

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

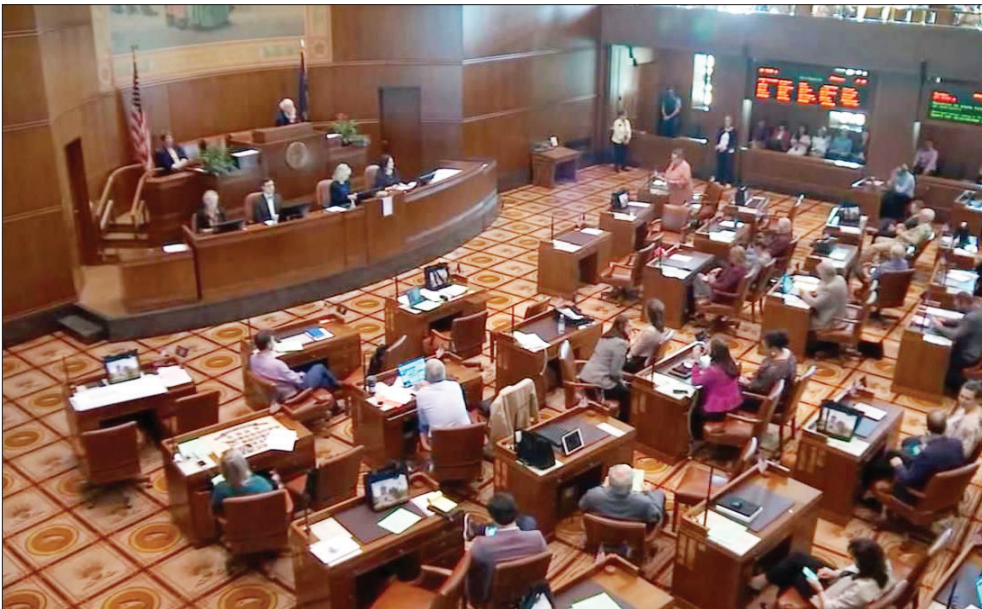
Legislators should put their names on their bills

Almost any Oregon legislator can launch into a passionate speech about how much they believe in accountability and transparency. But they don't always deliver.

Nowhere is that more glaring than in bills before the Legislature. Legislators conceal who introduced bills and who is behind them.

Not every bill is like that. But no bill should be like that. And yet year after year, there are bills in the Legislature that don't clearly say on them which legislator or legislators brought them forward.

Go through the list of legislative concepts that lawmakers are talking about this week and it's hard to find any that say who is behind them. They are often what are called "committee bills," meaning they are going to be introduced on behalf of a committee. That means no legislator takes



KPTV Photo

The short legislative session begins Feb. 3 and runs through March 8. Democrats continue to hold a supermajority in both chambers of the statehouse.

direct responsibility. It means voters can't hold legislators accountable. Why should that be allowed? We have never heard a satisfactory answer.

Legislators do sometimes introduce bills on behalf of constituents. They may not agree completely with what a constituent wants in the bill. They

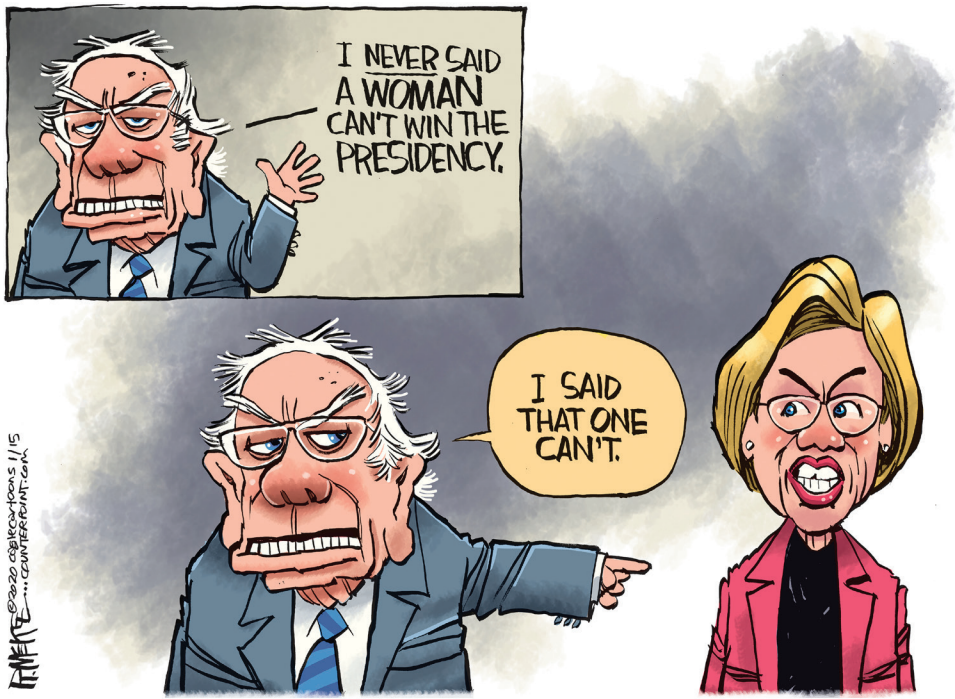
should still have to put their name on the bill.

Legislators also sometimes introduce bills on behalf of the governor or a state agency. They should still have to put their name on the bill.

Legislators do work together on legislation, as well. Then put all their names on it.

If you have the spare time to follow a bill as it moves through the Legislature, it usually becomes apparent who is supporting it and who is not. And in our experience, particularly with the Eastern Oregon delegation, individual legislators will be forthcoming about their legislative agenda. They don't hide it.

But there should be no mystery in any bills or draft bills in the Legislature. Voters should not have to play detective. When a bill or draft bill is discussed it shouldn't be a whodunit.



YOUR VIEWS

Senators, stay on the job

The last few years have brought increasing political partisanship. It's worn down our energy and worn down our trust in each other and in our elected officials. I hope that in our upcoming short legislative session we can remember how much we really need each other and how much we rely on a well-functioning state government.

Without a well-functioning state government, we won't have many basic things we want and need — emergency services when wildfires and nat-

ural disasters strike, functioning public schools and colleges, and access to health and family services. We can't afford to give up these things for the "pleasure" of not working together.

When state senators walk off the job as they did last summer, they abandon work on basic programs and other needed measures that we all need. Our senators should serve and protect us. They should not shut down the government. Senators, don't walk out on your responsibilities. Stay on the job in 2020.

Fran Finney
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OTHER VIEWS

Stopping the seepage of our national discontent

Editor's Note: Do you have a point you'd like to make or an issue you feel strongly about? Submit a letter to the editor or a guest column.

A new decade is upon us, we who live, love and die in a small rural town of some consequence. In this proud town, many significant talents abound with roots that have long been here and others newly planted, we thrive.

We have multi-faceted beliefs and opinions. We are occasionally complacent, fear change, are gutsy, and tough as hard-tack, but we are not atypical. For the most part, we all derive from immigrants with the exception of the indigenous people whose native tongue still dances past the wheat fields, reassuring consciousness daily, if we listen. We go about our business, chat in the street, lunch at Great Pacific, commiserate at the barber.

But as of late, the swirl of cruelty, despair and intolerance threatens our normalcy. It grows under the pavement, festers under the step where a lone, bearded man sits and speaks in whispers to no one. I hear young people parrot comments made by adults that are divisive and uncharacteristic. I attend meetings where those I have had prior connection with don't even acknowledge I am in the room.

Is this what we are becoming?

I teach in Portland. I see the fabric ripping out from under Stumptown's unwavering determination to keep it connected. Now, people are alien to each other, uncaring, unconscious, staring at a phone, completely unaware. I have found myself lecturing in front of students that have either no interest, or the information they have on a particular subject has been obtained via YouTube, and feel no need to personally engage with their fellow students since texting has become the communicator of choice. No longer is the fall of Rome a lesson learned. It is merely "history" and does not bear repeating, say my more self-absorbed students.

For those of us committed to teaching the most current, fact-based information, it's a bit disturbing to know that people are getting data from amateurs on YouTube — yet never taken one YouTube advisor's word on Napoleon's short visit to Elba. YouTube claims it was because "he wanted to visit Waterloo."

Hardly.

What went wrong? Are we now defined by our politics and our techie equipment appended to our thumbs? Are we to reap the benefits of a detached society? Is racism, xenophobia, sexism, red or blue shaping our youth? Is it generational, and are we responsible? Most of my education I received in Europe learning to understand what works and what doesn't. History is certainly worth repeating if for only getting it right. But when, in the short 243 years, did we cross the line that brought us to this moment? Recently,

the *New York Daily News* had an article that asked the same question, the answer, as clear and thoughtful as I have read:

"Perhaps it was the rise of self-reinforcing social media and press silos where everyone is told even their most exotic view is the only view, and where sacrifice, community and dignity are replaced by clicks, likes and retweets. We're selfie-filtered into unrecognizable oblivion.

"Perhaps it was the slow creep of reality television into every living room, on every screen, on every device that led us here. After all, reality TV in this decade gave us both the rise of the Kardashians and the election of Trump, which count as signs of the end times by any standard"

Deliberately disturbing? Yes. Can we change it? Not sure. I feel, as other parents and grandparents should feel, that the responsibility of not only our future, but the future of our grandchildren, falls on us far more than we would like to admit. Teaching that lying is OK, as long as it's not under oath, or that the warnings of experts should be dismissed as "fake news" when the facts are dangling like participles from their lips. I take my job seriously, I take my daily personal interactions with assiduity. And, as a small community, we might accede to benevolent acts, to engage our kids, construct our adults into a more cohesive representation of what an inhabitant of these United States should be.

We should pledge allegiance to our neighbors, our state, our country, to the laws on which it was founded, one nation under whatever deity you wish to acknowledge — be it God, El Shaddai, Jehovah, Allah — with liberty and justice for all. For those of you "patriots" — which I was taught is the sacrifice of personal interest to the public welfare — you could hardly disagree with liberty and justice, but to pledge your allegiance to a piece of cloth that many have worn as shirts, bandanas and bathing suits, or an allegiance to any mortal man, doesn't exude American love of country.

Each of us can stop the seepage of our national discontent by keeping our perspective, understanding what is fact and what is not, educating ourselves and our kids. Our opinions are just that, our opinions; agree or disagree, it can be done with respect and without destroying the fabric of this town. Perhaps we can, as we address 2020, renew our commitment as a community, encourage growth, camaraderie, tenderness and compassion.

Regardless of what you think your status is here in Pendleton, leave it at home. The next time you exit the barber, GP or the Rainbow, tell the stranger on the bench to have a very happy and healthy new year.

Kate Dimon is a Pendleton resident, who is an adjunct professor at Clatsop Community College.



KATE DIMON

COMMENT

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.

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