

EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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OTHER VIEWS

Scrap the hail Mary

Medford Mail Tribune

Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek pulled out a Super Bowl analogy in calling for lawmakers to push ahead with an ambitious carbon tax proposal despite the brief 35-day legislative session.

The Legislature, she said, is like the New England Patriots, famous for quickly scoring points when time is short.

"We're going to work hard on the field, and we're going to get that ball across the goal line," Kotek said.

The analogy falls apart, however, when you realize that the House and the Senate, while both under Democratic control, are operating with different playbooks.

Senate President Peter Courtney and Majority Leader Ginny Burdick suggested holding off on passing the cap-and-invest legislation known as the Clean Energy Jobs Bill until the full-length 2019 session. They have a point.

The bill would set a cap on greenhouse gas pollution statewide that would decrease every year, and establish a price for every ton of emissions. The state's biggest polluters — energy utilities, fossil-fuel corporations — would be required to hold allowances for each ton

they emit, by reducing their emissions below the cap, purchasing or trading for allowances or arranging for offsets. The proceeds, estimated at \$700 million a year, would be spent to promote clean energy projects, train workers and provide utility bill relief.

That's not necessarily a bad idea, but it's complex legislation to push through in 35 days, and it's not the only major initiative on the table. Lawmakers also have vowed to tackle health care reform, gun control, state employee retirement changes, bond funding for Oregon State University's Cascades campus in Bend. All in a short session originally designed to make budget adjustments and other tweaks that couldn't wait for the next long session.

Supporters of the Clean Energy Jobs Bill worked throughout the 2017 session putting it together, and have worked since to drum up support. But without a buy-in from Senate Democratic leaders on a push to pass it this session, it could stall. It also would go back on a deal made with voters when short sessions were added in 2010.

For years, Oregon did its legislative business only in odd-numbered years, passing a two-year budget and wrangling



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Steam rises from KapStone Kraft Paper Corporation in Longview.

over everything else in marathon sessions that sometimes stretched for more than six months. Courtney was among those lawmakers who urged voters to allow annual sessions to help the Legislature be more efficient. The measure that passed capped short sessions at 35 calendar days and long sessions at 160 days.

This year, it's possible the Legislature could face a budget shortfall of \$200 million to \$300 million because of the federal tax reform bill passed by Congress, but state economists have yet to predict precise figures. If that's the case,

that should be lawmakers' top priority, and balancing the budget could get in the way of many items on the wish list.

Courtney has said Clean Energy Jobs should pass in 2019, and vowed not to wait any longer than that, but he fears a divisive battle this year could "tear us up."

A last-minute touchdown drive may be exciting on the football field, but it leaves the losing team bruised and angry. Rather than throwing up a hail Mary on cap-and-invest, lawmakers might be better off listening to Coach Courtney, taking a knee and going to overtime in 2019.

OTHER VIEWS

Let's ban pornography

In this weekend's New York Times Magazine there is a long profile of a new kind of pedagogy unique to our particular stage of civilization. It's called "porn literacy," and it involves explaining to young people whose sexual coming-of-age is being mediated by watching online gangbangs that actually hard-core pornography is not an appropriate guide to how the sexes should relate.

For anyone who grew up with the ideals of post-sexual revolution liberalism, there is a striking pathos to these educators' efforts. The sex education programs in my mostly liberal schools featured a touching faith from the adults in charge that they were engaged in a great work of enlightenment, that with the right curricula they could roll back the forces of repression and make sexuality a place of egalitarian pleasure and safety for us all.

Compared to those idealists, the people teaching "porn literacy" have accepted a sweeping pedagogical defeat. They take for granted that the most important sex education may take place on Pornhub, that the purpose of their work is essentially remedial, and that there is no escape from the world that porn has made.

Which at the moment there is not. But we are supposed to be in the midst of a great sexual reassessment, a clearing-out of assumptions that serve misogyny and impose bad sex on semi-willing women. And such a reassessment will be incomplete if it never reconsiders our surrender to the idea that many teenagers, most young men especially, will get their sex education from online smut.

This surrender was not inevitable. It was only a generation ago that the unlikely (or was it?) alliance of feminists and religious conservatives made the regulation of pornography a live political debate. But between the individualistic drift of society, the invention of the internet, and the failure of the Dworkin-Falwell alliance's predictions that porn would lead to rising rates of rape, the anti-porn case was marginalized — with religious conservatism's surrender to Donald Trump's playboy candidacy a seeming coup de grace.

Except it doesn't have to be. Trump's grotesqueries have stirred up a feminist reaction that's more moralistic and less gamely sex-positive than the Clinton-justifying variety, and there's no necessary reason why its moralistic gaze can't extend to our porn addiction. And indeed, I think the part of the #MeToo movement that's interested in discussing sexual unhappiness and not just sexual harassment clearly wants to talk about pornography, even if it doesn't quite realize that yet.

Consider the narratives that are touchstones for this part of the discussion — the New Yorker bad-sex short story "Cat Person" and the controversial first-person

account of being not-raped by Aziz Ansari (jointly described by one Twitter jester as an "ethnography of the degree to which millennial sex is a joyless mimetic spamming of half-remembered porn tropes"), as well as more sociological accounts of the ubiquity of female sexual unhappiness and pain (especially from that porn standby, anal sex).

In many of them, you see a kind of female revulsion, not against Harvey Weinstein-style apex

predators, but against the very different sort of male personality that a pornographic education seems to produce: a breed at once entitled and resentful, angry and undermotivated, "woke" and caddish, shaped by unprecedented possibilities for sexual gratification and frustrated that real

women are less available and more complicated than the version on their screen.

Such men would exist without industrial-scale porn, but porn selects for them, as it selects for a romantic landscape like our own: ever-more-liberated and ever-less-erotic, trending Japan-ward in its gulf between the sexes, with marriage and children

and sex itself in shared decline. So if you want better men by any standard, there is every reason to regard ubiquitous pornography as an obstacle — and to suspect that between virtual reality and creepy forms of customization, its influence is only likely to get worse.

But unlike many structural forces with which moralists of the left and right contend, porn is also just a product — something made and distributed and sold, and therefore subject to regulation and restriction if we so desire.

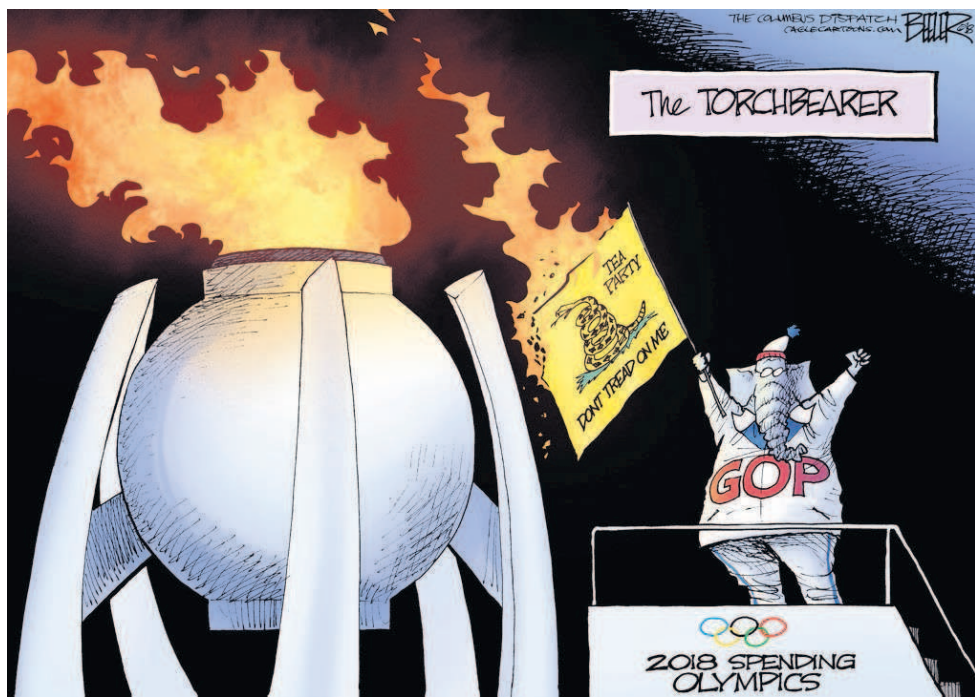
The belief that it should not be restricted is a mistake; the belief that it cannot be censored is a superstition. Law and jurisprudence changed once and can change again, and while you can find anything somewhere on the internet, making hard-core porn something to be quested after in dark corners would dramatically reduce its pedagogical role, its cultural normalcy, its power over libidos everywhere.

That we cannot imagine such censorship is part of our larger inability to imagine any escape from the online world's immersive power, even as we harbor growing doubts about its influence upon our psyches.

But in this sense porn also presents an opportunity to reconsider the tendency to just drift along with technological immersion, a chance where the moral stakes are sharpened to prove we don't have to accept enslavement to our screens.

Feminists should take it. We should all take it. It is not only decency but eros itself that waits to be regained.

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OTHER VIEWS

First rivers, then oceans

In 2013, I stood in the barren landscape south of Mexicali, Mexico. Everywhere I looked, for almost as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but dirt and sand. But it wasn't always that way.

The lunar landscape south of Mexicali once made up the Colorado River Delta, where 5 trillion gallons of water poured into the Sea of Cortez every year. The massive dams built on the Colorado River in the 20th century ended that flow; now, not one drop reaches the sea. The 2 million-acre delta and wetlands have become a barren sea of sand and dirt.

Without a regular infusion of freshwater, the Sea of Cortez has suffered greatly. Fish and crab species are on the brink of extinction. Without nutrients provided by the freshwater, the millions of birds that used to frequent the massive wetland have vanished, and the human fishing culture has dwindled.

The interrupted linkage between the Colorado River and the Sea of Cortez is not an anomaly, however. Rather, it is becoming the norm.

On the Snake and Columbia rivers in Oregon and Washington, massive dams have stopped the migration of nearly a million salmon a year — the sole source of food for the southern resident killer whales, or orcas, that live along the Washington coast and in Puget Sound. Without salmon for food, the population of this species of orca has dwindled to fewer than 100 and is teetering on extinction.

Along the East Coast of the United States, Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, eels and other species can no longer migrate to spawn, overcoming the gantlet of dams on the Susquehanna, Connecticut and Merrimack rivers. Both the rivers and oceans suffer as fish populations dwindle to a fraction of their former numbers.

It's not just dams on rivers that are killing the oceans; pollution in rivers gets carried out to sea, where it remains a threat. In the United States, the most notorious example of this is the massive "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. It expanded to its largest size yet in 2017, and as measured by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration covered almost 9,000 square miles, an area the size of New Jersey. The dead zone is mostly caused by nitrate-based fertilizer that washes off hundreds of thousands of square miles of farms in the Midwest and South, flows into the Mississippi River Basin, and then into the Gulf of Mexico. The nitrates feed massive algae blooms that suck the oxygen out of the water and make parts of the Gulf of Mexico unable to support life.

Increasingly, dams and pollution co-mingle to harm both rivers and ocean. Where I live — in Fort Collins, Colorado — is a perfect example. There's a proposal to build a huge dam on the Cache la Poudre River, which would suck a massive amount of water out of the river every year and send that water to small towns on the plains. One of those towns is Fort Morgan, in eastern Colorado.

Fort Morgan is surrounded by farms and cattle feedlots, and it has always had access to groundwater. In fact, the town used to use that groundwater for its drinking water. But over the years the groundwater became so polluted with nitrates from farm fertilizer that the town says it can no longer afford to purify it to drinking-water standards. So the town is now included in the massive dam project, thanks to a proposed 70-mile pipeline from the dam to the town.

Meanwhile, the groundwater around Fort Morgan is just getting more polluted with nitrates. These poisons continue to flow into the highly polluted South Platte River, which flows into the Platte River, which flows into the Missouri River, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico, which is now home to that huge, nitrate-caused dead zone.

Most of us learned this stuff about rivers flowing to the sea in grade school. We learned about the water cycle that replenishes and repeats itself. That is, unless we dam and pollute the rivers, truncating the water cycle and interrupting the cycle of life.

To save the oceans, we must save the rivers that feed them.

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