

## OUR VIEW

# Elected leaders work for the voter

Oregon lawmakers did something good recently when they approved Senate Bill 513, a measure that requires high school students to complete one semester of civics before they graduate.

The bill goes into effect beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

Lawmakers passed a similar bill in 2017 that strongly encouraged school districts to offer civics instruction, but it was not required.

Senate Bill 513 probably will not garner banner headlines or spark controversy, but is probably one of the most crucial pieces of legislation to come down the pike in decades.

That is because knowledge regarding how our government works is, at times, absent from public discourse. All one must do is look to the recent presidential election or the tenure of several of our past presidents. Neither former presidents Donald Trump, Barack Obama nor George W. Bush could simply rule exclusively. That is not how our system of government works. Each president can do a whole lot by themselves — using such edicts as executive orders — but in the end they are beholden not only to the people but to Congress.

A firm, basic knowledge of how our republic functions, how legislation is created and who gets to make the final decision on key issues is crucial for not only our youths but for all voters.

We in the news business sometimes make the error that everyone understands how our government works, and then stand in dismay when people make what appear to be outrageous statements about democracy.

The path to work within our system to make change or to get something done begins with the knowledge of how the machinery of democracy works.

Why is it important? Civic education is critical because if we do not know how the system functions, we cannot act as careful observers of our elected leaders. Our elected leaders — from the local city council all the way up to the president — are not bestowed with unlimited power to do as they choose. They are constrained by a check-and-balance system brilliantly conceived by our Founding Fathers.

Many of the recent problems the nation encountered can be directly traced to an ignorance of how our government works. Many do not know how a legislative bill works. Where it is developed. Others believe a president carries unlimited power and can make “things happen” on a whim.

The first lesson in civics education should be the easiest. That lesson is elected leaders work for the voter. Period.

### EDITORIALS

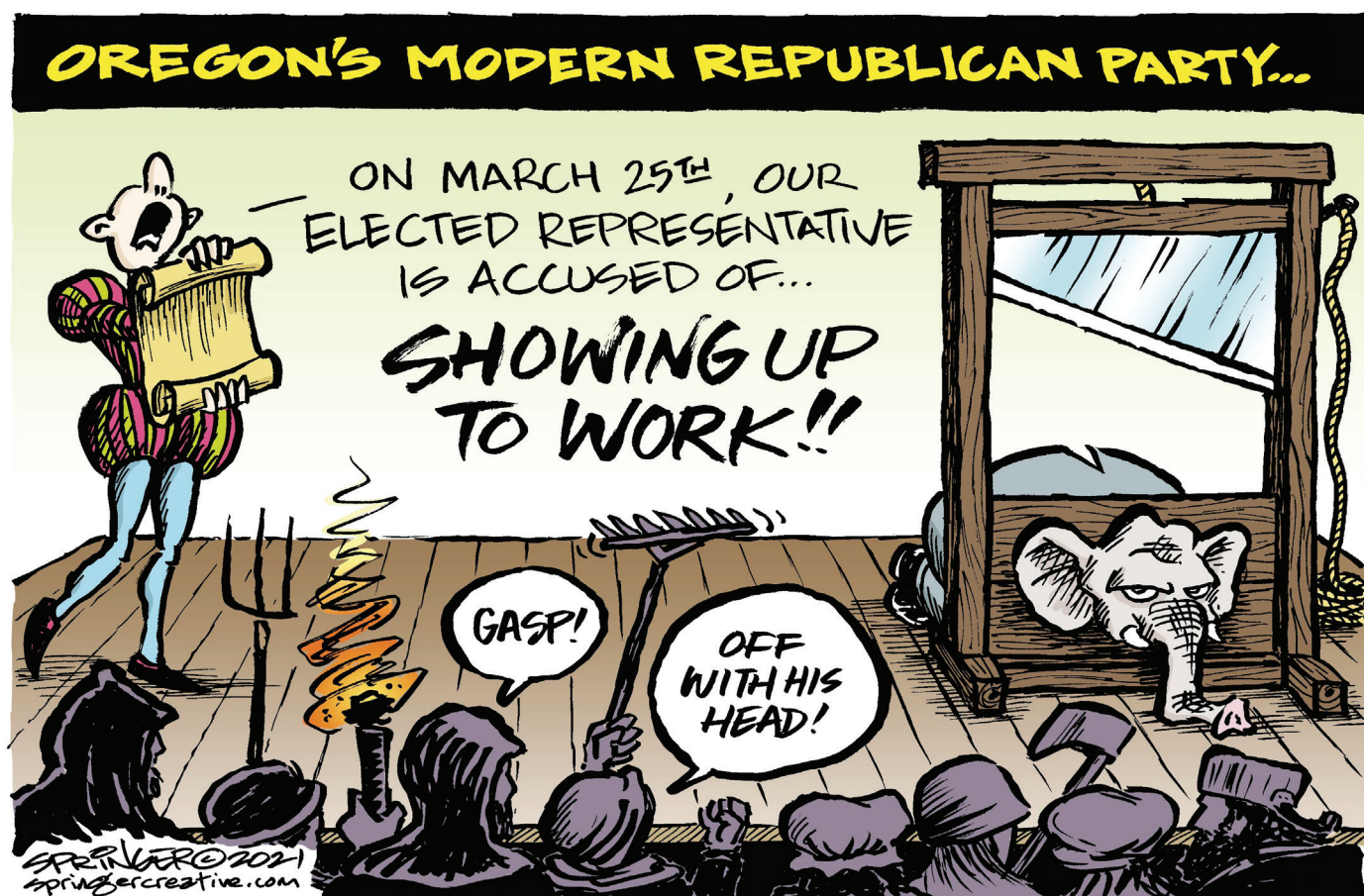
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### LETTERS

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 letters 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.

### SEND LETTERS TO:

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or via mail to Andrew Cutler,  
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801



## Are you willing to pay for the B2H?



FUJI  
KREIDER  
OTHER VIEWS

People ask, “Is that still going on?” Yes, it’s true, the massively destructive Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission project is still under review. Each time we’ve asked folks to speak out, it’s more critical that they do.

The final hearing at the Oregon Public Utilities Commission on Idaho Power’s 2019 energy plan, which features B2H, is Thursday, April 15. The OPUC commissioners have been impressed with the number of public comments already received, and now is the most important opportunity to speak out with your reactions to Idaho Power’s power play.

Building the line will guarantee them cost recovery and a hefty 7.6% profit based on the project’s \$1.2 billion cost. Good for them. Bad for us.

In 2015, when I started tracking these plans (integrated resources plans), Idaho Power claimed it needed 351 megawatts of energy by 2026 to replace energy from coal plant closures. Rather than building its own resources to satisfy this need, the company wanted to buy energy from the Mid Columbia energy trading hub and transmit it hundreds of miles away. That’s where the B2H comes in.

Closing coal plants is definitely worth supporting. But destroying hundreds of

miles of private and public lands, habitats and sacred places — in addition to footing the bill — is not the way. Contrary to the company’s green-washing narrative, there are many ways for it to get or make the energy it may need.

Now, after six years and three IRPs, the “need” has been reduced to from 351 MW to 42 MW — and in the Idaho’s PUC review, the company state the need will be only 5 MW by 2029! This reduction has been occurring even with Idaho Power actively resisting more solar and wind contracts, battery storage or building any of its own energy resources. It has discouraged renewable energy projects through state legislation and is de-incentivizing rooftop solar among customers. The industry’s innovations, appliance and building efficiencies, and people’s own conservation, continues driving down the need.

That’s right — 42 or 5 MW of energy need by 2029? They can easily make that up with a small solar farm or simple energy efficiencies, respectively. My point is: There is plenty of energy and energy generation potential in Idaho. The “need” can be easily canceled. So without a need, why the B2H? For Idaho Power it’s all about profits. Not only through the guaranteed return on investment on the capital project (B2H), but the company can continue to gain profits through transmission tariffs. At the Oregon Public Utilities Commission, the discussion has evolved into “regional grid capacity and resiliency,” and “costs to the ratepayers.”

(Since the Bonneville Power Administration is currently a partner in the B2H that also means that we, as Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members, are also ratepayers in this arrangement.)

I’ve asked for an analysis on upgrading and reconducting the three lines that go from the Mid Columbia Hub to Idaho, from 230-kilovolt to 345-kV lines. The increased capacity of these three lines could yield a total of 345 kV more capacity. These lines could be fire-hardened; they could be digitized and the corridors could be cleared out — all benefiting actions bringing much more security and resiliency into the current system while reducing fire risks.

If Idaho Power really needed the capacity in the future, which is questionable, the Oregon PUC (the regulators in this case) should order the company to study upgrading before planning and building new.

There won’t be another opportunity to influence the OPUC for at least another year, and by then much more work will be completed in the permitting process. Not good. Therefore, we need to tell the OPUC: Do not acknowledge this project any longer. We can’t afford it and it is not needed. Write now (before April 15) to [puc.publiccomments@state.or.us](mailto:puc.publiccomments@state.or.us). For more info, check out [www.stopb2h.org](http://www.stopb2h.org). Now is the time to act.

*Fuji Kreider has lived in La Grande 34 years and is a member of the local nonprofit Stop B2H Coalition.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### Hansell keeps children at the forefront

This letter is to introduce Mrs. Sally Anderson Hansell, who is running for a position on the Hermiston School Board.

Mrs. Hansell grew up in Hermiston, graduated from Hermiston High School, and went on to get her degree in law. She is a practicing attorney in Hermiston. She has three children in the Hermiston schools at this time; she also has to school her husband, Tyler Hansell, occasionally.

Mrs. Hansell has seen what COVID has done to her children’s education and believes your children have been affected too. She believes that school is more than learning to read, write and mathematics — it is a place where discipline and respect are taught. School is a place where children see old friends and make new ones.

In Hermiston, some children eat two meals a day at school. In a way, school is a mirror of society where children learn to deal with the same problems that Mom and Dad do every day. Many of these things have been taken from our children during the COVID era. How and when will these losses be replaced?

I haven’t read or heard of any concrete plan to do that. I don’t believe this is the fault of the local schools, educators, board or administration. I do believe that if you elect Mrs. Hansell, she will absolutely make sure that these problems will be solved for our children. Please join me in voting for Mrs.

### LETTERS DEADLINE FOR MAY 18 ELECTIONS

The East Oregonian does not run endorsements of more than 400 words. The East Oregonian will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day, if necessary. We run the letters on a first-come, first-served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 7. You can email them to [editor@eastoregonian.com](mailto:editor@eastoregonian.com), or mail them to East Oregonian, c/o Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. We will publish our last letters on Saturday, May 15. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 18.

Hansell in the May 18 election.

Mike Mehren  
Hermiston

### B2H and environmental justice

On Thursday, April 15, our public utility commissioners will hold their final hearing on Idaho Power’s 2019 energy plan, which includes the B2H transmission line.

I’ve urged the Oregon Public Utility Commission to acknowledge issues of environmental justice when considering approval for the B2H transmission line. I believe Idaho Power is not shouldering the true environmental cost of the proposed B2H line, that Idaho Power is instead passing the cost of impacts to economically disadvantaged rural communities.

For instance, Idaho Power claims “no significant impact” for 150-foot transmission towers that would be built a few

blocks from a beautiful mountain lake, the key feature of the cherished and historic city of La Grande Morgan Lake Park. If the B2H line impacted such a park in Portland, I do not believe it would be going forward.

Fire risks are another cost/hardship passed on to our fire vulnerable rural communities. Rural residents demand to be treated fairly and to have our environment considered and protected!

There are other options to building the B2H line, even if a transmission line is determined to be necessary. Concerned residents with STOP B2H have outlined many such alternatives at [www.stopb2h.org](http://www.stopb2h.org). I’ve asked the commission to pursue these options, taking into account environmental justice issues and the true cost of the B2H transmission lines to economically disadvantaged rural communities.

Please consider doing the same before April 15. Email [puc.hearings@state.or.us](mailto:puc.hearings@state.or.us).

Kathryn Andrew  
La Grande