

OUR VIEW

Bills should be clear about intent

State Senate President Peter Courtney held a news conference before the 2021 legislative session to announce steps to keep the legislative process accessible to Oregonians.

“We have never seen a session like this before. We need to keep members and staff safe,” he said. “Legislative staff worked hard to come up with a plan that is safe and transparent. Every session, Oregonians make their voices heard on issues they care about. We need these voices.”

But if you don't know what the Oregon Legislature is talking about it's hard to voice your opinion. Consider Courtney's Senate Bill 846. It's a model of translucency, not transparency. The bill shifts money around. It also potentially reduces the kicker tax refund.

Does the language of the bill clearly state that it potentially reduces the kicker? No.

Does it even mention the kicker? No.

Shouldn't a bill that potentially reduces the kicker clearly state that? Yes, we think so. Do you?

Now if you are fluent in the budget-speak of the Legislature you could figure it out from the language of the bill — maybe. What the bill does, in part, is repeal transfers to the general fund of \$15 million from the state's insurance fund and from an operating account of the Department of Justice. The money stays where it is, at least temporarily. It just doesn't get shifted over to the general fund.

That matters because it effectively reduces the general fund by that \$15 million. That affects the kicker. The kicker is Oregon's unique law passed by voters. It occurs if state revenues exceed forecast revenues by 2% or more over a two-year budget cycle. If that happens, the excess, including the trigger amount, gets returned to taxpayers.

No final determination has been made if there will be a kicker for the 2019-21 biennium. But the kicker is on target to kick, according to the latest revenue forecast. And because Senate Bill 846 is moving forward, the amount returned to taxpayers would be less.

Look, legislators need to be able to move money around, such as in this bill. They need to be able to balance the budget and line money up how they want to spend it. They also should be transparent about what they are doing and clearly state in a bill if it would reduce the kicker.

‘THE MARSHMALLOW TEST’

A Stanford University psychology experiment studying delayed gratification.

So, you can have *one* marshmallow right now ...

... or wait a little while and have *two* marshmallows later.



My complicated relationship with wild turkeys



BILL ANEY
THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

When it comes to wild turkeys, I admit to being a little bit conflicted.

April is gobbler season, when turkey hunters across the country break the bonds of winter by heading into the woods. An early morning gobbler reverberating through the trees is a truly thrilling sound, and hunters work to lure in a tom turkey with an assortment of clucks, yelps and purrs imitating a love-lorn hen. The closeup sight of an adult tom in full strut, gobbling and drumming, with bare head shifting brilliant red, white and blue isn't soon forgotten.

Elk hunters will find some aspects of turkey hunting familiar, with a recipe of equal parts calling, camouflage, subterfuge and adrenaline. One big difference is that turkey hunters also experience the fullness of spring: the sight of wildflowers, the sound of songbirds, the smell of moist earth, and the almost visceral sensation of ruffed grouse drumming.

The problem is, turkeys don't belong here in the Blues.

Fossil records show that there was a distant relative of the North American wild turkey in Southern California more than 10,000 years ago, but the first written records indicate that the native range was mostly east of the Rocky Mountains and in Southern Arizona and Mexico. Turkeys are not native to any other continent, and European explorers, having found the birds to be excellent eating, brought turkeys back with them to be domesticated across Europe and Scandinavia by 1550.

Over the next several hundred years,

North American turkey numbers were decimated as settlers arrived on the continent, and then moved west. In the mid-1900s, state wildlife agencies and sportsmen's groups repopulated the continent with wild birds, including establishing huntable turkey populations in areas where they didn't previously exist. In Oregon, the Game Commission started releasing birds in 1961, and over the next 40 years transplanted almost 10,000 birds in 584 different releases. I remember seeing my first turkey in 1978 near Tupper on the Umatilla National Forest, a direct result of one of these releases.

At one time the National Wild Turkey Federation had a goal to establish huntable populations in all 50 states by the year 2000. As a turkey hunter who thrills at the sound of a gobbler, I appreciate that goal. As an ecologist, it gives me chills.

So I am conflicted. Like ring-necked pheasants, California quail, Hungarian partridge and chukars, our region is host to non-native populations brought here solely for recreational purposes (a.k.a. hunting), and I have spent many days in the field in pursuit of each of these winged invaders. I also understand that the world is full of disastrous consequences of introductions of non-native species into new ecosystems.

Perhaps the most infamous example is the introduction of two dozen European rabbits into Australia in 1859 by an Englishman, nostalgic for the rabbit hunts he experienced back home. Presented with a climate of mild winters and no natural predators, the rabbits bred, well, like rabbits, and within 10 years were declared a nuisance with more than 2 million killed by hunters without any appreciable impact on the population. In 1950, the population was estimated at 6 million, and Australians

built rabbit fences, removed hunting restrictions, and introduced a variety of diseases in desperate attempts to control the rabbits.

I could only imagine what could happen in places like Hawaii, with large number of unique species that have been devastated by non-native animals and plants. Yet, turkeys have been introduced there as well.

To be fair, there is limited evidence I could find of turkeys (or pheasants, quail, or partridges for that matter) having negative effects on native wildlife or habitats in North America. They can be an alternative prey source for medium-sized predators like coyotes and bobcats, and in theory their presence could support higher predator populations higher than they would be without turkeys, but no one has proven that yet.

Aldo Leopold, considered the father of American wildlife management, is famous for writing, “To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.” I imagine he would have added that intelligent tinkering also means not adding extra wheels or screws into the works without fully understanding what might happen.

So I am conflicted. I have enjoyed seeing turkeys in South Dakota, Oregon, Washington, and even Hawaii. I also understand that they don't belong in those places and dread what feels like the inevitable unintended consequences. In the meantime, I will do my feeble best to control the spread of this alien by attempting to fill one or more turkey tags this spring.

As an ecologist and law-abiding hunter, it's at once both the least and the most that I can do.

Bill Aney is a forester and wildlife biologist living in Pendleton and loving the Blue Mountains.

YOUR VIEWS

Mink farmers should be easily identifiable

I really enjoyed the humorous article about mink as the precursor to depopulating the world. I wonder how many living in Eastern Oregon have ever seen a domestic or wild mink? I thought I saw one, but it turned out to be a furry little dog that belonged to folks in Meacham.

I think it would be great if mink farmers and trappers wore a special mask with a red M in the center, so we could avoid them. While we're at it, maybe politicians should wear a mask with a black P for the same reason.

When I was about 10, my mother drug me along on a shopping trip. We went to a huge store that had all different kinds of garments. She walked back

to a corner to look at coats and a wild mink jumped off the rack and flung itself around her neck. I grabbed it and flung it on the ground and stomped on it. Unfortunately, my mother and I were asked to leave immediately. My mother wasn't very pleased with my efforts to save her life.

Mike Mehren
Hermiston

Pendleton is due for big screen success

Almost three weeks ago, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article (“Hollywood Renews Love for West-erns,” March 8, 2021) that holds promise for Pendleton.

Pendleton has it all — the Round-Up,

the historic downtown, the underground tour and, yes, the Cozy Rooms. The town is surrounded by cattle ranches, fields of wheat, and not far away the sheep that helped give rise to the Pendleton Woolen Mills.

Your older readers may remember “Sky King,” the radio and TV show that featured an airplane landing on the ranch. Pendleton is close, with an airport and a budding drone business. It is time for Pendleton to be featured on the big screen or a streaming service. Paramount's “Yellowstone” has been a success. Why not Pendleton?

For any questions, I can be reached at Kent.Hughes@wilsoncenter.org, Kent.H.Hughes@gmail.com, or by phone at 202-320-9078.

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