



PATRICK CAHILL

OTHER VIEWS

PFLAG Pendleton offers support and education

It is with a heavy heart and great disappointment that we, PFLAG Pendleton, as a member of the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce, are writing in response to the recent comments on the use of pronouns made by the chamber's president. Unfortunately, these hurtful and dismissive comments were widely distributed to our business and community leaders in a recent chamber newsletter.

As PFLAG, in support of families and friends of the LGBTQ2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two spirit, plus) community, we advocate for individuals within our society to live, love and find happiness as their true selves. Our chapter is one of 400 other PFLAG chapters in the United States, and our membership is just a few of the millions of other American citizens that believe as we do. Many of us have come to these beliefs through great personal challenges, changes and growth.

We find it disappointing that someone who is in a public position, who is meant to serve her community and constituency with an impartial outlook, could be so thoughtless with her words to negatively impact the people she is meant to serve. The people who are put into positions of leadership, whether it be local government, city employees or anyone who could be called a public figure, should leave their personal negative feelings at the door to represent their organizations.

Someone with a broad reach such as the chamber of commerce president ought to strive to make the lives of those in their reach better, not more difficult. It is exceptionally frustrating to see a letter from someone who genuinely believes that ignoring a changing world would be in any way beneficial and denouncing a part of her constituency could be seen in any way as a positive trait in a leader.

The chamber president literally states, "Ostriches do not actually bury their heads in the sand, and when threatened they will fall down flat. Ostriches are skilled at using their strong legs to defend themselves by kicking their opponents. While I am not much of a runner, I do share another quality of ostriches — they are very vocal. Yes, ostrich-like behavior works for me."

We hope the chamber president will use her voice in the future to build people up, not tear them down.

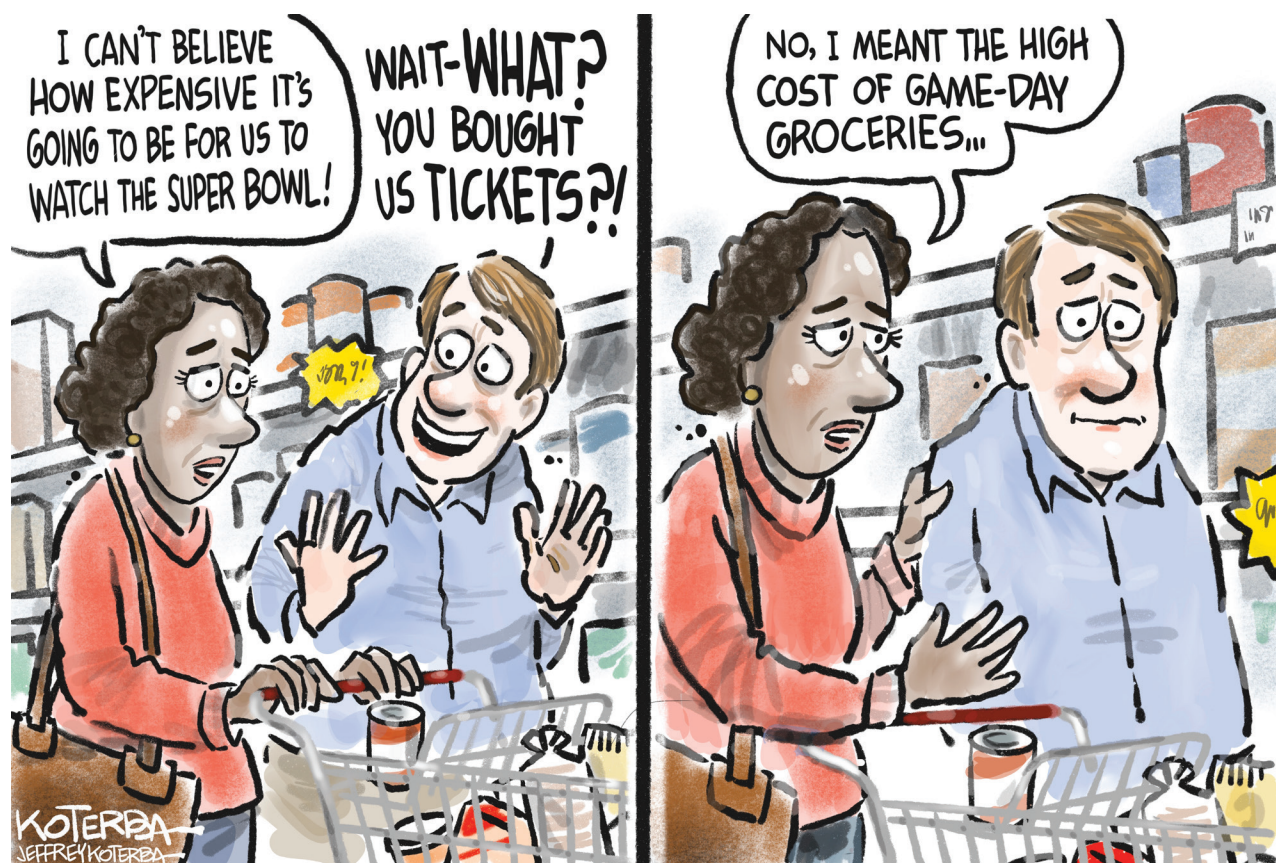
It is PFLAG Pendleton's view that it is through the chamber's organization and leadership that our community has a forum for business cooperation, learning and growth. Further communication to members on these comments provides a clear opportunity for education, action and leadership by the chamber. PFLAG Pendleton sees this unfortunate incident as a growth opportunity. We appreciate the apology that has been issued by the president and the acknowledgement, from the two organizations she works and volunteers for, that her opinions are hers and do not represent their groups' philosophies. That's a start, but apologies fade away and the hurt remains.

This, in our opinion, is a true teachable moment and further action is needed. We want to see members of our city's leadership stand up for a healthy and safe place for everyone to live and thrive. We hope they will choose to learn more and work harder to understand the true impact of someone proudly declaring, "I'm going to keep my head down and hope for brighter days ahead."

PFLAG Pendleton understands you have to work for brighter days. We can't just "hope" they will happen. So PFLAG Pendleton would like to offer the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and staff an opportunity for education and to show consideration specifically toward the gender nonbinary community. It is PFLAG's role in Pendleton not only to support and advocate for the LGBTQ2S+ community but to educate, support and advocate for others to help prevent these types of situations in the future. We ask that the chamber and its president will join us in this important work.

PFLAG sees the word ally as a verb, not a noun. Definition: To work alongside with another as a collaborator, listener, active accomplice, and advocate. Referenced from "Ally-Up."

Patrick Cahill (pronouns he/him/his) is a PFLAG Pendleton Board Member and on the PFLAG Board of Directors. Patrick is a Pendleton High School graduate and raised in our community.



A frenetic agenda for short session



DICK HUGHES

OTHER VIEWS

The Oregon Legislature could impose a sales tax on luxury cars, RVs, electronics, boats, snowmobiles, jewelry, guns, clothing and handbags.

Lawmakers might allow Oregonians to pump their own gas at service stations.

But the Legislature won't push year-round schooling for K-12 students, although state Senate President Peter Courtney said that would help repair the damage that kids suffered during the pandemic. The 35-day legislative session that started Tuesday, Feb. 1, in Salem doesn't allow time for such complex issues. Instead, lawmakers again will put money into boosting summer school programs.

So-called "short" legislative sessions in even-numbered years complement the "long" regular sessions in odd-numbered years, which under the Oregon Constitution can last up to 160 days.

Despite the pared-down agenda, the pace will be frenetic, the action swift and the outcomes highly uncertain.

During the Associated Press Legislative Preview last week, Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend, recalled that he was the last person in the Capitol during the 2020 short session because everyone else in the building got mad and went home.

That's only a slight exaggeration. The presiding officers — Courtney, a Democrat from Salem, and House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland — abruptly adjourned the session days before the constitutional deadline because all the Republicans walked out except Knopp in the Senate and Rep. Cheri Helt, of Bend, in the House.

This year's prospects are dicey as well. Here are five factors at play:

1. Why are we here?

Oregon's state government runs on a two-year budget cycle. The Legislature met every other year, often with special sessions in between, until voters in 2010 adopted length-limited annual sessions. The 35-day sessions were to deal with budget issues that cropped up, fix problems in previous legislation and ... what?

Republicans consistently contend that the supermajority Democrats usurp the purpose of short sessions by bringing in big issues better handled in long sessions, if at all.

2020's abiding outrage to Republicans was the Democrats' reworked carbon cap-and-trade bill, which had failed the previous year. This year's dealbreaker could be House Bill

4002 requiring overtime for agricultural workers. House Republican Leader Vikki Breese Iverson, of Prineville, called it the elephant in the room. Rep. Andrea Salinas, of Lake Oswego, and other Democrats are resuming their battle for agricultural overtime after that proposal died in the 2021 Legislature.

2. Tensions within government

One of the briefest measures, sponsored by Republicans, undoubtedly is dead on arrival in the Democrat-controlled Legislature. House Joint Resolution 201 would terminate Gov. Kate Brown's March 8, 2020 executive order declaring a state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Democrats will back Brown on this. Yet they're displeased with her administration in other areas, and not just unemployment and rental assistance payments.

One concern is the state's perceived lack of progress in mental health care. Legislators put more money into such programs, but they now are unsure whether the money is going where they wanted. Courtney said that raises the question of how far the legislative branch should go in overseeing the executive branch. Legislators' patience is running out.

3. New faces, no relationships

So many legislators have departed in recent months that lawmakers haven't met some of their new colleagues. The pandemic curtailed social events, funded by lobbyists and others, where people got to know one another on a casual basis. Meanwhile, health protocols have restricted interactions in the Capitol.

The latest newcomer, Rep.-designate Travis Nelson, D-Portland, will be sworn in a half hour before the 2022 Legislature convenes Tuesday morning. He replaces Kotek.

Virtual committee meetings mean legislators aren't sitting next to each other, chit-chatting before — and sometimes during — meetings. A hallmark of Oregon's legislature is that D's and R's sit next to each other in committees instead of being on separate sides as in Congress.

Meanwhile, four of the key House leaders are starting their first session in their roles: House Speaker-nominee Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis; House Majority Leader Julie Fahey, D-Eugene; Breese Iverson as Republican leader; and budget committee co-chair Tawna Sanchez, D-Portland.

Such new leadership could mean a fresh start, a less-combative middle and a cooperative ending. Or not.

On the other side of the Capitol, Courtney is serving his final year in the Legislature before retiring. The longest-tenured Senate president in Oregon history, Courtney has been a collaborative, moderating influence

while partisan divides have grown and his own Senate Democratic Caucus has moved to the left. How will his role play out in 2022?

4. Election year

As in any session, but more so during a campaign year, expect lots of public politicking and backroom dealing that make a legislator look good. Or bad. Lawmakers' speeches on the Senate and House floors rarely change minds, but they do create clips for political campaigns. Not only are many members running for reelection, but some are going for higher offices, such as Congress.

House members cannot fundraise during a session, which helps explain why two legislative combatants have resigned before the session starts. Former Speaker Kotek and former House Republican Leader Christine Drazen, of Canby, are both running for governor.

Pollsters rank Oregon as likely electing a Democrat for governor this year. But FiveThirtyEight reported on Thursday, "Republicans might even have a shot at their white whale — the Oregon governor's office, which they lost by just 6 points in 2014 and 2 points in 2010."

Oregon's largest labor union has now endorsed Kotek. Service Employees International Union's influence will mean significant financial and volunteer resources for her campaign. Meanwhile, Drazen's campaign announced that she is the first Republican gubernatorial candidate to raise more than \$1 million for this year's race.

5. The pandemic

The ever-changing pandemic presents many unknowns. The Legislature has perhaps an extra \$2 billion to spend, much of it for one-time investments. Brown wants a half-billion of that set aside to shore against future budget shortfalls.

Issues exacerbated by the pandemic — including housing, employment and health care — already are high on the agenda. "Short sessions were built for this exact moment," Rayfield said.

Meanwhile, two of Oregon's favorite prohibitions could go separate ways.

The Legislature has gradually eroded the full ban on self-serve gas. This year it might go all the way. House Bill 4151 has bipartisan backing from several key legislators amid intense support and opposition from the public.

However, the retail sales tax on luxury items, which would finance \$750 monthly stipends to low-income Oregonians, likely is dead on arrival. House Bill 4079 has only one sponsor, retiring Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

Idaho Power is bullying local landowners



JIM KREIDER

OTHER VIEWS

Idaho Power, an out-of-state regulated energy monopoly, is attempting to build a 300 mile, 500 kilovolt transmission line through five Eastern Oregon counties. It is called the Boardman to Hemingway, or B2H, transmission line, an unneeded and destructive project that threatens our land and heritage.

Idaho Power has started taking landowners to circuit court to gain access to their land for preconstruction surveys. This is for preconstruction proceedings, aka eminent domain — for a transmission line that has not been approved.

The B2H application is still under consideration; more specifically, it is in a contested case that needs to be resolved before final consideration and decisions are made by the Oregon Department of Energy Energy Facility Siting Council. This is not expected until summer or later this year. There could even be more court challenges before a final decision is made.

Obviously, Idaho Power's precondemnation process is premature. It ignores the established state process for conducting preconstruction surveys.

The ODOE process allows for "over-the-fence" surveys should the landowner choose not to allow utilities' agents on their property. The Stop B2H Coalition has communicated with ODOE to learn the relevant regulations regarding access to private property. Idaho Power and its attorneys chose to bypass the established ODOE processes and are taking private landowners to court using methods that are inconsistent with ODOE's proposed order.

To date, at least 21 landowners have or will be served a petition for precondemnation entry on their property. Eventually, there will be more. How can we sit back and watch this invasion of private property and potential land taking happen to our neighbors and friends?

Idaho Power has the financial resources to bully people, to publish slick materials to convince Oregonians that the B2H is a done deal, to make grandiose promises of tax revenues to counties, to employ attorneys and engineers to twist words and counter everything that people, including our local scientists, raise. They relentlessly "greenwash" the project which is not green at all.

The B2H application should be suspended

until Idaho Power ceases its precondemnation court proceedings and follows the procedures in the proposed order. Condemnation or precondemnation should not occur until a site certificate is issued, which gives permission to build the line. At that point, if that happens, there is an established process for condemnation or eminent domain that Idaho Power will need to follow.

Please speak out. Contact your elected officials: demand that Idaho Power stop bullying and harassing landowners. We sent this letter to elected officials, citing the rules: bit.ly/legis-ltr. Idaho Power has a bad reputation. This has been clear since they built the Hells Canyon Dam complex without the promised fish ladders, and it has resurfaced and intensified with the B2H transmission line.

Passionate people from all walks of life and politics make up the Stop B2H Coalition. We have joined forces and commented on every step in the decision making and permitting processes (federal and state) since 2007 as individuals and 2016 as a coalition. We have been steadfast and professional in our well-researched filings against the B2H documenting countless errors and outdated studies in their application and analyses.

Jim Kreider of La Grande is the co-chair of the Stop B2H Coalition Board of Directors.