

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OTHER VIEWS

# Let the Legislature know you're there

Albany Democrat-Herald

It's an easy thing (a time-honored tradition, in fact) to bad-mouth the Oregon Legislature, which opened its 2019 session yesterday and is scheduled to meet in Salem until the end of June.

To be sure, it's a certain bet that the Legislature this session will do some dopey things, and will deserve at least some of the criticism that onlookers and citizens will deliver.

With that said, and before the session heats up, here are some other points worth making about Oregon's Legislature:

First, even though we do pay lawmakers (a laughably small sum, considering the work most of them put in), this is still, for all intents and purposes, a citizen Legislature. Generally speaking, we don't yet have full-time legislators, although many legislators would tell you that their duties take up plenty of time even when the Legislature isn't in session.

The second point flows



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky

**A man walks by the Oregon State Capitol in Salem on Tuesday, the first day of the Legislature's 2019 session.**

from that first one: In part because this is a citizen Legislature, most legislators are legitimately interested in what their constituents have to say. (Legislators who are not might have a hard time getting re-elected.) A story by reporter Claire Withycombe of the Oregon Capital Bureau outlined some of the ways that regular people who don't have access to high-powered lobbyists can connect with their legislators.

Of course, it helps to know who your legislators are, and our guess is that many people would fail this relatively simple test. If you want to find out, though, there's an easy way to do so: The Legislature's website includes a nifty feature where all you have to do is enter your address to find out who's representing you in Salem. The feature also includes links to your legislators' web pages and email addresses.

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If you want to send an email address to your legislator, feel free to do that: Just be sure you write it in your own words. That's much more valuable to a legislator than if you just copied and pasted some

boilerplate language from an advocacy group; legislators discount that sort of message. (Snail mail also is accepted at the Capitol.)

If there's an issue that really engages you, think about joining an organization that feels the same way: There's power in numbers in Salem.

It also helps if you do some research before you fire off that email, and the Legislature operates an invaluable site that features up-to-the-minute information, including updated versions of bills and current calendars. The site, the Oregon Legislative Information System, can be accessed at this address: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1>. If you have any interest in legislative doings, it'll be worth your while to spend some time exploring the site, which boasts a wealth of other information — including lists of bills that your legislator is sponsoring.

A couple of additional points are worth keeping in mind as the session gets rolling:

Although news accounts

of the Legislature often focus on partisan rifts (and there will be partisan rifts), it's not at all unusual for legislators to work with their counterparts on the other side of the aisle. In this regard, the Legislature is different than the U.S. Congress, which seems to be permanently paralyzed in partisan gridlock.

Remember as well that legislators face a daunting workload: Nearly 1,500 bills already have been introduced in this session and that number will grow dramatically over the next few weeks. Most of those bills will not pass; many, in fact, are essentially dead on arrival. (One of the undervalued functions of a Legislature is to kill bills.) Even with that high mortality rate, it still amounts to a lot of work in a short period of time.

But that doesn't mean you can't chide a legislator for what you think is an ill-advised bill or vote.

After all, the Legislature convenes to do the work of the people. It works better if the people are watching.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Congress, President should forego pay, too

We face a crisis in government. Our elected leaders are not doing the jobs they were elected to do. We have a tripod form of government for a reason (read the Federalist Papers). Our system was never set up for the leadership, both the Congress and President, to act like 2-year olds fighting over a toy. This is no longer "partisanship." It is a complete failure to do their jobs. Their salaries should be the ones suspended.

No one in leadership should be exempt: the President, the Congress, no one should get a paycheck until an agreement is reached. The rest of us should not be punished for the failure of our leadership to lead.

Dale Hilding  
Pendleton

### Covington incident should have been researched

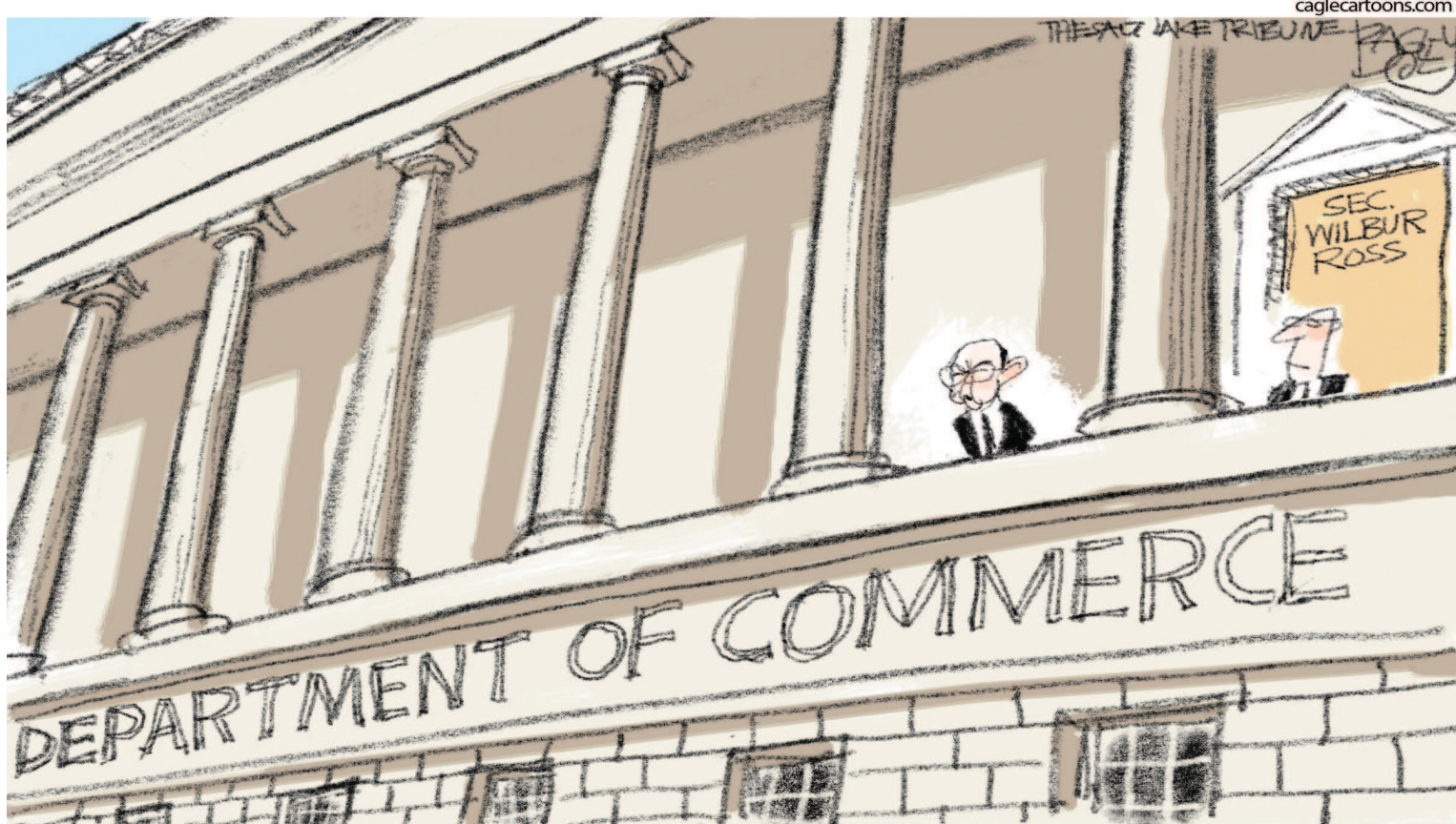
I was very surprised to find, starting in the second paragraph of the Solidarity Walk story, information about the "alleged" misconduct of the students from Covington High School.

Obviously the story must have been written before doing research on the incident and determining that the students in question did not in fact cause the incident or respond in a hostile manner to anyone in the crowd. I am disturbed that your writer jumped on the "blame the #MAGA hat wearers" wagon by going on the word of the BuzzFeed article that a lot of "professional reporters" took as gospel truth without doing any research about what exactly happened.

As you know, Covington HS had to cancel school Monday due to death threats from the crazies who jump on these types of stories. I would like to see a follow-up article clearly stating just what happened at the Right to Life March and how these students were initially the target of some pretty mean and nasty accusations by a hate group.

Social media just may be the downfall of this great republic. The haters are going to hate, but threatening high school students and journalists reporting misinformation is not going to help the situation. Please be peaceful every one, love your neighbor and let the hatred go.

Toni Baldassarre  
Pendleton



## OTHER VIEWS

# Fighting the fear of falling

It is wet and gloomy outside. The rain thundered on the roof last night. All week the rain has been persistent, sometimes colder, sometimes warmer, but not yet snow.

I am preparing for a blitz of preaching for Pastor Chuck at Zion Lutheran Church in Newberg this next couple of months. The first will be preaching in an adult Vacation Bible School on February 6 to do a 20-minute gig to raise spirits. (I'm listed on the bulletin as "Comedian Pastor" for this one.) Then, after that, I will be preaching the five Wednesday Lenten services, starting in March, and each one of these sermons / reflections will be a take on prayer.

I work a regular day job, and we are all nervous now, as my colleagues and I serve some functions of the federal government — which, as you may know, is having a little pushback in keeping the lights on. Our bud-

get is running out.

Also, as a citizen volunteer, I have recently been voted onto a board supporting Oregon's seniors' disabilities advisory and advocacy groups. My main focus is on people with disabilities. This week I attended a legislative boot camp put on by DHS, to teach us how to support the politicians in their struggles to help the seniors and the disabled.

I'm going to be a little critical here of our highest levels of government, and criticize our government's leadership for holding human beings of kindness and virtue in the federal government in a blackmail that threatens their lives and livelihoods. I regard this as a criminal and immoral act. It is like lifting the wallet of a poor man, while holding a knife to the throat of his child.

I know our president, in his previous incarnation as a builder, has a reputation of not paying his workmen and has left them

damaged and impoverished in many cases, while he walks away from his moral obligations with the property and the money bags of others. He has used bankruptcy as a tool for his own enrichment. I know that it may not be illegal in the convolutions of our law, but I know that he has sinned and continues to sin against the requirements of his heavenly father to pay workmen what they are owed. His punishment, I have no doubt, is coming unless he repents.

Here, I am looking sideways at Greg Walden, our Prince of Eastern Oregon, who I feel is a principled man and somebody who is being called by his Lord to speak out for moral behavior all through our government. He has my backing in prayer to do what needs to be done to restore honor to our nation.

Amen.

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COLIN BROWN  
COMMENT

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