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OUR VIEW

In Salem, both parties found way to support pay equity

Oregon is setting a national example for ensuring that employees are paid equally for performing equal work.

In doing so, Oregon also has shown how Democrats and Republicans can work together. And it happened because of the 2017 Legislature's struggles on an unrelated issue — curbing the soaring costs of the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System.

House Bill 2005, known as the Oregon Equal Pay Act of 2017, outlaws wage discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, veteran status and other protected classes. It allows different pay levels for equivalent work if the disparity is because of bona fide factors such as merit, seniority and quality of a person's work. And it bars employers from asking for job applicants' salary history before offering a job. That matters because women often have been paid less in the past, and using salary history for a new job can perpetuate that disparity.

The bill, which Gov. Kate Brown plans to sign into law next week, combines enforcement and education. It encourages employers to examine the internal equity of their wages, provides them with legal protections for doing so, but expands penalties for employers who willfully discriminate. The bill initially was so divisive that it passed the state House in late March on a party-line vote after Republicans narrowly failed to substitute their own version. Yet the final version unanimously passed both the Senate and this week the House.

How could this be? It stems from good-hearted people being willing to listen, make compromises and not fall victim to ideology. Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, gives broad autonomy to his committee chairs instead of ordering them what to do. He also has a knack for pairing the right people

to lead committees, which is where most of the Oregon Legislature's work gets done. Kathleen Taylor, a first-term Democratic senator from Milwaukie, and experienced Republican Sen. Tim Knopp, of Bend, did not know each other well before Courtney appointed them to the Senate Workforce Committee.

But chair Taylor and vice chair Knopp developed a collaborative trust and respect as they worked this year on PERS and other issues. Under the Legislature's deadlines, they ran out of time to resolve PERS, which they shipped off to the legislative budget

committee for more work. Pay equity is a priority for Taylor, and Courtney asked Knopp to work with her on it. Republican Sen. Bill Hansell of Athena, a member of the Workforce Committee, said Taylor's leadership and Knopp's collaboration were crucial. Little by little, the committee reshaped the measure from a bad bill into a good bill. The working relationship between Taylor and Knopp was personified by her giving the opening argument for the bill on the Senate floor and his giving the closing argument, Hansell said.

In the House, the bill had elicited considerable rancor. In the Senate, all sides got their say, as negotiations started by finding common ground. Senators talked with House members about their concerns. Misunderstandings and miscommunications were resolved. Blowups and hiccups happened, but no one was willing to walk away from the negotiating table.

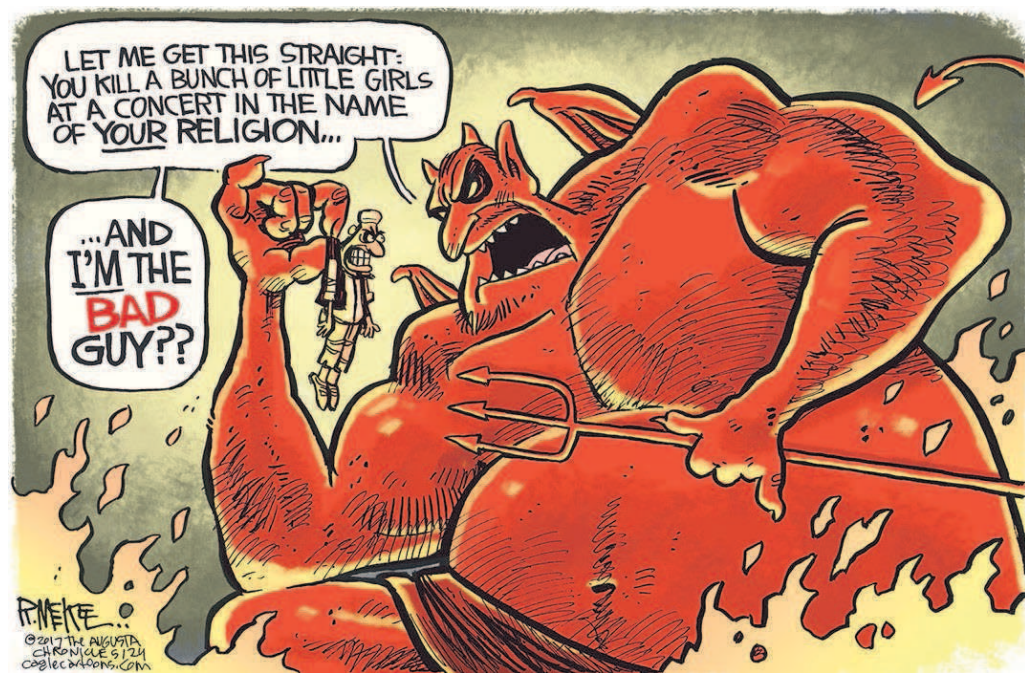
Seeking perfect legislation can be the barrier to achieving good legislation. On the pay equity bill, business and labor — Republicans and Democrats — were largely satisfied that the final version was both effective and reasonable. Oregon can be proud of its equal-pay legislation. And equally proud of its legislators, starting with Sens. Taylor and Knopp.

The bill bars employers from asking for applicants' salary history before offering a job.

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.

LETTERS POLICY

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OTHER VIEWS

At this rate, it won't matter if Trump colluded with Russia

Throughout the Trump-Russia investigation, the core question — the question that mattered above all others — was whether President Trump or his associates colluded with Russia to try to influence the 2016 election. If there were proof of that, the effect on Trump's presidency would have been devastating, and possibly fatal.

The problem, for the confederation of Democrats, pundits, Obama holdovers and NeverTrumpers who hoped to see that result, has been that so far, after a lot of investigating, no evidence has emerged that collusion actually occurred. Although they allowed that previously unknown proof could always emerge, last week some of the lawmakers most deeply involved in the investigation, and most closely in touch with the intelligence community working on the probe, conceded that there appeared to be no there there.

That was then. Now, rather than focusing on alleged collusion, the thrust of leaks in recent days has been directed almost exclusively toward building a case of obstruction of justice against the president, charging that he actively tried to derail the investigation into his campaign and his associates. More and more, day after day, Trump's adversaries believe that, when it comes to bringing down the president, it might not matter if collusion occurred or not. A cover-up would be enough to do the job.

The Trump-Russia case could become the ultimate illustration of the old Washington saying that it's not the crime, it's the cover-up. In this case, there might be no underlying crime at all.

The latest story in the cover-up timeline broke Monday night in the *Washington Post*. Citing current and former officials, the paper reported that Trump called the Director of National Intelligence and the head of the National Security Agency to enlist their help to "push back" against the FBI investigation and to "publicly deny the existence of any evidence of collusion during the 2016 election."

Before that came a spate of reports and developments, all arising out of Trump's May 9 firing of FBI Director James Comey.

First, the White House portrayed the firing as 1) not Trump's doing, and 2) not related to the Russia investigation.

Then Trump told NBC's Lester Holt that he had in fact decided to fire Comey because "this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story."

Then, with accusations of obstruction in the air, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed a special counsel to investigate the Russia affair. Rosenstein specifically gave that prosecutor, former FBI Director Robert Mueller, authority to pursue any "federal crimes arising from the investigation" and specifically referenced 28 CFR 600.4(a), which is the part of the Code of Federal Regulations dealing with special counsels



BYRON YORK
Comment

and obstruction: "The jurisdiction of a Special Counsel shall also include the authority to investigate and prosecute federal crimes committed in the course of, and with intent to interfere with, the Special Counsel's investigation, such as perjury, obstruction of justice, destruction of evidence, and intimidation of witnesses; and to conduct appeals arising out of the matter being investigated and/or prosecuted."

Then *The New York Times* reported that Comey wrote contemporaneous memos of his interactions with the president, and that during one of those interactions Trump asked Comey to drop the investigation into fired national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Then the *Times* reported Trump, in an Oval Office meeting, bragged to Russia's foreign minister and ambassador to the U.S. that firing Comey relieved Trump of "great pressure" in the Russia investigation.

As each revelation came, there was more talk of obstruction. (A Google search of "Trump" and "obstruction of justice" Monday night drew 597,000 hits.) Democrat after Democrat suggested Trump might have engaged in obstruction, while the list of Democrats calling for impeachment grew long enough for party leaders to worry about the situation escalating too soon. The newest stories will do nothing to slow things down, even with the president on a foreign trip.

Before Trump fired Comey, a likely conclusion of the Russia affair was coming into view. Flynn would be in trouble for his connections to Turkey and possible violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Former Trump campaign head Paul Manafort would be in trouble for some sort of sleazy business dealing in Ukraine. Maybe another figure or two from TrumpWorld would get into trouble, as well, but in ways tangential to the investigation. There would be scalps for Democrats to celebrate, but the most consequential issue — collusion — would end in nothing.

That was before Comey was sacked. Now, the investigation has taken what is for Trump a more ominous turn. Focusing on alleged obstruction, the president's enemies no longer have to find an underlying crime to attempt to remove him from office.

All the while, some Republicans have found themselves asking over and over: But what about collusion? Remember that? If there's no crime at the bottom of the Russia affair, then isn't all of this just much ado about nothing?

The answer is no. Certainly Trump has good arguments to make in his defense, beginning with what legally constitutes obstruction. But after the last two weeks, his supporters can no longer assume that his detractors will have to find an underlying crime to make big trouble for the president.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

YOUR VIEWS

City of Echo bullying resident to condemn his land

I read with interest the *East Oregonian* article concerning the city of Echo taking Michael Yunker's property by condemnation for a water treatment facility. In a letter the city indicated that it would be better for him to voluntarily sell, so the city did not have to handle the situation in the most expensive and least neighborly way. How could that possibly be better for him? It appears the city feels that condemning the property is the least neighborly way to handle the situation.

City manager Diane Berry stated that the proposed project would only encompass a "small piece" of the field. The ranch is 65 acres, of which 14 is the river, leaving 51 usable acres. That is 19.6 percent of the ranch. That is not a small piece.

The city of Echo was advised by Oregon DEQ 10 years ago that they would have to upgrade the sewer system. They have received six extensions to an agreement with DEQ in that 10 years. What has the city done to pursue other viable alternatives to locate and upgrade the sewer system? Ten years is more than sufficient time to find funding and viable alternatives.

Mayor Jeanie Hampton stated that she felt Echo residents would understand the city's decision to pursue Mr. Yunker's land. Did you ask them in an open forum or is this an assumption?

When Mr. Yunker asked to voice his

concerns of the condemnation at a city council meeting, he was told he had to read a letter of concern to the council in a closed door executive session. Why?

These concerns should lead a reasonable person to question what the city of Echo's motives are for condemning private property. And yes, I am Mr. Yunker's brother. Regardless of that fact, these are questions that should be publicly addressed and sufficiently answered based on reasonable facts.

D. Yunker, (Michael Yunker's brother)
Central Oregon

Don't make God responsible for Trump's election

I can just see God now. St. Peter tapped him on the shoulder and handed him the *East Oregonian* containing the Ron Ingle letter giving Him credit (blame?) for the Donald Trump farce of a presidency. Did he chuckle, frown or puke at the thought of being dragged into our cesspool known as U.S. politics?

The incredibly naive and hypocritical religious right in this country are beyond the realms of common sense in embracing the con man now occupying the White House. I can imagine if Larry Flynt, the publisher of *Hustler* magazine, came out and said he was pro life, the evangelicals in this country would fall all over themselves to nominate him for president and disregard

every decadent thing he had ever done up until now. My apologies to Larry Flynt for comparing him to Trump.

Hopefully this latest scandal concerning Comey will finally be Trump's undoing. Don't be one of Trump's chumps. Wake up! You've been conned.

David Gracia
Hermiston

More takeaways from Pendleton drone industry

The op-ed I wrote for Saturday's *East Oregonian* ("Drone range a development opportunity") went through considerable editing after submission. Verbose writing is a risk when a former editorial writer like me does a guest column. There are four more aspects of drones I would like to note.

The U.S. Department of Energy and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (outgrowth of Battelle Northwest, in the Tri-Cities) has worked since the 1980s on aviation and atmospheric testing related to aerosoles and depletion of the ozone layer. It is that work that drew attention to the Pendleton airport as a test range possibility for drones. A recent open house at the airport featured roll-out of a monoplane with a 10 foot wingspan called the Tiger Shark and piloted from a ground control station.

Besides atmospheric testing, another productive use of drones under consideration is to provide more detailed information

on, say, levels of moisture and nutrients on cropland. With grant money, a program called Oregon UAS Future Farm has been created by two men to promote drone use to growers. The two are Jeff Lorton, an economic development specialist who has moved here from Yamhill County, and Young Kim, CEO of Virginia-based Digital Harvest, which focuses on using unmanned aerial systems in ag. Digital Harvest and Yamaha have contact facilities and equipment at the Pendleton airport. Lorton said Future Farm seeks to integrate drones into ag through demonstrations to local crop producers. He said he would like to see Gov. Kate Brown name a small group of Oregonians to form strategy to promote drone use in farming and forestry.

The fact that the Pendleton airport has a tower and a variety of activity — commercial flights, National Guard helicopters, medical rescue aircraft, crop dusters, fixed base operators — has earned the airport a reputation for helpfulness and dependability among officials from the FAA and elsewhere.

Key personnel who have been working to promote the Pendleton Test Range: Darryl Abling, range manager, 541-966-0281; Jeff Lorton, liaison between the drone industry and agriculture, 503-989-6933; and Steve Chrisman, airport manager and economic development director for Pendleton, 541-276-7754.

Mike Forrester
Pendleton