

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Special session about politics, not policy

Gov. Kate Brown is trying to have it both ways. She's taking a tax break from Oregon businesses and she's calling a special legislative session to give businesses a tax break.

If that sounds like election-year posturing by a governor who is seeking re-election, well, it is.

Brown riled Republicans and business leaders last week by announcing she would sign Senate Bill 1528, passed a few weeks ago by the Oregon Legislature. The bill is a reaction to congressional passage late last year of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The federal law gave a tax cut to "pass-through" entities — businesses whose profits or losses are passed directly to the owners and counted as personal income for taxation purposes. Such businesses generally are organized as sole proprietorships, LLCs, partnerships or S-corporations.

The state legislation, SB 1528, stops that tax break from also applying to Oregon income taxes. As Brown explained, such businesses still will get

their federal tax cut but not the same cut in their state income taxes. Thus, the state will collect more tax revenue.

Brown said that's not a tax increase, just a lack of tax cut.

Opponents disagree. One of them, state Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, confirmed this week that he will sue the state over SB 1528.

Boquist contends the bill raises taxes and thus needed a supermajority for passage in the Legislature. Instead, Democrats in the Senate and House passed it by simple majorities. Four Democrats joined all Republicans in voting no.

Meanwhile, Brown now wants the Legislature to hold a special session to give sole proprietorships a tax break.

If this sounds confusing and purely political, well, again it is.

During a special legislative session in 2013, Democrats gained Republican support for the so-called "Grand Bargain" by including a break for LLCs, partnerships and S-corporations.

Sole proprietorships were left out of that



Molly J. Smith /Statesman-Journal via AP

Governor Kate Brown speaks to the media on Jan. 29 at the Oregon State Capitol.

deal, and Brown now says that was unfair to them.

The 2019 Legislature could make that change, even retroactively for this year. But Brown claims small businesses need more certainty than that, and said she would order lawmakers to hold a special session before June 30 and ask them to broaden the 2013 small-business tax break to include sole proprietors.

Meanwhile, many of her fellow

Democrats, particularly in the state House, have been trying to undo the overall 2013 tax break. And last week, Brown would not commit to whether the 2013 tax break was good long-term public policy. Neither was she ready to discuss tax reform, which she previously said would be a critical issue for the 2019 Legislature.

Boquist is right. Holding a special legislative session is about politics, not good government policy.



YOUR VIEWS

Don't support OSU extension tax

Don't be fooled by the upcoming vote to support a service district for the OSU Extension for ag.

They will have you believe that the proposed tax of 33 cents per \$1,000 will not increase your taxes due to compression. Just make a call to the director of taxation in Pendleton and he will tell you that's false, as he did me. If this passes you will pay the tax.

If OSU wants an extension, let them pay for it — they have plenty of money. This proposal is just another grab for your money. Vote no.

Jim Tiede
Hermiston

Choose Collins for Circuit Court judge for District 6

As a resident of, contributor to, and loyal supporter of Pendleton since 1980, I have a stake in who is elected to fill Judge Hampton's position. She leaves shoes too big for just anyone to fill.

Rob Collins has practiced law at a high level throughout his career. Rob's knowledge of the substantive law of civil and criminal matters, and his mastery of procedure and evidence, have afforded him the honor of serving as municipal court judge on a pro tem basis for five years plus. His law practice has shown relatable works of action directly hinged to what we need in this community.

Rob's unfailing diversity including, general civil practice and litigation, expert counsel to real estate owners, small business owners, and pro bono work with local service clubs and organizations are too many to list here. I have personally witnessed the many hours Rob gave graciously to set up a 501(c)3 for a local service organization.

Rob is currently serving on the board of directors of the Pendleton Round-Up Association, which includes volunteerism as the Indian Director. While serving

on committees and boards with Rob over the past 11 years it is easy to note that while he has many connections and has contributed in word and deed to the Pendleton Rotary Club, the Pendleton Swim Association, the Don Fossati Scholarship, the Oregon East Symphony and the Arts Council, he has flown under the radar due to staying true to his desire to give credit to all involved in each endeavor.

We can confidently vote for Rob Collins as our new Circuit Court judge for District 6, Position 1 because the Circuit Court benches cannot be a training ground and he is already more than fully prepared by his broad and varied experiences.

Gwen Fjeld
Pendleton

Vote Innes for Pendleton council

I am writing to urge the residents of Ward 1 in Pendleton to vote wisely this upcoming primary. You have an opportunity to seat wisdom, hard work and character on our council seat this season.

I have known Carole for almost two decades. I have worked in community theatre productions and watched her work on other committees and projects serving this community. Carole gives of her time, her heart and her compassion for the residents of this community.

While I haven't had the pleasure to work with her recently, I was delighted when I learned Carole was running for a city government seat. I can't think of a better candidate to represent the city's residents, our hardworking city employees and our community.

Carole Innes will bring Pendleton into the future with sound fiscal advice and oversight. Carole Innes has the background, education and experience to bring Pendleton forward.

Vote Carole Innes — Ward 1 — for Pendleton City Council.

Lezlee Flagg
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS



U.S. Sen Ron Wyden gestures while answering a question during a town hall Tuesday at Umatilla High School.

Staff photo
by E.J. Harris

Plenty to learn from Eastern Oregon town halls

By **RON WYDEN**
U.S. Senator (D-Ore.)

Thank you high school students throughout Eastern Oregon for proving again that "listening to the future" produces smart and civil discussions that show common ground exists on challenging issues.

Last week, I held open-to-all town halls in schools in Wheeler, Gilliam, Umatilla, Morrow and Sherman counties. (The week's sixth town hall in Union County was at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.) The community meetings are part of my pledge to hold annual town halls in each of Oregon's 36 counties.

And during the government shutdown in 2013, I embarked on a "listening to the future" tour of Oregon schools so students on the cusp of voting in a couple years' time could have the opportunity to engage directly with elected officials. The equation is basic: "annual town halls" plus "listening to the future" adds up to an "Oregon Way" success story where students and adults show the entire country how to take on tough topics and seek solutions.

Eastern Oregon provided an object lesson last week for that equation.

Many of the questions by students and adults at last week's town halls in Wheeler High School, Condon High School, Umatilla High School, Riverside Jr./Sr. High School and Sherman Jr./Sr. High School focused on what can be done to reduce gun violence. Other topics included healthcare, DACA, the environment, college affordability, foreign policy, veterans services, the rural economy and more.

All difficult-to-solve subjects. Yet in each instance, students had done their homework and came prepared to ask good questions. Parents, teachers, school staff and communities should all be proud. Oregon voices at these "listening to the future" town halls have an impact on generating lasting solutions.

Let me be specific: In the last five years at town halls, I heard time and again from Oregonians frustrated about wildfires tearing through their communities and threatening their homes and businesses.

At the same time, I learned about the "fire borrowing" madness in which federal agencies "borrow" money from essential wildfire prevention work to fill budgets for battling the big blazes.

Working with Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), we crafted the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act that lets federal agencies, such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, better plan for wildland fires and devote the resources necessary to fight them.

And in the days before last week's town halls, Congress passed our legislation to halt the short-sighted practice of "fire borrowing."

The legislation will not end wildfires, but it will help the federal government be a smarter partner for Oregon and the West in dealing with wildfires, and ensuring the prevention work gets done upfront so our national forests are healthier and more resilient.

The bill took some pushing, pulling and prodding. But wildfire funding marks a great example of how community voices — I call it "people power" — can help to shape a solution and eventually prevail.

I am equally confident that some of the conversations in Eastern Oregon schools last week can lead to fresh ideas that may help achieve solutions on challenges that remain.

What I heard from students and adults in Eastern Oregon is a hunger for those solutions. Rest assured, last week's town halls will not be the end of that conversation.

Like any good conversation, the discussion is ongoing. And if it's anything like last week's town halls, it's apparent our young people will be leading the way.

Ron Wyden is a Democrat representing Oregon in the U.S. Senate.

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