

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Lawmakers trickle out information to the public

The 2022 legislative session doesn't officially start until February, but next week legislative committees will meet and talk about proposed bills.

Legislators may know some of what's coming. It's hard for the public to know much of anything, so far.

For instance, as of Jan. 7, it was not clear who will be testifying or even what those bills are really about. On Tuesday, Jan. 11, one House committee talked about a proposal for broadband, cannabis, system development charges, assistance for live venues, workforce development and more.

You could argue that's fine. More details are typically posted before the meetings. Some committees have posted proposed bills and who will be testifying. And, well, the legislative session hasn't even started, yet. These are just preliminary discussions.

It's always easy to come up with excuses and justifications. But if the state's elected leaders aimed to create a system designed to get input from Oregonians, this is not how they would do it. Proposed bills and full agendas would be posted far in advance to give the public a chance to understand what's coming and react.

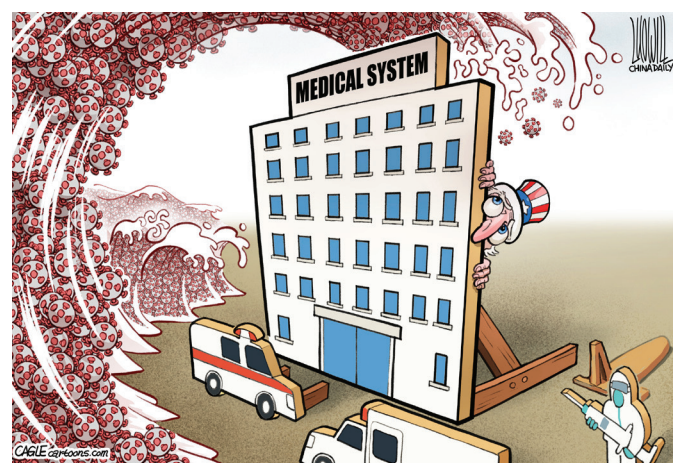
From what we can tell there are some interesting legislative concepts on the table. We will just single out one. It aims to protect school superintendents.

Last year, the Adrian School Board fired Superintendent Kevin Purnell because the board wanted him to defy the governor's mask mandate, and he refused. The proposed bill says school boards may not direct superintendents from taking any action that conflicts with state or federal laws or policies. It also prevents schools boards from taking any employment action if a superintendent complies with such laws and policies.

Maybe that bill is not one that will generate much public discussion. But when a bill is not posted well in advance, there is less chance that the public could have input.

What we have with the Oregon Legislature is a system that allows public input, not one that is designed for it. It's designed now to serve only those who have the time and energy to refresh state websites every hour to see if clear information is posted. We don't expect that to change.

Trickling out information keeps the power in Salem in the hands of legislators and lobbyists and away from the public.



YOUR VIEWS

Let us celebrate and honor MLK Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day won distinction as a national holiday at a terrifically bloody cost, and though the pandemic precludes large celebrations, we are extremely aware of the need to celebrate and honor all colors, ethnicities, shapes and sizes of people as belonging to the human family.

"Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch," said Abdu'l Baha, son of Baha'u'llah, prophet, founder of the Baha'i Faith. More than 100 years ago, when speaking about the blight of racism in this country, Abdu'l Baha warned us that if we didn't do all in our power to bring about the oneness of humanity, our streets would run with blood and so they have.

The pivot of peace and justice in every area of life — economic, cultural, social, academic, agricultural, artistic — requires an end to the divisive and corrosive influence of race and prejudice.

Let us celebrate and honor then, with heart and soul and action, the stunning and heroic pioneering efforts of a man with the mission of a world changing principle, the oneness of humanity, his honor MLK Jr.

Many are familiar with his life story, his unwavering commitment to his mission but it is well not to forget some of his monumental utterances such as those in "I have a dream." He tells us that there are "insufficient funds in the great bank of justice." and that we, as people, "cannot walk alone." He commends us to "transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

Isabel Wilkerson, in her book "The Warmth of Other Suns," tells us of the 75-year migration, beginning in the early 1900s of African Americans to the north, east and west from the the Southern states — something untouched in my history classes.

And while we're about it, let us not forget his honor Mahatma Gandhi, father of the Indian independence movement, assassinated in 1948 for his monumental nonviolent activism towards justice and peace for his people. He lived his words to humanity. Words such as these, "An eye for an eye will only make the world blind," and "In a gentle way, you can shake the world," and "The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane."

And also among those to whom

we owe such tribute is his honor, the recently deceased Archbishop Desmond Tutu, what a loss to our world. Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, the Gandhi Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Honor, to name a few of his accolades. He was known for his outstanding sense of humor as well as for quotations such as the following: "My humanity is bound up with yours, for we can only be human together," and "If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends, you talk to your enemies."

He also is reported to have said, "God is not upset that Gandhi was not a Christian, because God is not a Christian. All of God's children and their different faiths help us to realize the immensity of God."

May we never forget the mission of these beloved souls.

Ruth Hall
Pendleton

Big lumber is making record profits

I used to think big tech and big pharmacy were the two most corrupt businesses in the country. Big lumber is catching up fast. While the poor consumer, contractor and family building a home all suffer, big lumber is making record profits.

These obscene price increases cost the family building a home over \$30,000 past what they had planned. I just surveyed prices at Home Depot (Jan. 3) and found that oriented strand board has gone up to \$26 per sheet, 3/8 plywood is now \$33.73 a sheet and 1/2 plywood is now \$51.88. A 2x4 is \$6.48 and a 2x6 is now \$8.27.

I went to Home Depot recently needing the 3/8 plywood, a few sheets of OSB, and some 2x6s. My pickup was full, so I came back early the next morning to find 3/8 plywood at \$25 a sheet — an overnight increase of \$5 per sheet — and today it's almost \$34. The 2x4s had gone up \$1 each. There was a contractor there loading 100 2x4s, which would now cost him an extra \$100.

Another little trick big lumber uses now is downsizing the products. What used to be 3/8 plywood is now 11/32. Half-inch plywood is 23/32. So they get you both ways, downsizing the materials and upsizing prices.

You will hear all kinds of excuses for this coming from big lumber. They were not prepared, it's hard to get materi-

als, the pandemic means fewer workers, a full moon and of course disasters. I am convinced now big lumber loves disasters. Every time the news reports a coming hurricane or tornado, big lumber breaks out the champagne. They know more bonuses are on the way.

Several economic online sources report big lumber profits were up 300% over pre-pandemic levels. Even good old Home Depot made a profit of \$49.8 billion in 2021, up to 19.38% over 2020. I do a lot of shopping at Home Depot and appreciate their military discount.

I guess the old fashion American idea of us all suffering together and gaining together is gone.

David Burns
Irrigon

Recent ruling should change the vote-by-mail system

I was intrigued by the recent Oregon Supreme Court ruling concerning the exclusion of inactive voters from being counted on petitions. In review of the opinion it stipulated that by statute inactive voters are prohibited from voting. Thus only active voter's signature will be counted. A voter is considered inactive if they have not voted in the last 10 years and have been notified by the county.

I think this ruling will/should have ramifications concerning Oregon's vote-by-mail system. Instead of sending out mass ballots to all registered voters, only active voters should be allowed to vote using the rationale of the court's ruling.

I am not a proponent of vote-by-mail. I am a firm believer in one person, one vote. I also think people should have to show some type of identification to vote. The United States is only one of a few countries in the world that do not require identification to vote. Given the importance of each election, it is critical to ensure voter integrity.

So, if you are in an inactive status your signature will not count on a petition, and the same should hold true to your ballot. If you are in an inactive status, all you have to do is contact the Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services to be activated.

Some court rulings have unattended consequences, I think this one may and should change the vote-by-mail system in Oregon.

Joe Mesteth
Hermiston

EDITORIALS

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