

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

More pressing issues for Oregon

Of all the issues worthy of Oregon legislators’ immediate attention, a narrow tax break for businesses would rank far, far down the list. Yet that tax break is why Gov. Kate Brown is ordering the Legislature to convene on May 21.

Having signed state legislation that takes a potential tax break away from many businesses, Brown now wants to grant one to roughly 9,000 sole proprietorships.

In Pendleton last week, Brown said that she thinks “very strongly that Oregon’s small businesses need tax fairness and they need it now. They can’t wait until 2019.”

The governor, who just happens to be running for re-election this year, recently had a self-realization: “We have an obvious inequity in Oregon’s tax system that is prejudiced against thousands of small Oregon businesses, and a simple change can fix it. I’m simply not willing

to let these main street businesses — entrepreneurs, mom and pops, and start-ups — go through another tax year with unfair tax treatment as compared to their larger competitors.” Thus, Brown wants a one-day special legislative session on May 21, although it might last longer. That tax break might be worthwhile, although the details have been sketchy. But we wonder why Brown can’t let the tax break wait for the 2019 Legislature, yet she is leaving a slew of more-important issues hanging. Brown is not calling a special session to make Oregon’s unstable tax system better align with the state’s economic and educational priorities. She is not calling a special session to address our substance-abuse epidemic flowing from opioids, alcohol and other drugs. She is not calling a special session to

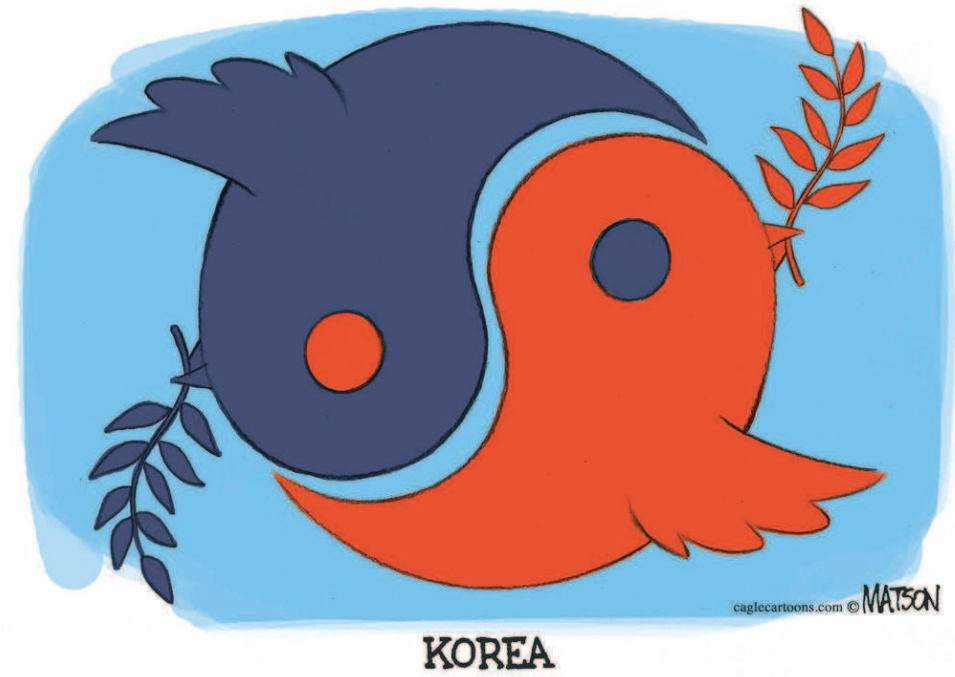


Molly J. Smith/Statesman-Journal via AP

Governor Kate Brown spoke to the media after the 2018 legislative session.

confront the well-chronicled deficiencies in the state’s child welfare program. She is not calling a special session to complete needed reforms in the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System. She is not calling a special session to tackle the widespread shortage of affordable housing across Oregon. She is not even calling a special session to devise a new, public-supported plan for

replacing the nearly obsolete Interstate 5 bridges in Portland. And she certainly is not calling a special session to address many of the issues that have divided rural and urban Oregon. Choose any of the above or add your own topic, and it likely would matter more to Oregonians — including legislators and businesspeople — than Brown’s plan for a May 21 special session.



YOUR VIEWS

Cayuse Technologies must pull its own weight

There were two recent articles on Cayuse Technologies, a CTUIR-owned business, in the *Confederated Umatilla Journal*. However, the articles were very one-sided and did not include some pertinent facts and information, which I have included here to provide a more balanced perspective. Cayuse Tech has been in business for over 12 years now, and they should have developed into a stand-alone business that is turning profits by itself after all this time. Yet here they are having the federal government help bail them out of the flat situation they put themselves into. This is dependency. What happened to “economic sovereignty” and independence that was a *CUJ* buzzword just a few years ago? Some would call this corporate welfare. We are into a new fiscal year and once again Cayuse Tech has not contributed to the current CTUIR operating budget, to help fund departments and programs. In complete contrast, Wildhorse annually contributes tens of millions to the tribal operating budget, some tribal programs are completely funded by casino-generated revenue. And where is the Board of Trustees in being a voice on behalf of tribal interests in this situation? All they ever do is merely rubber-stamp whatever Cayuse Tech management puts on the table in front of them. Four years ago, as a BOT member, I squeezed a paltry \$15,000 out of Cayuse Tech for the 2015 operating budget, and the same amount for the 2016 budget. Cayuse Tech has regressed back to contributing nothing financially to the tribal administration, the people or the community. Remember, many Cayuse Tech employees commute to work from outside the Pendleton area, and take the wealth that is generated here and spend and invest it in their own respective communities. And what does that leave us? Yes, as a major player we have economic and political roles to play in the region, and beyond, but we have an overarching responsibility, first and foremost, to provide for our own people and

resources first. This is not an “attack” on Cayuse Tech, or anyone. Tribal leadership always welcomes input on relevant tribal issues from the tribal membership and community, and this is my input on a relevant tribal issue. If and when Cayuse Tech starts to make meaningful contributions to the tribal operating budget, and community, and employs a reasonable amount of CTUIR tribal members, I will be the first to acknowledge and commend it. **Bob Shippentower**
Pendleton

Bill Hansell’s fairy tale

I have great respect for our state senator from Athena, Bill Hansell. He is a man of integrity — and a sense of humor, based on his April 13 column “Business tax fairy tale.” Bonus points for using a much-cherished cinematic classic to move his point along. But although I support his quest for fairness, his fairy tale falls apart due to his cavalier reference to the “tax breaks” King Donald (he would love that title) and his congressional minions approved. Straight from “The Normalization of Trump 101,” mentioning that massive tax bill as if it was no big deal — or a good deal — is disingenuous. As anyone who has been paying attention knows, the tax bill championed by this “King” is anything but fair. In a cynical reversal of the Robin Hood ethic, the tax overhaul is designed to take from the poor and give to the rich, while adding more than \$1 trillion to the deficit. Me thinks “the counts and countesses in their very large Castle on the Hill” have forsaken their conservative principles, and their self-esteem. I like to think our local conservatives are not infected by the greed and spinelessness exhibited by the ruling party in the nation’s capital. But they don’t show it when they ignore the giant elephant in the room. Worse yet, that elephant is racist, deceitful and dangerously arrogant. **Hal McCune**
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Understanding events in North Korea

North Korea doesn’t have enough food, it lacks Facebook and Beyoncé, and its diplomats have to ration their use of computers in the Foreign Ministry because of electricity shortages. But North Korea excels at choreography and theater, and its officials are well educated, very savvy, and agile with a pirouette. So we have peace breaking out on the Korean Peninsula — and President Donald Trump gets credit for that. As with any circus performance, it’s amazing to behold but not quite as billed. As Kim Jong Un stepped into South Korea on Friday — the first North Korean leader to do so — let’s acknowledge that he has played a weak hand exceptionally well. Kim is now aiming to squirm out of sanctions, build up his economy and retain his nuclear arsenal, all while remaining a global focus of attention. It’s a remarkable performance. “North Korea expert” is an oxymoron, but from someone who has been covering the country since the 1980s, here’s my take on why we should be deeply skeptical — and yet relieved, even a bit hopeful. Trump’s tightening of sanctions and his belligerent rhetoric genuinely did change the equation. All this was meant to intimidate Kim, but it mostly alarmed President Moon Jae-in of South Korea and galvanized him to undertake successful Olympic diplomacy that laid the groundwork for the North-South summit meeting. Kim then parlayed that progress into meetings with both Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, both of which reflected longtime North Korean goals. And on Friday Kim and Moon adopted a declaration promising “no more war,” “a new era of peace” and “complete denuclearization.” Inspiring, but count me skeptical. North and South Korean leaders have signed grand peace documents before, in 2000 and 2007, and neither lasted. In 2012, North Korea agreed not to test missiles and then weeks later fired one off but called it a “satellite” launch. When North Korea talks about “complete denuclearization,” it typically means that the U.S. ends its alliance with South Korea, and then North Korea will no longer need nuclear weapons to defend itself. But the U.S. won’t give up the South. And North Korea has been pursuing nuclear weapons since the 1950s, and I don’t know any expert who thinks that it will genuinely hand over its arsenal. On my last visit to North Korea, in September, a Foreign Ministry official told me that Libya had given up its nuclear program — only to have its regime toppled. Likewise, he noted, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq lacked a nuclear deterrent — so Saddam was ousted by America. North Korea would not make the same mistake, he insisted. It’s even less likely that North Korea will give up its nukes now that it sees Trump poised to tear up the Iran nuclear deal. Kim’s game plan seems to be to sign pledges for denuclearization, leaving details to be worked out in follow-up talks, knowing that the pledges won’t be fully implemented and that there will never be intrusive inspections. This may be disingenuous on the



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

part of North Korea, but that’s not terrible: It provides a face-saving way for both North Korea and the U.S. to back away from the precipice of war. Trump and Kim both badly want a meeting, so expect North Korea to release its three American detainees in the coming weeks and to make soothing statements. Trump and Kim will present themselves as historic peacemakers as they sign some kind of declaration calling for peace and denuclearization, with some kind of timetable; Trump’s aides will then say that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize more than Barack Obama did. I hope Trump will also raise human rights issues. A commission of inquiry suggested that North Korea has committed crimes against humanity “on a massive scale” in its labor camps, and we should push for access to these camps by humanitarian organizations. “Over 100,000 people, a figure that includes countless innocent family members of so-called enemies of the state, are effectively consigned to die in North Korea’s political prisons,” Navi Pillay, a former U.N. high commissioner for human rights, told me. “The forced abortions, infanticide, persecution of Christians, torture and summary executions that regularly occur in those various facilities are well documented. President Trump can demand that the Red Cross and the international community have access to North Korea’s prisons and labor camp systems.” In the meantime, I’m guessing that the North will halt all nuclear and missile testing (hopefully, including short-range missiles), and will stop production of plutonium at its reactors in Yongbyon (North Korea may also claim to stop enriching uranium, but that’s more difficult to verify). In exchange, China and South Korea will quietly ease sanctions — and Kim will get what he has always wanted, the legitimacy of being treated as a world leader, as an equal, and as the ruler of a de facto nuclear state. Both Kim and Trump benefit politically from that scenario, and for that matter so does the world: Hard-liners will fume that we’re being played and that the North is not verifiably giving up nuclear weapons — true — but it’s all preferable to war. How does this end? The West’s plan is to drag things along until the North collapses. This may happen. The problem is that it was also the U.S. plan in 1994 in a previous nuclear deal. And I confess that I chose to be *The New York Times*’ bureau chief in Tokyo in the late 1990s partly so that I could cover what I thought might be the collapse soon of the North Korean regime. I learned then not to make predictions about the timing of the demise of the Kim dynasty. In effect, the emerging framework is a backdoor route to a nuclear cap or to the “freeze for a freeze” solution that North Korea and China have previously recommended and that Trump has rejected. It may all fall apart. But it’s possible now to envision a path away from war, and for that even we skeptics should be grateful. ■

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. He is a columnist for The New York Times.

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