

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW



Capital Press Photo/Sierra Dawn McClain

A panoramic view of the June 27, 2019, protest at the Oregon Capitol in Salem.

Voices of frustration, and fear, at the Capitol

Thousands of Oregonians gathered in front of the state Capitol last week to protest climate change bills that wouldn't help the climate but would raise the cost of gasoline, diesel fuel, electricity and natural gas in addition to threatening rural jobs.

The only thing House Bill 2020 offered was the promise of "green" jobs and the fact that it wouldn't significantly impact the climate. Even proponents have said it would have impacted only about 0.12% of global greenhouses gases.

What the protesters said was from the heart, born of frustration and fear for themselves and their families and a realization that, in the large scheme of politics in Oregon, they barely matter. Portland has the votes, so who cares about Pendleton, or Tillamook, or La Grande, or Baker City or John Day?

The voices were as clear as they were heartfelt.

"We've got climate problems to deal with, obviously," 19-year-old Mary Hewitt told *Capital Press*

reporter Sierra Dawn McClain. Hewitt comes from a family of truckers, fishermen and other working-class people. "So many of my peers have come out supporting these bills. They think they're fighting for the environment, and I get it. But this is not the way to help the earth. Ride a bike to work. Walk more. Recycle. But don't crush me and my family. We're people, too."

Ellie Hilger, 30, from Tillamook, also took part in the protest.

"Tillamook is not just a tourist destination," Hilger said. "We work the land and take care of it. I come from a logging family. My dad runs a hay farm. This bill will destroy Tillamook industries."

"Crush" and "destroy" are not words demonstrating confidence in the Legislature. These folks — loggers, farmers, truckers and ranchers — have been the targets of Oregon environmental activists for decades. The activists have crippled the timber industry, once a mainstay of the state's economy. They have attacked ranchers — note the shameful attack

on Dwight and Steven Hammond that continues in a Portland courtroom. Good Lord, haven't they been through enough? Now, even after they were pardoned by President Donald Trump, the environmental attack dogs continue.

And note the bills constantly introduced in the Legislature attacking loggers, farmers and ranchers — the people who provide the state's food, fiber and shelter.

It's as though rural Oregonians — even the ones whose families braved the Oregon Trail to build a life here — are an endangered species. They feel that political "leaders" such as Gov. Kate Brown have not only abandoned them but are actively working against their interests.

We often hear chatter about healing the urban-rural divide. Yet some politicians appear to use it and try their best to widen the gap that divides Oregonians. As an example, where was Brown when last week's protest took place? Where were the others, who still insist HB 2020 was misunderstood?

This was a chance for them to talk with the protesters, to gain an understanding of their concerns, to show empathy and tell them they fully understand and promise to prevent any legislation that would hurt rural Oregon. This was a chance to start building a bridge, yet they didn't show up.

HB 2020, the cap-and-trade climate bill, died in the Legislature during the waning days of the session. But another bill, HB 2007, which will require heavy equipment and trucks in the three counties around Portland to have expensive new diesel engines, passed.

Proponents promise to keep pushing cap-and-trade bills in the future. No doubt they will, and in the process they will continue to drive a wedge between urban and rural Oregon, which would pay a disproportionately high price for an immeasurably small impact on climate change.

What also won't die is the distrust and damage Brown and others have inflicted on Oregon, its people and its economy.

YOUR VIEWS

Merkley a tourist, not a concerned legislator

Sorry, but your Tip of the Hat to Sen. Jeff Merkley of June 29 is misplaced. While it is true that he puts forth effort to come to Eastern Oregon, it is clear from his record as a senator that his visit is for naught and his partisan ways do continue. The visits are just that, a "visit"; he is a tourist on a social trip, not a concerned legislator that comes to listen, understand and pursue legislation that supports us.

Most recent evidence of him being out of touch on the needs of all of Oregon is his supporting Tweet of May 28 of Oregon HB 2020. So yes, please come, senator, but do us all a favor and listen and act!

Carl Culham
Athena

Lawmakers should do their job

In the late 1990s, the federal government threatened water rights to the Little Walla Walla River because steelhead and bull trout were listed as a threatened species. I was a pastor in Milton-Freewater at the time. Those of us who understand the complexities of rural agriculture can imagine the chaos this threatened. Local irrigators, and our church, began to build a coalition which included the Tribes, various government agencies, diverse environmental groups and more. We found a solution and a way around the crisis. Cooperation was the key.

The Associated Press reported Friday that 11 Oregon lawmakers fled the state to avoid the cooperation and conversation that we elected them to

engage in are now claiming victory in the defeat of HB 2020.

HB 2020 would have had Oregon declare a state of emergency around climate concerns that desperately need attention. Its goal was to "dramatically reduce greenhouse gases by 2050" through a cap and trade regime yet to be wholly defined. While we in rural and urban Oregon experience the crisis differently, we all know it exists.

Those of you in our state legislature have been given a trust by the people of Oregon. It's a hard job. I respect that. It is likewise the job of faith communities like mine to support your work and speak up when you have failed. I am doing my job. Leaving the state to avoid doing yours is a catastrophic failure. My prayers for renewed integrity in office will continue.

Bishop Dave Brauer-Rieke
Portland

Thank you, Greg Walden

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden held a town hall meeting in Athena at noon on Sunday. He was very forthcoming with information, from forest fires, opioids, wolves, the border, and even touched on the Green New Deal and what the cost would be to implement such a plan. He handled the antagonists very well. His staff gave out contact information and he promised to get back in touch with people with answers to specific questions.

I was impressed and Greg Walden is assured of getting my vote again. It was exciting to actually have him come to Athena.

Sally Thompson
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