

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the Hat, kick in the pants

Legislative success can often be hard to come by, but a tip of the hat to Oregon lawmakers for approving a bill that funnels more than \$1 million to the education department for FFA programs.

The legislation, House Bill 2444, secured a 27-0 vote in the Senate last week and it will furnish \$1.43 million to help fuel enrollment, leadership development and coordinate statewide competitions.

Most notably the funds will eliminate fees to join at FFA program, often an obstacle for some who can't afford, but want to join, a local FFA program.

There are almost 7,000 students already enrolled in the Oregon FFA. JD Cant, co-chair for Advocacy with the Oregon Agriculture Teacher's Association, said the funding could help as many as 5,000 additional students, who already take agriculture classes, become enrolled in the intra-curricular program.

This time lawmakers made the

right decision and should be lauded for pushing through this important legislation. FFA programs provide a much-needed — and in some places — and necessary addition to regular school curriculum.

**A kick in the pants to Gov. Kate Brown** for threatening to use her powers as the state's chief executive to revive the failed state climate bill. The controversy of the bill sent Republican lawmakers fleeing the capital last month and sparked a series of protests in Salem. The governor needs to stop the threats and let the climate bill die.

**A tip of the hat to all of those who helped support Pendleton's Fourth of July Parade.** The downtown corridor was covered with red, white and blue and the parade was a triumph. While all the volunteers that helped make the parade possible deserve praise, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 922 spearheaded the event. The big thank you goes out to the VFW post.

**A kick in the pants to Lexington**



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky

**House Bill 2444, relating to agricultural education, flew through the Senate on June 30 by a 27-0 vote. The bill appropriates \$1.43 million to the Oregon Department of Education for FFA to provide financing for enrollment, leadership development and the coordination of 24 state-level competitions.**

**elected city leaders** for being unable to pass a budget before the end of the fiscal year, which forced the town's government to close. The city council was scheduled to pass its 2019-20 budget last week but only one city councilor showed up. A meeting will occur Tuesday at the Lexington City Hall where the issue will be discussed.

The city's elected and appointed leadership can surely do better than this. They need to pass a budget and

then get on with other important business.

**A tip of the hat to the Pendleton City Council** for its idea to seek input from residents about the best way to raise money for city road renovations. The council plans to hold public meetings and other presentations to gather feedback. The idea is a good one. Elected leaders can't go wrong if they actively seek out information and input from voters.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Oregon Constitution disapproves of walkouts to deny quorum

Before the dust settles on this just-completed legislative session, we need to debunk a false narrative about the Senate Republicans' two walkouts that disrupted legislative business.

In his press conference last Friday, Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr. claimed the walkouts were a legitimate legislative strategy authorized in the Oregon constitution.

"The founders put (the) quorum in there for this very reason when you get a super majority," he said. "By denying quorum, you force parties to come back together."

That's not true. In fact, the constitution pointedly disapproves of a walkout to deny a quorum.

The quorum requirement is found in Article IV, section 12:

"Two thirds of each house shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a smaller number may meet; adjourn from day to day, and compel the attendance of absent members."

This says two things about a quorum. First, two-thirds of each House constitutes a quorum to do business. Second, if there isn't a quorum, those members present can "compel the attendance of absent members."

Webster's dictionary says "compel" means "to impel or force to appear." Compel does not mean to sit and wait, plead or negotiate. Nothing in this constitutional provision suggests the founders "put (the) quorum in there" to give any faction of the Legislature the right to deny a quorum for any purpose.

It's important to note that both parties have used the walkout as a legislative strategy. When I was speaker pro tem of the Republican-controlled Oregon House in 2001, it was the Democrats who left town to deny us a quorum to enact a redistricting plan. House Speaker Mark Simmons and I signed summonses directing the Oregon State Police to bring in the absent members.

As in this past session, the OSP were not effective in compelling the missing members to return in 2001. And they

won't be effective in future walkouts. For one thing, it's not their job, and to mount a concerted search for AWOL members would detract from their mission of public safety. For another, members can evade the state police by leaving the state. Sen. Brian Boquist introduced a chilling new reason not to send OSP to compel absent members last month when he threatened anyone who tried to bring him in. We should not ask troopers to put their lives in danger just to enforce the constitution's quorum requirement.

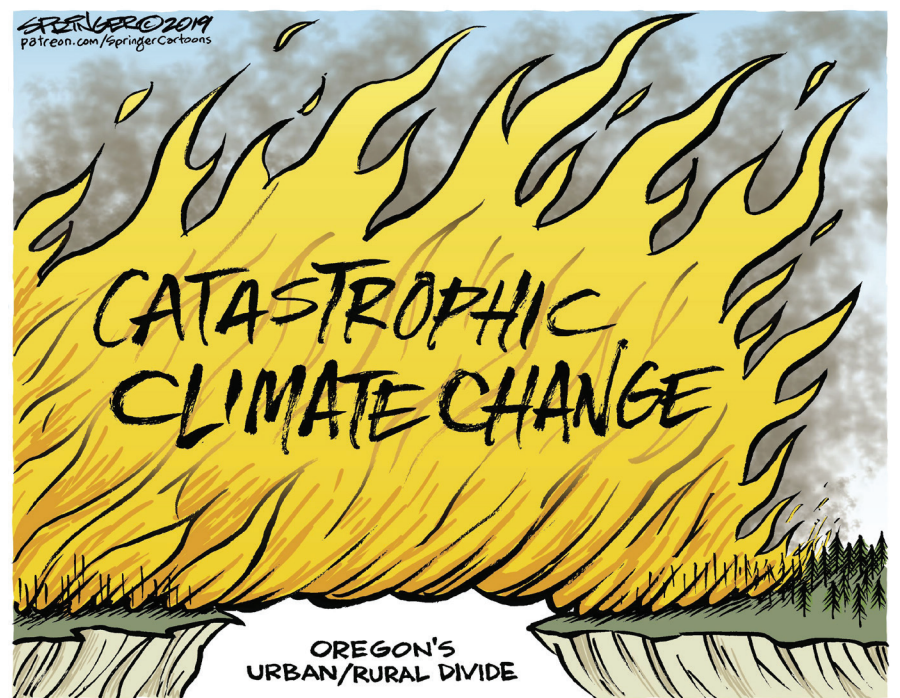
A better answer would be to amend the constitution to include automatic penalties for those who, for whatever reason, would be absent without an excuse during a legislative session. This could include fines that escalate on a daily basis, with an ultimate penalty of expulsion after so many days of unexcused absence.

Such an amendment would ensure that the walk-out does not become normalized as a legislative strategy. We can't allow that to happen.

For those concerned about protecting a minority from an oppressive majority, there are already protections in place. Tax measures require a three-fifths super-majority. With divided government, each chamber can limit the other and the governor can control both with the veto. Oregon has the referendum and initiative, by which actions of the legislature can be put to a vote of the people. There is recourse to the courts. And there is always the ballot box, where voters can throw out a party that has acted against their interest.

Of all the Constitution's protections for the minority, walking out on the job is not one of them. No, in fact, the opposite: By allowing members to be "compelled" to attend, the Constitution places highest priority on members being present to do the work for which they were elected. If our system lacks meaningful tools to enforce that expectation, we should put them in place.

*Lane Shetterly is a former Republican member of the Oregon House of Representatives. He served as speaker pro tem of the House from 2001 to 2004.*

LANE SHETTERLY  
COMMENT

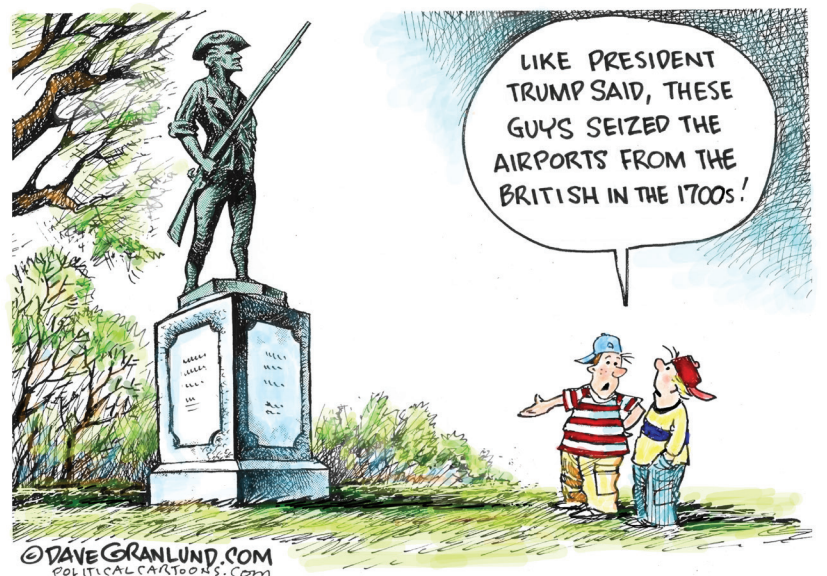
## YOUR VIEWS

### Border conditions a subject of disagreement

I was at the town hall that Greg Walden hosted in Athena on Sunday and, to say the least, I am aghast at how he distorted conditions on the border. He let on like there are no issues with the housing of the immigrants from South America, yet when people like Ron Wyden and Alexia Oasia-Cortez talk about conditions down there, they are awful. Even the people who treat the migrants say that conditions are bad.

No one in America should have to sleep on the floor covered up with a space blanket, yet you can see pictures every day of children laying on the floor covered with a space blanket and trying to sleep. Perhaps Representative Walden should go with Senators Merkley and Wyden and see first-hand what a horrendous situation it is down there, instead of listening to No. 45 tweet about how wonderful it is down there.

Barbara Wright  
Pendleton



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