this summer, with more of a fact-finding mission. It deals with chickens.

State Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ash-



A chicken on a ranch near Scio.

Brian Hayes/Statesman Journal

land, who chairs the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, announced the work group members in June and said they would examine the potential effects of large-scale poultry operations. The issues include water supply, air and water quality, impacts on neighbors and whether such facilities are

appropriate on high-value farmland.

Confined animal feeding operations — known as CAFOs — are controversial in Oregon, though most discussion has been around dairies. The proposed chicken CAFOs have now raised the hackles of neighbors, farmers and public officials. During Legislative Days in

June, Golden's committee and the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee held informational meetings to learn about such operations.

Millions of chicks could be coming to the mid-Willamette Valley each year. They would be raised in facilities built on undeveloped farmland and then sent to slaughter as fully grown chickens. One CAFO applicant has received initial approval from the Oregon Department of Agriculture but still has other conditions to meet.

Golden tapped Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, to lead the work group. Dembrow is such a believer in bringing contrasting people together to achieve good public policy that he's sometimes referred to as "Mr. Work Group" or "Mr. Task Force." He's involved in several at the moment, including a group he convened to address the shortage of educators.

The poultry work group won't create possible poultry legislation. Instead, it will assess the current regulations and laws affecting potential megaoperations and share that information with Golden's committee, which could use it to shape concepts for the 2023 Legislature. Such advance work may prevent unintended consequences if a bill becomes law.

"My job will be to make sure that we fully understand the existing rules and statutes, understand the different perspectives on where they may or may not be appropriate for the proposed poultry megaoperations, that we understand the potential impacts of any changes to them, and that all voices are heard," Dembrow said.

And unlike many work groups, this one will not operate behind closed doors. The public can watch the meetings, which will be online, and at one least session will be reserved for public comment.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hogwash

I must reply to Nello Picinich's letter ("Obfuscating," June 25) regarding the evils of gillnets. He states that the issue is not about recreational angling vs. commercial fishing, but about selective fishing. Hogwash.

Hooks are much less selective in the Columbia River than the gillnet. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries establishes the allowable kill of nonlocal wild and natural-spawn salmonids intermingled with hatchery and healthy wild stocks, under Endangered Species Act standards. Between 70% and 80% of those fish, depending upon the stock, have been assigned by the states to the sport fishery.

Despite the fact that recreational fishery has by far the most fish and allowable fish kills assigned to it, it frequently overshoots its quota of wild fish kills. Gillnetting continues on the main stem Columbia because no other gear meets both ESA standards and is economically viable. In 2012, Oregon and Washington reallocated main stem fisheries to the recreational sector, and select area fisheries to the commercial sector.

At that time, promises were made to the commercial fishery, including more select areas, plus substantially increased production, neither of which occurred. The main stem fishery still comprises about 40% of the industry income.

A balance of recreational fishing and commercial fishing provides fish for sports fishers, a relatively small group, and the fish-consuming public, a much larger population. Picinich's desire for a sport fishery that takes the entire allowable catch is an example of the urban view of how the rural-urban divide affects Washington and Oregon, right in our own communities.

KENT MARTIN
Skamokawa, Washington

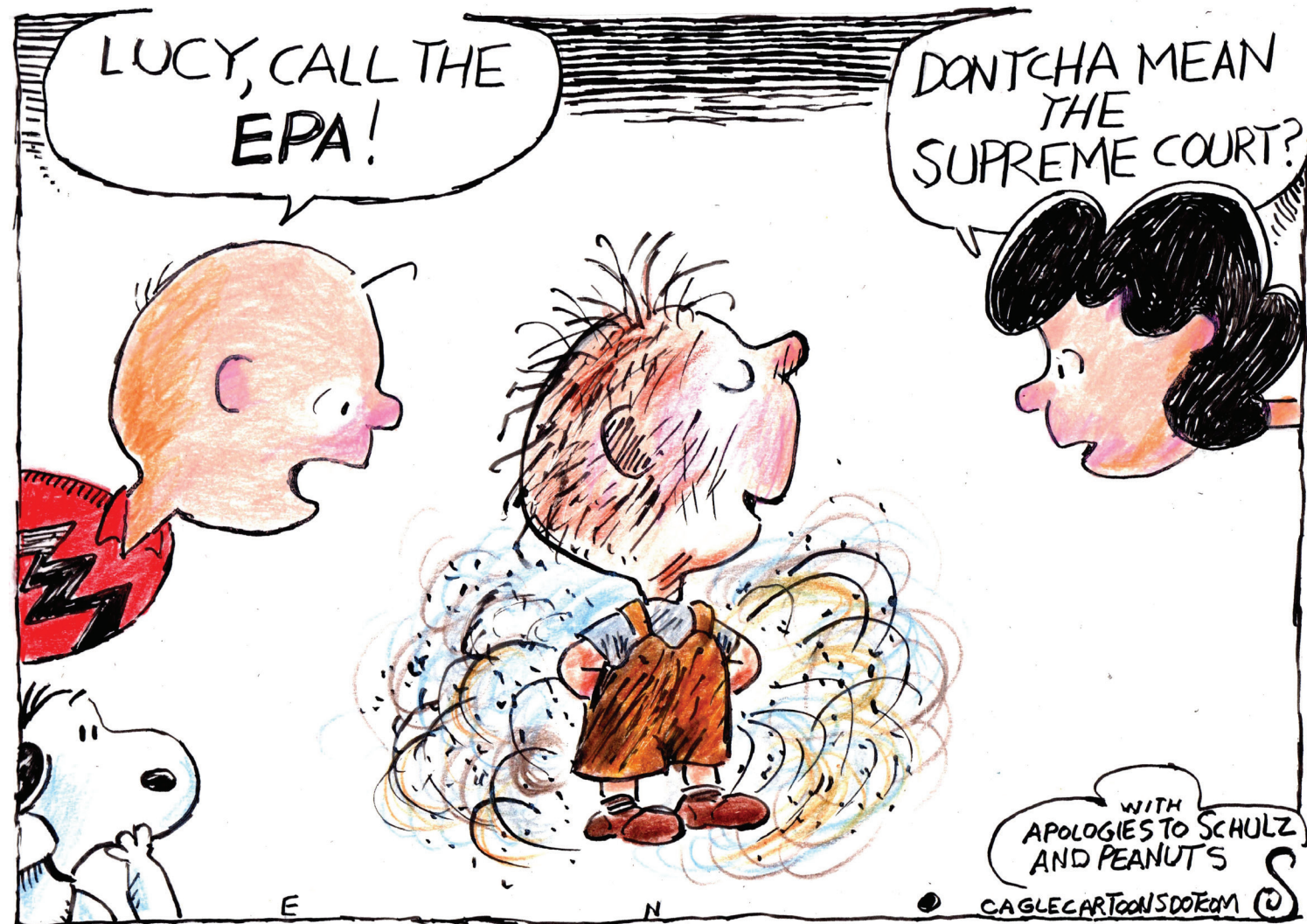
Choices

The world is going to hell in a handbasket. I remember thinking that was a strange thing to say when I was a child, but now I get it. In the massive greed, our rights being violated, the cost of everything from food to gas to just living, the homeless in our town — the list is long.

How are we, as a community, going to tackle these issues without stepping back and looking at history, and not making the same mistakes over and over again!

Let's take just one problem: the homeless. It breaks my heart and many others' to see the plight of the homeless.

It is time to revisit the decision to close



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

mental health hospitals and spend the money, the time and the energy to reopen those hospitals and give the mentally ill the help they need. Why has our humanity diminished so much that we can't see that as the very first step?

We have to look at each issue one at a time, and work together to make good changes and good choices.

Do I support my community and buy all of my goods right here in my town? These are the kinds of choices we can make that will make a difference.

If we all do our best, and work together, we can make this world a better place

without violence. Choose love; love always wins in the end.

MARY HADREAS
Astoria

Browser's beware

You might be a browser like me. I love browsing my way through City Lumber, Homespun Quilts and garden stores. Sad to say, though, the proposed remodeled Astoria Library will no longer be a haven for book browsers like me, and many of you.

The current plan, originally presented several years ago at public meetings, is that most books will be in closed stacks, off-limits to patrons. After you request a specific book, a staff member will get it from the closed stacks.

This won't work for me. Since childhood, I've picked nearly all my books by chance as I've roamed the stacks. I've rarely gone to the library with a specific title in mind.

Mayor Bruce Jones described the proposed remodel in the June 23 Astorian: "It's a place for people to convene, hear presentations, to hear music, to study, to do job applications, to do all kinds of learning and tutoring. A library could be a great community gathering space if it has the right amenities and the right functionality." Not a word about books.

The shift to a new-style facility is underway. City staff are getting rid of books to make room for the remodel. I hope the plans will change before the November bond election to include more books, more open stacks and browsing.

If not, then I ask the city to acknowledge that this bond issue is to finance a community center, not a library.

Laurie Caplan
Astoria