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**OUR VIEW**

# Big issues in short session

Oregon's third short session kicks off Monday, and it will be an important one for the state.

It will also be just 35 days long, by voter mandate, so the important work that needs to get done will be under the gun right from the start. So, too, will be the entire concept of the short session.

Oregon has only had these special sessions biennially since 2010. That was the year that Measure 71, a legislatively referred constitutional amendment, passed with 68 percent of the popular vote. The measure called for changing Oregon's every-other-year legislature into an annual one, but with a short session in even-numbered years.

Proponents argued that the state was just too complex and too large an organization to leave unmoored for a full calendar year, and they convinced the electorate on that issue.

But they also promised that these short sessions would be limited in scope. They would just be used just to check in on the economy and emergencies, and make changes to the state budget — even cut checks for residents in the case of a surplus.

This special session will be much more than that.

Legislators have the intensely controversial, economically and socially impactful discussion of the significant hike to minimum wage at the forefront. If nothing gets done this session, the blunt instrument of an initiative is sure to pass — long term effects be damned.

Of course, that may happen anyway. But the best chance of rural

Oregon getting a fair shake will be through the legislature.

Yet if that's not enough, bills will be pushed forward to restrict gun sales, deal with the state's housing crisis and — if there's still time — stop a little thing called global warming.

Good luck with that, Salem. Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena) has a narrower focus on two bills he hopes to get passed next month.

He told the editorial board before he ventured cross state that he intends to use the first of his two allotted bills to reaffirm the delisting of the wolf. He said if the legislature renews its support for the Oregon Wolf Plan and the decision of the citizen board to delist, it may give it more weight in the courts, where it is sure to head because of environmentalists. Rep. Greg Barreto (R-Cove) will likely be working through the house on the same issue.

Hansell's other bill has to deal with water requirements for homeowner associations when a municipality is in a designated drought. When that's the case, Hansell wants to allow state law to supersede homeowner association agreements, which could help reduce water usage during emergencies.

If issues big and small get dealt with in a professional manner during this type of time crunch, maybe the short session is working. If legislation is rushed, debate hurried and there is little to show for it, then Oregon may have to rethink the purpose and usefulness of the short session.

**In only 35 days, legislators have a lot to discuss.**

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

**YOUR VIEWS**

**Plute's actions harm residents on fixed income**

Well, the petition has not even been approved yet, and already it is a "cheap shot" and backed by "cowards and bullies."

Al Plute claims in so many words I am a coward and a bully but doesn't know me. I suppose with that train of thought anyone who signs the petition is a coward because they did not go to the city council meetings.

A few years ago I did attend council meetings when there was the grand plan to beautify downtown Pendleton. I heard a lot of hindering of some real import, as in the sidewalks were ten feet wide when in reality they were 12 feet. Typical of most politicians to attack and marginalize because they believe they are more intelligent than you and they hold a position of power.

That power came from me, Councilmen Plute. I helped vote you into office. You have been a big disappointment because what I and others see is what you have done is to improve yourself and use the cliché of helping Pendleton as profit for yourself.

I did hear you say you wanted to turn Pendleton into a retirement community. Forty-nine percent of the people in Pendleton are on some kind of assistance that includes Social Security. So the water rate goes up an extra \$5 dollars a month, for which no vote was needed by the people.

I suspect the city council felt the gas tax would not pass and knew that they could approve the \$5.

Councilman Plute, if the petition is approved and the "cowards and bullies" sign it with enough signatures will we still be "cowards and bullies?"

If there are not enough signatures then we lose nothing except time and energy and you can crow how shrewd

and clever you are, that we are losers and your superiority trumped us.

**Roesch Kishpaugh**  
Pendleton

**Ranchers deserve more respect and gratitude**

Your heartfelt editorial about the Malheur Refuge standoff was excellent.

I'm not sure I'd be as conciliatory on the subject of land management. On Jan. 5, just a few days after the occupation commenced, Rep. Greg Walden made utter mincemeat out of the BLM on the House floor. It was a sad, eloquent, and truly magnificent speech, yet I have seen no discussion in the wider media of anything he said. Anyone who hasn't read it should find it, and you'll see what I mean.

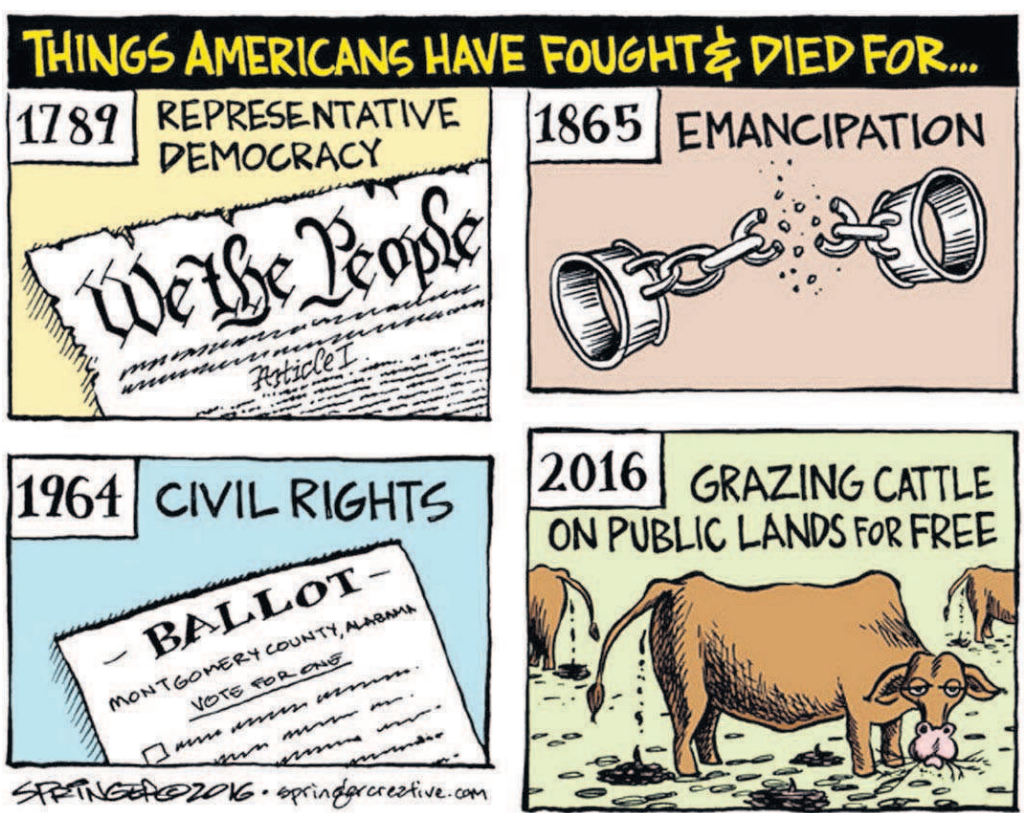
There is a big problem: The people in these sparsely populated, far-flung counties are resolutely ignored. And now that the "standoff" looks like it's over, they'll keep being ignored. That's just wrong. Something needs to change.

Something else: I might live in Seattle but I breathe in Eastern Oregon, which puts the beautiful in "America the Beautiful." I like to tell friends that the high desert's not for everyone, but if you like it you will more than like it.

I love that land in ways that my words cannot capture. I also have a great affection and deep appreciation for the ranchers, a group of people who I think deserve a good deal more respect and gratitude than they get.

As far as I'm concerned, we are all in this together. Damn close to the top my list are the hard-working cattlemen and their families. Someone ought to say it, so I will: Thank you for feeding us so well. Beef is what's for dinner, and ranchers' lives matter.

**Charles Pluckhahn**  
Seattle



**OTHER VIEWS**

## What Republicans should say

For a few decades, American and British conservatism marched in tandem. Thatcher was philosophically akin to Reagan. John Major was akin to George Bush.

But now the two conservatisms have split. The key divide is over what to do about the slow-motion devastation being felt by the less educated, the working class and the poor.

Ted Cruz and Donald Trump have appealed to working-class voters mostly by blaming outsiders. If we could kick out all the immigrants there wouldn't be lawbreakers driving down wages. If we could dismantle the Washington cartel the economy would rise.

In Britain David Cameron is going down another path. This month he gave a speech called "Life Chances." Not to give away the ending or anything, but I'd give a lung to have a Republican politician give a speech like that in this country.

First, he defined the role of government: basic security. In a world full of risks, government can help furnish a secure base from which people can work, dream and rise.

Cameron argued that both sides in the debate over poverty suffered real limitations because they still used 20th-century thinking. The left has traditionally wanted to use the state to redistribute money downward. The right has traditionally relied on the market to generate the growth that lifts all boats.

The welfare state and the market are important, but, he argues, "talk to a single mum on a poverty-stricken estate, someone who suffers from chronic depression, someone who perhaps drinks all day to numb the pain of the sexual abuse she suffered as a child. Tell her that because her benefits have risen by a couple of pounds a week, she and her children have been magically lifted out of poverty. Or on the other hand, if you told her about the great opportunities created by our market economy, I expect she'll ask you what planet you're actually on."

Cameron called for a more social approach. He believes government can play a role in rebuilding social capital and in healing some of the traumas fueled by scarcity and family breakdown.

He laid out a broad agenda: Strengthen family bonds with shared parental leave and a tax code that rewards marriage. Widen opportunities for free marital counseling. Speed up the adoption process. Create a voucher program for parenting classes. Expand the Troubled Families program by 400,000 slots. This program spends 4,000 pounds (about \$5,700) per family over three years and uses family coaches to help heal the most disrupted households.

Cameron would also create "character



**DAVID BROOKS**  
Comment

modules" for schools, so that there are intentional programs that teach resilience, curiosity, honesty and service. He would expand the National Citizen Service so that by 2021 60 percent of the nation's 16-year-olds are performing national service, and meeting others from across society. He wants to create a program to recruit 25,000 mentors to work with young teenagers.

To address concentrated poverty, he would replace or revamp 100 public housing projects across the country. He would invest big sums in mental health programs and create a social impact fund to unlock millions for new drug and alcohol treatment.

It's an agenda that covers the entire life cycle, aiming to give people the strength and social resources to stand on their own. In the U.S. we could use exactly this sort of agenda. There is an epidemic of isolation, addiction and trauma.

According to an AARP survey, one-third of adults over 45 report being chronically lonely. Drug

overdose deaths of people ages 45 to 64 increased elevenfold between 1990 and 2010. More than half the American births to women under 30 are outside marriage. Poorer parents are too strained and stressed to spend as much quality time raising their kids. According to the sociologist Robert Putnam, college-educated parents spend 50 percent more "Goodnight Moon" time with their kids than less-educated parents.

Meanwhile social support systems are fraying, especially for those without a college degree. Religious affiliation is plummeting. Since 1990 the number of people who declare no religious preference has tripled. Social trust is declining. Only 18 percent of high school seniors say that most people can be trusted.

There are two natural approaches to help those who are falling behind. The first we'll call the Bernie Sanders approach. Focus on economics. Provide people with money and jobs and their lifestyles will become more stable. Marriage rates will rise. Depression rates will drop.

The second should be the conservative approach. Focus on social norms, community bonds and a nurturing civic fabric. People need relationships and basic security before they can respond to economic incentives.

But Republicans have walked away from their traditional Burkean turf. The two leading Republican presidential candidates offer little more than nativism and demagoguery.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, and a contributing editor at Newsweek and the Atlantic Monthly.



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