

O

EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ANDREW CUTLER
Editor

WYATT HAAPT JR.
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Lawmakers shouldn’t rush complex bills

Oregon legislators will hit the 2020 legislative session on Feb. 3, and while there are already a number of high-profile bills on the horizon, elected leaders should remember that complex legislation can’t be ironed out in a mere 35 days.

One key bill apparently on the legislative agenda is a new proposal to slash greenhouse gas emissions. A similar bill consumed much of the 2019 session and was eventually allowed to die.

The greenhouse gas emission proposal is a good case in point regarding why such bills need to be reviewed during the longer session — set for next year. That’s because it is complex and has the capacity to impact all of Oregon.

It isn’t a new occurrence. In the past, complex bills with the potential to make a huge impact on the state have been rolled out during the so-called “short session.” When that happens, the voters get short-changed. That’s because complicated legislation needs months of



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky, File

In this June 29, 2019, file photo, lawmakers convene at the Oregon Senate after the minority Republicans ended a walkout they had begun on June 20 over a carbon-emissions bill they said would harm their rural constituents. The Democrats intend to take up a new version of the carbon-emissions bill during the 2020 Legislature.

review and study. Especially when the legislation is new, as is the case with the current emission proposal.

There is all too often a rush by whatever particular interest group is behind a specific initiative to

get it OK’d by the Legislature, and then rammed into law.

Voters deserve better. They deserve lawmakers that are going to take their time to get it right — not rush to make a judgment on a

particular proposal that impacts all of Oregon.

Major policy topics need a thorough vetting, not a quick turnaround.

Lawmakers should also remember that the work they do is important, so important that voters count on them to make the right decisions. A “right decision” can’t be made in a mere 35 days.

Every legislative session is important, but the 35-day session that will kick off next month was never designed to be one where wide-sweeping pieces of legislation are quickly formed, and then made into law.

Lawmakers should go to the 35-day session, get the work that needs to be done finished, and then quickly get out of Salem. Major issues — such as the carbon emission topic — should be shuffled off until the next, longer session where careful methodical thought and debate will make it a better piece of legislation for all Oregonians.

YOUR VIEWS

Hansell should back climate legislation

Sen. Bill Hansell, I am an Oregon grandfather writing on behalf of my kids and grandchildren — and yours — and children and grandchildren everywhere. While, as an 80-year-old, I will not live to see the full impact of the climate crisis, I am committed to bequeathing a habitable planet to our children and grandchildren.

We are in a climate crisis that demands strong climate action. Oregon’s oceans are becoming more acidic and wildfires are growing more frequent and massive.

Senate Bill 1530 is a good framework, but currently it is too weak to meet the demands of the climate crisis. It provides too many giveaways to the fossil fuel industry, allowing these corporations to continue polluting as usual, harming our health and the climate.

SB 1530 needs to be stronger to reduce pollution from fossil fuels and increase investments in a clean economy. It needs to be stronger to reduce greenhouse gases from oil companies all across the state. Investments in communities most affected by climate change — rural, low-income, tribes and communities of color — need to be guaranteed.

Oregon’s young people need strong climate action. They need leaders to pass strong climate legislation that will protect the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the soil that grows the food they eat. That’s why Oregon’s youths have been taking to the streets in record numbers in all parts of the state. They are calling for leaders to pass strong policies that will give them a future free from devastating climate disasters and collapsed economies.

Oregon’s most vulnerable populations need strong climate action. People in poverty have the most to lose under climate crisis disasters.

Rural Oregon needs strong climate action. We are on the front lines of climate change. From ranchers in Union County to tree farmers in Clackamas County to farm workers in Hermiston, there are strong voices from rural Oregon calling for action. Please listen to our voices.

Please build upon the work you have started by strengthening SB 1530 and passing bold climate legislation in 2020.

Bill Whitaker
La Grande

Homeless situation made worse by zoning laws

I have managed properties for over 40 years. I am truly alarmed with the current homeless problem. I heard that San Francisco is paying \$100,000 per homeless person per year, that their life expectancy is 30 years less and that the hospital is just letting them stay when there are empty beds. The problem is getting worse. Young women with small kids are rapidly increasing.

I was recently visiting with a police officer and his advice to me was “never feed them.”

How Christian is that?

It is obvious that our own government does not want to help solve this problem. Regulations make housing unaffordable. Water, sewer, garbage and tax rates must be passed on in rents. They are all too high. New construction standards and parking requirements make affordable housing impossible.

The free market system is not allowed to work.

With the new technology in smoke detectors, sprinkler systems should be eliminated. Homeless people do not need 1-1/2 parking spaces per unit. They seldom have a vehicle. The HUD/inspection requirements make older properties impossible for your tenants to live in.

Do you remember “Ma Smalley’s” boarding house in the old “Gunsmoke” episodes? People can share bathrooms, laundry rooms and kitchens. They need these services — not just a warming shelter. Zoning laws restrict residential occupancy in most areas. New construction standards and parking requirements are needed to convert these to affordable housing. Churches are outright in all our zones. We need to encourage faith-based homeless/treatment centers, even government funded.

Boarding houses need to be outright uses in commercial zones and some light industrial locations. The homeless/addiction problem needs to be immediately addressed. Our own doctors caused most of the problem. An emergency executive order is needed.

Kalvin Garton
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

I can’t endorse the Times’ approach

The New York Times provided lessons in both journalism and television Sunday night, by way of bad examples.

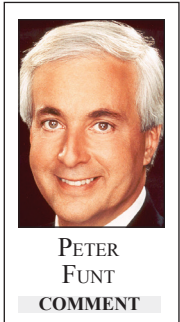
First: If a newspaper believes in making political endorsements it shouldn’t balk when a tough call comes along, leaving voters more mystified than before. Second: The ingredients that create a compelling reality-TV show (“The Apprentice” comes to mind) are not the same as those that make for honest political opining.

After spending “more than a dozen hours” interviewing most of the major candidates seeking the Democrats’ nomination for the presidency, the *Times* declared itself unable to choose between Senators Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, so it endorsed both. Readers were advised to deal with it “in the privacy of the voting booth.”

That, of course, is the essence of the argument many publishers use to explain why they do not make political endorsements in the first place. The *Times*, however, has a long history of issuing pointed recommendations — going back to 1860 when it endorsed Abraham Lincoln.

More troubling, however, is the way the paper unveiled its non-endorsement in a competition-style episode of the television series it produces for FX, known as “The Weekly.” Much like “Shark Tank,” the long-running ABC series in which contestants are interviewed by a panel of successful business tycoons for a chance to make a deal and become wealthy, the *Times*’ program faced a common dilemma. Should hours of material be edited for insight and clarity — fair but often dry — or should the producers go for pacing and entertainment value?

The episode of “The Weekly” went heavily for the latter, as best illustrated by the clips selected for the segment on businessman Andrew Yang. Although the full transcript of Yang’s interview, published by the *Times*, shows a reasonable depth of thinking on pressing issues of the day, he was asked on the TV show “what government secret” he would like to know (UFO evidence, he said with a laugh). And he was asked which of his



PETER FUNT
COMMENT

opponents “understands the internet” (answer: none).

In his few edited minutes, Yang was given what a former guru of schlock-TV, Chuck Barris, liked to call the “zonk” treatment. Former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg got a taste of it as well when confronted with the fact that some trolls of social media refer to him as “Mayo Pete,” an apparent reference to either his whiteness, or blandness, or both.

Just about every twist from the reality-TV handbook was employed, from hearing the editorial board members offer unkind jabs after candidates left the room, to having secret ballots written on slips of paper as a means of whittling the decision down to the final four (Warren, Klobuchar, Buttigieg and Sen. Cory Booker, who has since dropped out of the race). Then, a pause for a commercial while Kathleen Kingsbury, the paper’s deputy editorial page editor, mulled.

In the past, these *Times* interviews with candidates were off the record — at least to the extent that full transcripts were never released and TV cameras were not present. In an admission that those of us who work in television understand all too well, Kingsbury told the *Washington Post*, “The reality is when you bring TV cameras into any meeting, people’s behavior changes. I’m still wondering if we should have done this on TV or if we should have just released the transcripts.”

If the *Times*’ goal was to boost ratings for its TV show, the endorsement competition probably succeeded. However, to the extent the paper was out to guide Democrats, who will begin the long voting and caucusing process on Feb. 3 in Iowa, the dual recommendation was little more than frustrating.

The 2020 election and the presidency itself have already been stained by a reality TV mentality, along with the distortions that come with abbreviated takes on social media, and the form-over-substance nature of cable TV.

When *The New York Times* emulates such things it loses my vote.

Peter Funt is a nationally syndicated columnist.