

Lexington: City closed after council fails to pass budget

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"The last three meetings have been a nightmare," he said.

Dickenson optimistically called his layoff a "vacation" and said he hopes a budget gets passed next week so that he can return to work quickly.

"They just voted the recorder and I a raise, and then they turn around and do

this," he said.

Kemp is seeking advice from various state agencies, the city's legal counsel, Morrow County, the city's insurance company and the League of Oregon Cities on how to proceed. Until Lexington's government is up and running again, the city can't pay its bills. Residents will not be able to obtain permits, pay their utility bills in

person or access other services normally available at city hall. Residents can mail payments, but the U.S. Postal Service is currently holding the city's mail.

According to information provided by Oregon Department of Revenue public information officer Rich Hoover, if any expenditures are made without the appropriation authority

provided by passing a budget, "the officials who allow or authorize such expenditures might be held personally responsible for the repayment of the money."

He also stated that it was possible that Lexington could lose their tax levy for the year if it was successfully challenged in court.

Hoover said as of 2017 ghost towns were no longer

subject to local budget law after Oregon ghost towns whose members didn't reside there year-round struggled to get a quorum to pass a budget by July 1. Lexington, while small, is not considered a ghost town.

Morrow County Board of Commissioners Chair Jim Doherty said Monday morning that he hadn't been aware of Lexington's clo-

sure. He said he would reach out and see what the county might need to do to fill in gaps, but noted that this wasn't the first time Lexington had been struggling with its status as a city.

"The last couple of years they've kind of been hanging in the balance in being incorporated," he said.

Lexington was incorporated in 1903.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Senator Ron Wyden speaks with Ken Bisconer, director of flight operations at PAE ISR, during a tour of the drone company's hangar at the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range.

Town Hall: Wyden talks policy in Pendleton

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One PAE employee volunteered that the company occasionally struggled with a regulation that required registration numbers for every drone. He added that those numbers were often deregistered once PAE shipped the drone overseas.

Wyden promised that he would connect his staff with PAE's to help solve the issue and any other federal issues they encountered.

Wyden and the issues

Oregon's senior senator wasn't just in Pendleton for a hangar tour.

Between a Sunday afternoon town hall at Blue Mountain Community College and a meeting with the *East Oregonian* editorial board, Wyden, a Democrat, was forceful in his opposition to some of the Trump administration's actions.

In light of rising tensions in the Middle East after Iran shot down an American drone, an audience member at the town hall asked Wyden what the U.S. could do to avoid a war in Iran.

Noting that President Donald Trump had authorized strikes against Iran before pulling back, Wyden was adamant that "nobody is going to cut corners" when it comes to going to war with Iran.

Wyden had especially harsh words for John Bolton, Trump's national security advisor.

"Mr. Bolton has never seen a cause he didn't want to start a war over," he said.

Another audience member asked Wyden how America could protect itself from election interference.

"I believe hostile foreign powers are going to interfere in our elections in 2020 in a way that will make 2016 look

like small potatoes," Wyden responded.

Wyden touted his work on the SAFE Act, a bill that requires paper ballots in national elections and cybersecurity audits.

The bill recently passed the U.S. House of Representatives, but it faces much tougher odds in the Senate, which is controlled by Republicans.

He said election security supporters should fan out like "digital Paul Reveres," spreading the word about the issue and putting pressure on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to allow the bill's consideration in the Senate.

And like Rep. Greg Walden's town hall earlier in the day, the conditions at the immigration detention camps near the U.S.-Mexico border became a topic of discussion.

Wyden recounted a recent video from federal court where a lawyer from the U.S. Justice Department argued that the federal government wasn't required to provide migrant children housed in detention centers soap or toothbrushes.

"That's not American folks," he said. "When you see a child that's hurting, whether it's by the roadside or anywhere else, you try to reach out and help that child rather than walk in the other direction."

Toward the end of the meeting, an audience member who identified himself as a member of a local Tea Party group spoke up.

The man pushed back against some of Wyden's criticism of the president and his comments on climate change.

Wyden said they may not agree on the issues, but giving the man a chance to speak at the town hall was a part of the "Oregon Way."

Climate: HB 2020 widens urban-rural divide

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knows this but has chosen to sow fear in the hearts and minds of rural Oregonians through a campaign of distortion and misinformation."

Opponents, including the 11 Republican senators who fled the state last week to prevent a vote on HB 2020, say the cap-and-trade plan's urban supporters simply don't understand their rural counterparts.

"Part of governing is including all of Oregon, not just Multnomah County, in what is to be included in legislation," said Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend.

Andrew Miller, a major Republican donor and chief executive officer of Portland-based Stimson Lumber Co., framed HB 2020 in more colorful terms.

"It's a 'screw you' to rural Oregon so that people in urban Oregon can feel good about saving the planet," Miller said.

Oregon is often described as a "blue state," one that favors Democrats. But that belies the reality that Oregon, like many Western states, contains sharp political contrasts.

Oregon's few major cities and their suburbs hold the bulk of the population, and therefore its voter base and political power. They are overwhelmingly "blue" in contrast to the largely "red" counties of Eastern Oregon and the Oregon coast.

But dividing the state neatly into Portland and everything else and assigning each to ends of the political spectrum is an oversimplification.

As of January, Oregon had 969,106 registered Democrats, 701,392 registered Republicans and 911,387 voters who were not affiliated with a party.

And some of the state's rapidly growing regions, such as Bend and Hood River, are becoming more liberal.

But one statewide survey suggested views on climate change were driven more by politics than geography.

The Portland firm DHM surveyed Oregonians in March about whether Oregon



Capital Press Photo/Sierra Dawn McClains

Protesters line the sidewalks Thursday near the Oregon Capitol protesting two climate bills in the Legislature. HB 2020, the so-called cap-and-trade bill, was scuttled on Saturday. But HB 2007, which will require heavy-duty trucks and other equipment in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties to have new diesel engines, passed.

"should do more to address climate change."

Some 85% of Democrats said yes, compared with 25% of Republicans and 53% of nonaffiliated voters and those registered with other parties.

By area, 64% of respondents in the Portland area agreed, compared with 58% in the Willamette Valley and 44% in the rest of the state.

"There's been a misinformation campaign," said Brad Reed, spokesman for Renew Oregon, a coalition of special interests that supported the cap-and-trade program.

Reed said that campaign portrayed the pollution costs and restrictions proposed as destroying rural economies, riling areas of the state.

Backers of cap and trade said rural Oregon would have benefited in a way that opponents downplayed, obfuscated or ignored.

"This bill is a massive, massive investment in rural Oregon. I mean, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars a year will be going to rural Oregon for the next 30 years, the way this bill was designed," said Dylan Kruse, lobbyist for Sustainable Northwest. "This notion that this is urban versus rural, or this is about environmental groups profiting off of this, is outrageous."

By 2050, the Carbon Policy Office estimates Oregon's cap-and-trade plan would have eliminated 43.4 million metric tons of carbon annually from the atmosphere, the

Capital Press reported last spring. Critics pointed out that amount represents just 0.12% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the prices of diesel fuel, gasoline, natural gas and electricity would have gone up, in some cases dramatically.

Sen. Arnie Roblan, a Coos Bay Democrat, said Kruse's views don't account for the challenges of life in rural Oregon.

"They have to drive farther and farther because the mills are farther and farther away," said Roblan, who opposed the cap-and-trade plan. "All of these things conspire to make people who don't see a lot of hope out there, and that is very frustrating to them, and when other people don't acknowledge that, it makes it even harder."

Even supporters of HB 2020 like Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, acknowledge it was a tough sell.

Golden is one of three Democratic senators who live outside the Willamette Valley and represent largely rural constituencies. He said he understands the concerns he hears in his sprawling Southern Oregon district.

The timber industry there was decimated by the spotted owl decision and other shifts, both political and economic, in the late 20th century.

But cap and trade is different, he insisted.

"I want rural people in my district to know we really

hear you," Golden said. "We all remember the pain of the timber decline, and how rapid it was, and how working families had the rug pulled out from under them. I want them to know that this isn't that."

Some timber companies supported HB 2020, which exempted the industry from regulations.

Others did not, including Miller's Stimson Lumber. Miller believes that while some businesses and groups would prosper under cap and trade, others would suffer.

"It's all about picking political winners and losers," Miller said.

Similarly, while cap and trade had the support of some farmers, the Oregon Farm Bureau was opposed.

Jenny Dresler, lobbyist for the Oregon Farm Bureau, said cap and trade didn't address businesses' concerns that cost increases would drive them under.

"I don't know that it's urban versus rural as much as it's understanding some of the pressures in different sectors in Oregon's economy," she said.

Oregon's farmers compete with growers in other states, and even in other countries. Neighboring Idaho doesn't have anything like the regulations and fees included in HB 2020, Dresler pointed out.

Analysts said the bill would have immediately resulted in higher fuel costs, something opponents zeroed in on.

Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, worried that the increased cost of fuel, for example, could make Oregon farmers less competitive.

"In my district, you take a farmer in Ontario that grows onions," Findley said. "When he sells his onions, he sells them on an open market with growers from Idaho, and if the farmer from Oregon has to pay 22 cents a gallon more for fuel, his operating costs are up. ... The guy from Idaho whose fuel is 22 cents a gallon cheaper, his cost of production is less, but they're selling the same product to the same people."

Tourists: Dutch couple sees Pendleton

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Klooster said. "Everything is wide open and natural. The Netherlands is flat. That's it. That's our country."

Spelier said that most

people from the Netherlands visit American metropolises like Los Angeles or Las Vegas, but they wanted something a little different.

"There are 17 million people in the Netherlands,"

Spelier said. "There's not a lot of space. It's crowded. For us, Oregon is different. It's special. Life moves at a different pace here."

Spelier and van Klooster take annual trips around the globe together. Last year,

they went down under to Australia. Next year, it'll be Asia. But for now, they're taking their time in Oregon.

"We thought it was only on TV," van Klooster said of Pendleton. "But, it's real."

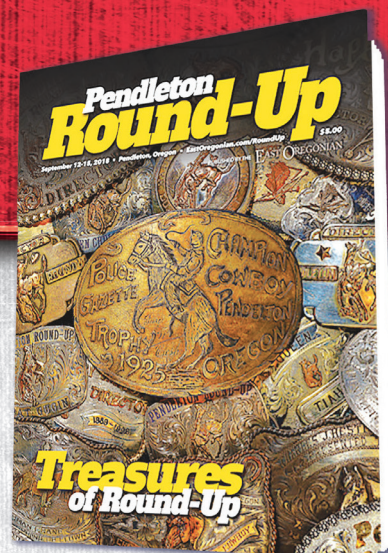
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