

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

A short, civil session

For much of Oregon's history, a biennial legislative session was enough to attend to the matters of the state. Every odd year, elected representatives, lobbyists and citizens would meet at the Capitol to debate and enact law while developing and approving a budget.

In 2010, voters approved a Senate resolution to create a 35-day special session in even years with the explicit purpose of making necessary adjustments to the budget or addressing unforeseen consequences of previously passed legislation.

So here we are, two weeks away from the fourth such "short session" in state history — and a politically fraught one at that. While the U.S. Congress can't figure out whether shutting down the federal government is an acceptable way to settle a dispute or not, citizens are feeling an ever stronger push toward one partisan camp or another.

Meanwhile it's an election year in Oregon, with Gov. Kate Brown campaigning for her first full term and Rep. Knute Buehler leading the field of Republicans looking to challenge her. While much of our political energy is spent watching D.C., Oregon state politics is at a crossroads of a kind in 2018. Next month's short session will mark the first few steps down that road.

So what should we expect of our elected leaders in Salem this February? Here are a few pointers.

• Bipartisan or bust

While debating new rules and laws during a full session requires a fair amount of posturing, party line toeing and negotiation, we feel that should be set aside in the short session.

A legislative committee convened in 2017 to examine how the sessions have been functioning since 2012 and made the suggestion that any bill should be required to be sponsored by a representative of both parties to be considered. The concept wasn't enacted, but we think it's a good one and should be followed.

It makes us nervous to see a list of goals including a Clean Energy Jobs Bill and gun regulations coming before a body with just over a month to debate and enact law. We've previously written that the pursuit of meaningful PERS reform this session is doubtful, but while politically difficult it would at least meet the principal of why these short sessions exist in the first place: Taking action early so that future budget problems don't spiral out of control.

• Deal with Measure 101 fallout

Oregon voters will decide Tuesday how they feel about the Medicaid



funding tax on Measure 101, which will have a major effect on how legislators will spend their in-session time. If the temporary health care taxes are approved by voters, it's a tip to legislators that voters remain supportive of their work, and that health insurance for all Oregonians is something we're willing to pay a little extra for. However, if the measure fails, legislators will be sent scrambling back to the Capitol with some difficult decisions to make. Money will have to be found, or cuts will have to be made. More than likely, it'll require some of each.

• No politics

Gov. Kate Brown is Oregon's top government official, so she should be able to guide legislative action during the 30 days.

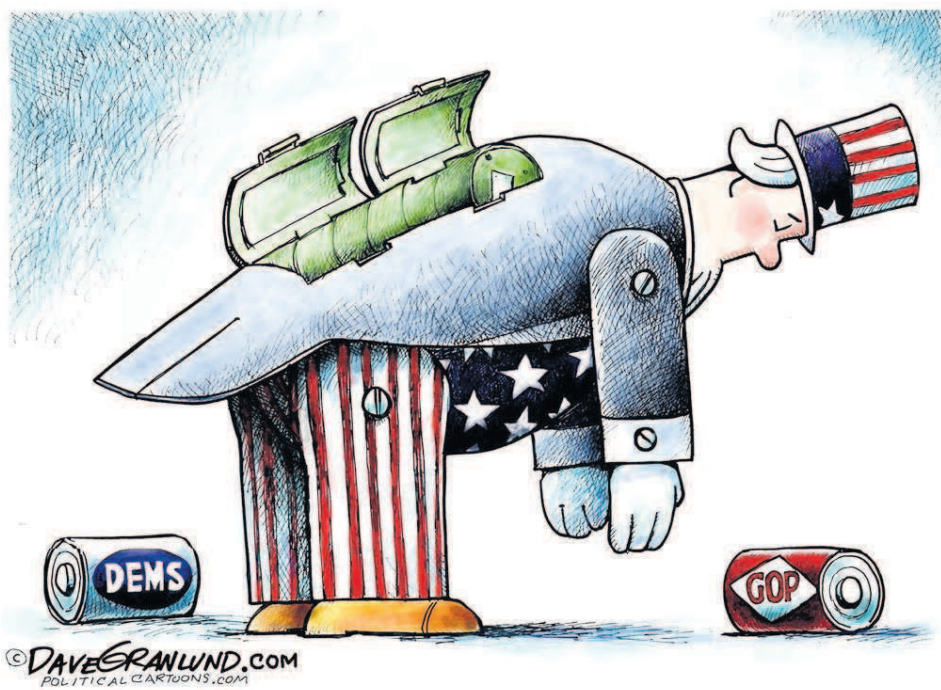
She told the *EO's* Capital Bureau

reporter this month that she hoped to tackle gun control, affordable housing, PERS paydown, opioid epidemic and state procurement practices. We're not sure how many, if any, of those are possible, and the likelihood goes down if Measure 101 goes down, too.

But we're sure that Brown and Democratic lawmakers will try to hang some tough votes on likely Republican challenger Knute Buehler.

The same rules stand for Buehler and the Republicans, too — who will likely look to the session as a chance to gather ammunition to use against Brown.

All is fair in love and war, but we hope the politicking is kept to a minimum and that for these 30 days legislators keep their eye on what's best for Oregon. Once it's over, then we can let the campaigning begin.



YOUR VIEWS

Measure 101 best way to keep Oregonians insured

There was a great health care success story in Oregon in 2014, when 360,000 Oregonians received health care for the first time under the Medicare expansion of the Affordable Care Act. That incredible surge brought the percentage of Oregonians with health insurance up to nearly 95 percent — an incredible number.

Why should people who get insurance through their employment care? Why should hospitals? Why should insurance companies themselves? Easy. It is a lot more cost effective and efficient to provide health care to people who are insured. The uninsured will still receive healthcare, only it will be in the very expensive emergency room and will have to be written off as charity by the hospitals. So who pays? Everyone who has insurance will ultimately bear the cost through increased premiums.

While Measure 101 is not perfect, there is no better solution waiting in the wings, and under 101 Oregon will continue to have one of the highest levels of insured individuals in the nation. That is definitely worth a yes vote.

John Scanlan
Pendleton

The road not taken

The good city folks of Pendleton dodge and decry when they have no choice but to drive its pock-marked streets.

My good country neighbors and I look when two roads diverge and are left to take the road less traveled.

(Apologies to Robert Frost.)

Don Reese
Echo

Pendleton needs men's clothing stores and car lots

In Wednesday's paper there was a big writeup on what the city had accomplished in 2017 and it got me to thinking. What

does Pendleton need to bring it back to life besides more housing? Well here's my list, and I think it's a good one:

Growing up in Pendleton we had two menswear stores besides Hamley's and The New York Store, now we have none. Businessmen have to go out of town for a suit or even a dress shirt. We also had many womenswear stores including JC Penny, The Bon Marche (now Macy's) Mode O'Day (now Fashion Bug, I think), The Frances Shop, Dawn's, Lucille's and Sidney's Pink Poodle, and now we have nothing but Maurices and Walmart, neither of which sell business attire for women.

We also had six car dealerships, not including Ray Fane who sold imports like Toyota, Vauxhalls and others foreign cars, and now we have none. We have a perfectly good building on the corner of 10th and Dorion for a car dealer to move into that has a shop space and showroom space already built. We also have another building sitting empty on Southeast Court that was built as a car dealership that is available to buy, and it even has a detail shop and a body and fender shop.

What about approaching Legacy out of La Grande about putting in a Ford dealership selling new and used Fords, or find a GMC dealership who has this area to put in GMC, Chevrolet and Buick in so that people who live in Pendleton can spend their car buying money in Pendleton instead of going to Walla Walla or the Tri-Cities?

I don't think that it is out of line to propose that a citizens committee be formed to explore the possibilities of getting some of these businesses back in Pendleton and make Pendleton the place to shop rather than it being the place where there is nothing to buy. I am willing to work on that committee and I am willing to bet that there are others out there that are, too. We need to bring Pendleton back to the vibrant business community it was in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and now is prime time to get the ball rolling.

Barbara Ann Wright
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

The mad king flies his flag

The emperor of the outdoors rode into town on a horse named Tonto, and soon demanded that his own special flag fly outside his headquarters whenever he was in Washington. He believes fracking is proof that "God loves us" and, despite being from Montana, doesn't know how to properly set up his fly line when fishing in front of the cameras.

"He had rigged his reel backward," Elliott D. Woods wrote of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in a wonderful profile in *Outside Magazine*. "Seems like an inconsequential thing, but in Montana, it's everything."

As it turned out, it was quite consequential. When the magazine next tried to dial into an Interior conference call, it was denied access.

You may think that Stormy Daniels is in charge of the natural world under Donald Trump. And yes, the boorish behavior of the president and the porn star makes for better reading than an account of the quack running Interior. But if someone were trashing your house, you'd want to pay attention. And Trump, using the very strange Zinke, is going after the sacred foundations of America's much-loved public lands, brick by brick.

Zinke has been called the Gulfstream Cowboy for his love of using charter planes to fly off to the nesting grounds of wealthy donors. But he's more like a mad king. And this monarch has control over the crown jewels of America's public land. They are not in safe hands.

Last month, the secretary attacked Patagonia, the outdoor retailer, after it protested the largest rollback of public land protection in our history with a website home page of a black screen and stark message: "The President Stole Your Land."

It is your land, all 400 million acres of it, though you wouldn't know by the way the Trump administration has ceded control to the private predators from the oil, gas, coal and uranium industries.

It is also your water, the near entirety of the outer continental shelf that Trump is opening to extractive drilling. Almost a dozen states have protested. The waters off the coast of Mar-a-Lago, in Florida, were given an exemption after Zinke met with the governor who said drilling was bad for tourism. Your public servant at work.

Zinke is upending a century of bipartisan values as part of a Trumpian culture war. When asked why the president shrank national monuments in the Southwest by 2 million acres, Zinke said it was a way to strike back against "an elitist sort of hunter and fisherman." Huh?

Could this be the same regular guy who

TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

took a helicopter to ride horses with Mike Pence? The Cabinet member who wants to charge \$70 to get into our most iconic national parks? The man whose nomination was championed by Donald Trump Jr., elephant killer and dictionary definition of elite hunter and fisherman?

Defenders of public land have pushed back. This week, a majority of the nonpartisan National Park Service advisory panel resigned in frustration. The board, federally chartered to help guide the service, said Zinke had refused to convene a single meeting with them last year. Silly bird-lovers. Don't they know you need to charter a plane for Zinke if you want to get his attention?

A much less-connected group, the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, responded with an essay from a board

member who lives in a 500-square-foot abode in the Rocky Mountains. "We hunt, gather, garden, can, smoke, dry, jelly and pickle as much of our own food as we can," wrote Tom Healy. "According to Mr. Secretary, I am an elitist."

The writer is from Whitefish, Zinke's hometown in Montana. Where have you heard that before? Ah, yes, a tiny energy company from Whitefish with two

employees — three if you count Zinke's kid when he was an intern on a side project — snagged a \$300 million, no-audit, no-bid contract to help rebuild Puerto Rico's electric grid. Zinke said he had absolutely, positively nothing to do with it.

Look, it could have been worse: Sarah Palin was an early favorite for interior secretary. Zinke is an ex-Navy SEAL, and looks the part. Enough nutty things come out of his mouth to make him a perfect Trump guy. "The government stops at the mailbox," he said at a rally last year, "and if you come any further, you're going to meet my gun." Note to Mr. Secretary: Don't shoot the sheriff, or the census taker.

It took a bribery scandal to bring down an Interior secretary in the Teapot Dome affair of the 1920s. Today, the corruption is all upfront. Energy Secretary Rick Perry gives bear hugs to coal barons, while doing all he can to have the government prop up their industry. The Environmental Protection Agency is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the polluters it is supposed to regulate.

Over at Interior, they haven't yet figured a way to charge Americans for the air we breathe. But the next time Zinke's flag is up, something may be in the works.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the *National Northwest correspondent*, then as a *national enterprise reporter*.