

O EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

WYATT HAUPT JR.
News Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Oregon Capitol in need of a new normal

On the surface, life is back to normal in the Oregon Capitol. Senate President Peter Courtney returned this past week from his medical leave. Meanwhile, some bills are sailing through the 2019 legislative session, and others are flailing. The supermajority Democrats and minority Republicans are publicly battling on several fronts while calmly collaborating on the Legislature’s routine work.

But “normal” will never be the same in the Capitol. Nor should it be. The sexual harassment incidents that shook the statehouse in recent years should never recur, and it is up to the legislative leaders to make that happen.

Do they now get it? That remains uncertain, but the signs are positive.

Courtney and especially House Speaker Tina Kotek had criticized a state agency’s finding of a “hostile workplace” at the Capitol. But this month the legislative leaders did an about-face, agreeing to a \$1.3 million settlement. Most of the money will go to eight women who suffered sexual harassment.

The settlement through the Bureau of Labor and Industries also removes the Legislature’s top lawyer and its human resources director from handling complaints of harassment. The bipartisan Joint Committee on Capi-



A man walks by the Oregon Capitol in Salem on Jan. 22, 2019, the first day of the legislative session.

tol Culture is working toward creating an independent equity office to handle those issues, which is among the top-to-bottom recommendations from the Oregon Law Commission and which Courtney and Kotek agreed to adopt.

Courtney took a big step by interrupting his medical leave and temporarily returning to the Senate on March 14 to vote for a resolution declaring support for survivors of sexual violence. HCR 25, which passed unanimously, is now in the House.

“I publicly apologize to any and all

survivors that have experienced any form of harassment — sexual harassment, workplace harassment — in the state Capitol,” Courtney said. “We must do better. I must do better.”

His comments came after Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis — whose formal complaint eventually led to last year’s resignation of Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg — had said moments earlier that the survivors of the sexual harassment never got an apology from the Legislature.

The settlement underscores the

severity of what has been happening in the Capitol for years, long before Courtney and Kotek came to power. Yet Courtney and Kotek have contended they did everything within their power to prevent sexual harassment, promptly investigate allegations and discipline perpetrators.

From a purely legal standpoint, that might have been true. But laws and regulations only cover so much. On human resources matters, there always is more that can be done as far as treating people with respect, with empathy and with compassion when they feel wronged — regardless of the circumstances.

A complete transformation in legislative culture is needed, one that upends the traditional power dynamics in the Capitol. Anyone — elected officials, legislative staff, interns, lobbyists, contractors and members of the public — must feel free to raise concerns without fear of political or personal retaliation.

The Capitol Culture Committee continues to refine its legislation that aims to improve anti-harassment training and handling of harassment complaints.

It will be much harder, but crucial, to achieve what must become the new norm in and around the Oregon Capitol: zero tolerance of harassment, bullying or mistreatment of any kind.

OTHER VIEWS

University security guards should be armed

Eugene Register-Guard

Last year, Portland State University police shot and killed a man who was trying to break up a fight outside a bar. Now a state lawmaker wants to take guns away from some university police officers. His fellow lawmakers should pass. One tragedy doesn’t justify making schools less safe.

Portland Democratic Rep. Diego Hernandez has introduced a bill to forbid university police in cities with more than 150,000 residents from carrying firearms. That’s a roundabout way of saying at the University of Oregon and PSU.

We have no doubt that Hernandez has good intentions. Faculty and students raised concerns about guns on campus, so he is serving those constituents. But, in the words of University of Oregon Police Association President Steven Barrett, his bill is “a drastic, ill-conceived, simplistic fix to a nuanced, complicated, and difficult issue.”

Targeting just urban campuses is counterintuitive. If anything, campus police forces in big cities have greater need to carry guns than their counterparts in smaller communities. Urban campuses are open to the public. Most people who stroll onto campus are benign, but in any city, troublemakers and violent individuals walk the streets, too. When they come onto campus, if an extreme situation arises, police need the right tools to respond.

Campus police also respond to incidents off campus, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of students. Eugene’s West University, for example, has seen an unacceptable number of assaults, thefts and other crimes in the past year.

It’s important to note that university police in Oregon are full-blown police offi-

cers, not just security officers. They receive the same training as city cops, including in proper weapon handling and crisis response.

That’s not to say there’s no room for change and improvement. In addition to solid training, officers on a diverse campus like the University of Oregon must have sensitivity toward people of color, LGBTQ and others. Police presence — especially armed police presence — impacts people differently.

The Daily Emerald reports that campus police are aware of these sensitivities, and are inviting students and campus community members to be active participants in

helping them internalize them so that every officer responds appropriately. That work must continue here and at all Oregon universities.

Campus police also could improve interdepartmental communication with other law enforcement.

For example, Hernandez cited an incident at the University of Oregon last year as justification for his bill. In May, police pointed their guns at a student DJ who had been directed to leave the Erb Memorial Union. Hernandez and many media outlets misreported that those officers were with the campus police. In fact, they were Eugene police there to assist, but they had not gotten clear instruction that the student was coming out. Communication broke down.

That incident is important because it is one of the

two that supporters of Hernandez’s bill have misused to support their goal. Without it, they have only the single shooting at PSU. One incident is not sufficient justification to disarm fully trained and equipped police officers who keep Oregon universities safe.

If Hernandez really wants to help, he should take a more nuanced approach focused on training and procedure.

IN ADDITION
TO SOLID
TRAINING,
OFFICERS ON
A DIVERSE
CAMPUS
LIKE THE
UNIVERSITY
OF OREGON
MUST HAVE
SENSITIVITY
TOWARD
PEOPLE
OF COLOR,
LGBTQ AND
OTHERS.



YOUR VIEWS

History will judge those who served, and self-served

After some of his better stunts, I did not believe The Donald could demean himself, and the office of the President of the United States, any lower than he already has. However, I was wrong — his personal attacks on the late Senator John McCain clearly demonstrate there are no limits to the cowardice of this fraud of a “leader.”

John McCain first comes to my mind equally as a naval officer and aviator, and as a distinguished statesman and political leader who served our country so well for so many years. His military career is well known; he was shot down flying dangerous missions over North Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War in the 1960s. McCain spent six years of extreme hardship as a prisoner of war

Upon learning that McCain’s father was a high ranking admiral in the U.S. Navy, his captors offered to release McCain early, probably hoping to use McCain’s release as leverage in high-level politics, and for propaganda purposes. However, McCain declined an early release because he knew there were other captives who had been there longer. This is just one example of McCain’s character and fortitude.

On the other hand, The Donald intention-

ally evaded the draft by shopping around for a doctor who, for the right price, wrote a letter to The Donald’s local draft board attesting that he had “painful” bone spurs and should be allowed a deferment from military service. Thus, the Donald literally bought his way out of military service.

The Donald is now trying to play the “victim” of a “witch hunt,” meaning the Mueller probe, the various House of Representative committees investigating the Trump administration and his family businesses. Also, the state of New York has their investigations going as well. It is the red flags of the Trump administration and Trump family businesses that have justified all the investigations.

Three years ago, a court ruled that The Donald must reimburse students at his now defunct Trump University millions of dollars because the university defrauded them. Also, at the same time another court ruled that one of his high-end golf courses in Florida must reimburse members there because of fraudulent business practices.

History will judge those who served our country well while in public office, and history will judge those who served themselves and their family well while in public office.

Bob Shippentower
Pendleton

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801, or email editor@eastoregonian.com.