

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

The mystery of the bills with no sponsor

We would like our Oregon legislators to join us in a whodunit. The mystery is: Help us find out who are the legislators behind certain bills.

Most bills this session or any session have a chief sponsor, maybe even a bunch of regular sponsors. They make it clear which legislators wanted their fellow legislators to consider a bill. Their names are right there on the bills.

But there is a subset of bills without any such clarity. The residents of Oregon can't know by looking at a bill who is behind it.

We went through the bills that were scheduled for some mention during the legislative session on Tuesday, Feb. 1, and found three: Senate Bills 1521 and 1522 and House Bill 4031.

SB 1521 would prohibit a school district from firing their superintendent for acting in compliance with state or federal law. This bill was introduced, at least in part, to prevent superintendents from being fired for complying with pandemic restrictions, such as masking and distance learning. It was apparently introduced at the request of the Senate Interim Committee on Education. All the members of the committee? One of them?

SB 1522 has so many disparate pieces it's hard to sum up. It's 20 pages long. It also has to do with education. It covers access to contact information for graduate students, requiring school districts to allow students to apply certain credits toward graduation, requirements for homeschooled students to participate in athletics and more. It was also at the request of the Senate Interim Committee on Education.

House Bill 4031 establishes a parity goal for the Department of Education so that the percentage of diverse employees reflects the percentage of diverse students in public schools. This one comes from the House Interim Committee in Education at the request of the Department of Education.

Now why would legislators allow bills to be introduced without putting a legislator's name on it? It's not because legislators are dissolute, lazy and work-shy or too busy.

It's, in part, because they can. The rules of the House and Senate allow it. It's Rule 12 in the House Rules. But legislators make those rules for introducing bills. So they must want it.

We aren't particularly worried about any of these three bills. The concern is the mystery that enables legislators to conceal what they are doing from their constituents. Hiding and setting in motion new laws in secrecy is great power. But such power has no place in a government that is supposed to be transparent, and has no place in the Oregon Legislature.



YOUR VIEWS

No voting rights for non-citizens

As I read the East Oregonian on Saturday, Jan. 29, I came across an op-ed that made me see red.

To think a so-called civic leader could call for voting rights for noncitizens. This is not a question that should be posed. Myself and many other veterans served to protect these rights and to be sure only citizens, born or naturalized, had these privileges.

I feel this self-indulgent buffoon owes an apology to his constituents and all the citizens of Oregon. This man needs to resign and move to a desert island.

Larry Platak
Pendleton

Some lawmakers failed social studies

President Joe Biden's push for a fair voting bill is an important issue the GOP has stalled in Congress. Why can't these individuals, who represent we, the voters, ask us what we want?

What happened to the Freedom to Vote Act?

Under the Constitution, legal citizens have the right to vote, regardless of race or color.

America's founding creed taught us that all are created equal, not in abil-

ity, but in value and dignity. A person's integrity is inherent. Being better educated doesn't make you a better person, nor does it qualify you to rule over the less educated; but it does, or should, enlighten you to fairness and equal rights.

Developing a fair voting policy requires some understanding of human nature, a knowledge of public opinion, and good judgment.

The right to vote is a concept of democracy. The Founders believed some people were better suited for public trust because they believed in their integrity. That's why we have elections.

Voting is a civil right. We were taught that in our social studies class in high school. Apparently some lawmakers failed that course.

Dr. Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

A different view on logging practices

I would like to offer a different viewpoint than the one presented by George Wuerther in the Jan. 22-23 edition of the East Oregonian. Unfortunately, earlier logging practices have created a negative perception about this industry. I prefer to use the term timber harvest, as a process that has many benefits.

At the end of Wuerther's column he stated we should stop logging our public forests. With decreased harvest levels, increased litigation, we have all but stopped harvesting on our public lands. That doesn't promote sound timber management.

So we should import more of our lumber products from Canada and other countries, close down more lumber mills and depend on private timberlands to become a source of lumber. Watch as we continue to have devastating wildfires and more unhealthy public forests due to insect mortality, disease and overstocked stands of timber.

I do not have a degree related to forestry. I studied forestry at Oregon State University, I've worked for the U.S. Forest Service planning timber sales. I've also worked for a timber harvest/wildland firefighting business. The past two summers, I worked on some of the largest wildfires in California, Oregon and Colorado. Hands on experience has provided me with valuable knowledge about our public forests.

On controversial topics the East Oregonian should present both pros and cons. In this case, seek out a professional from OSU's School of Forestry, or some other person to present the benefits of timber harvesting. I challenge your newspaper to do this.

Bill Wilcox
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