



DICK  
HUGHES

OTHER VIEWS

## Oregon's economic crystal ball is coming soon

The Oregon Legislature this year came close to allowing self-serve gasoline. Perhaps it's also time to repeal the state law that each city intersection in Oregon have at least one coffee shop.

OK, that's the extent of my April Fools' jokes. On further reflection, however, marijuana dispensaries appear to have overtaken coffee dispensaries in Salem. Maybe I should have used pot shops in the mock law.

Now, back to real-life politics. You might have noticed recently that your friendly neighborhood legislative candidates have been announcing campaign events to attract support and discuss issues. As part of election season, here are two Capitol issues worthy of discussion: state revenues and legislative technology.

### Money: How much and where to spend

Legislative candidates make plenty of promises about what they'll do if elected, from bolstering state police to enhancing environmental regulation. Where, in real life, will the money actually come from? (Of course, legislators also must get a majority of their colleagues and the governor to support their ideas.)

Circle the date of May 18 — the day after the primary election — on your crystal ball. That's when state economists will release their next forecast of how the Oregon economy and state revenues are faring. The quarterly forecasts, along with any tax changes created by a new Legislature, are the foundations on which the governor and lawmakers build the state's two-year budget.

The Democrat-controlled 2022 Legislature embraced the economists' previous predictions of rising revenues and spent heavily, particularly on one-time items. However, budgets tend to expand regardless of which party holds power. What differs is where and how they would spend the money.

When Salem Republican Gene Derfler was Senate majority leader and then Senate president 20 years ago, he was frustrated by such spending and asked the local newspaper editorial board to help rein in his GOP colleagues.

Democratic House Speaker Dan Rayfield, of Corvallis, noted this year that Republican lawmakers had an overabundance of ideas for spending on rural projects. "You'd think that Republicans would be under budget. But, boy, they came in way over budget," he said in February.

Meanwhile, inflation is hitting government as it is businesses, nonprofits and consumers. Wildfire season and associated costs remain unpredictable. So too is the pandemic, though it's easing — at least for now. And as always, state government faces assorted lawsuits, some potentially with hefty price tags.

Long-term indicators suggest budget belt-tightening in the future. Legislators this year added to budget reserves. Should they have done more?

### Technology: Help or hindrance

Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, was a legislative aide in the 1990s. He worked for a representative who told staff to respond only to paper letters, not emails. Times certainly have changed, Wagner said, and legislative staffs are much better now.

Technology has partially evened the participation gap between Portland-Salem-Eugene and the rest of Oregon. With legislative hearings held by video conference and phone, Oregonians can participate from anywhere. They no longer must drive to Salem, wait to hear whether their name is called to testify and, if not, drive back on another day or else give up.

People can respond almost instantly as developments unfold.

But the blessing of technology also is a curse. Video meetings are sterile, lacking the visual cues to how lawmakers and the audience are reacting. Internet or phone connections fail, especially in rural areas with unreliable service. There seems to be even less engagement between people testifying and committee members than in face-to-face meetings.

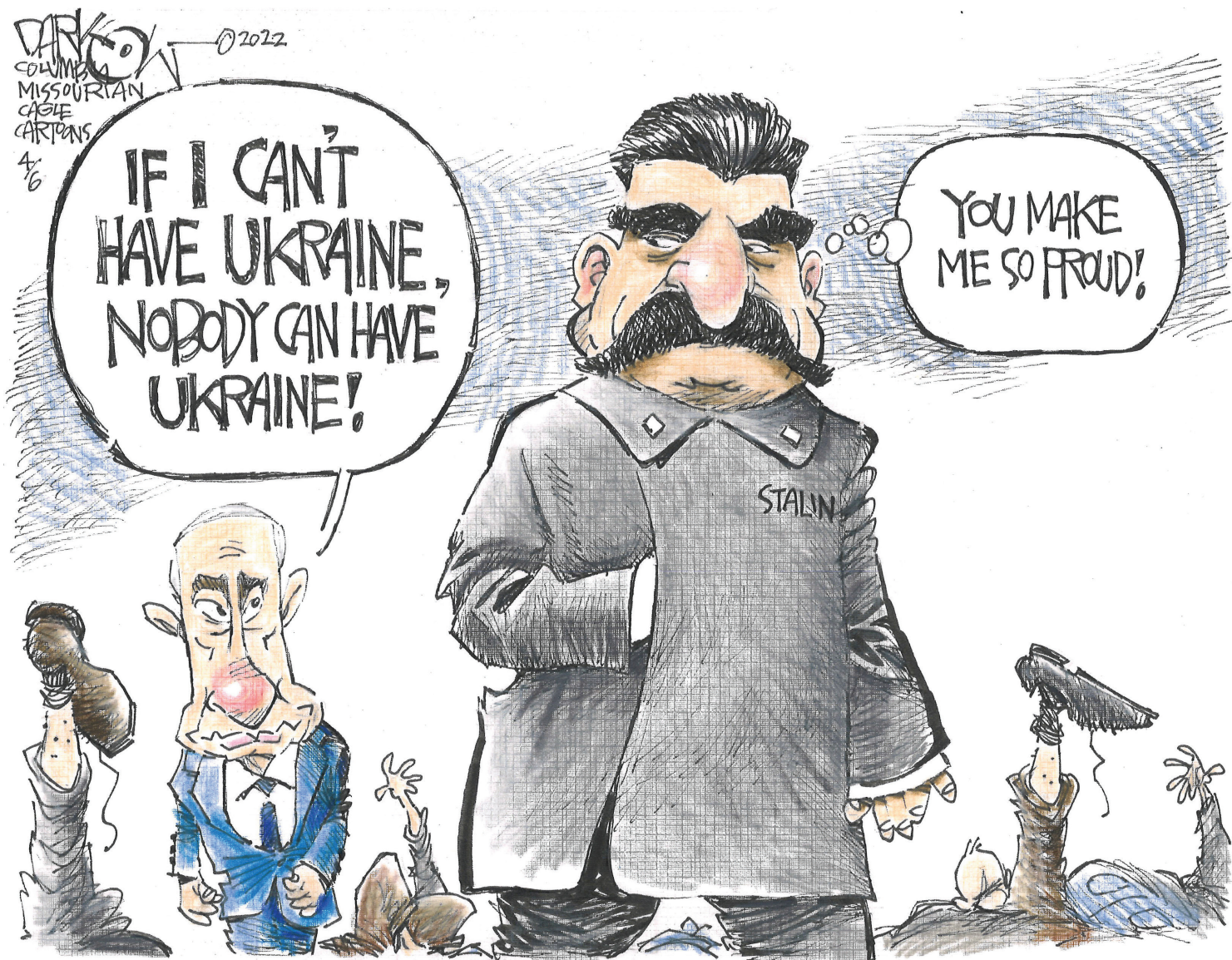
Anyone can fire off an email to a legislator or committee with less time — and thought — than required for an old-fashioned typed or handwritten letter. There is little buffer.

For controversial legislation, written testimony accumulates at such a rate that one wonders whether much of it ever is read by legislators.

Within the Capitol, technology too often is talked about as good or bad. It is neither. The issue is how it is employed — and whether it's overpromised and underdelivered.

The continuing question for legislators, individually and collectively, is how technology can expand accessibility, transparency and interaction while not replacing face-to-face contact and traditional cordial communication.

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



## Ketchup for breakfast



J.D.  
SMITH

FROM THE HEADWATERS OF DRY CREEK

At an Idaho conference a few years back, a woman asked me who had most influenced my writing. I had no idea, but I said it was probably Edgar Rice Burroughs, inventor of "Tarzan," because he could make a reader believe that a child could be raised by apes and never grow a beard as an adult. Since then I have given some thought to her question and realized that Joe "the Birdman" Gould influenced my way of life, if not my writing.

Joe Gould was born in Norwood, Massachusetts, in 1890 and graduated from Harvard with the Class of 1911. Of his college experience Joe said, "I did not want to go. It had been my plan to stay home and sit in a rocking chair and brood. I was an undistinguished student." Upon receiving his bachelor's degree, when asked by his mother what were his intentions, Joe replied, "I intend to stroll and ponder."

Stroll and ponder he did. The only socially recognized job that Joe Gould ever held, in 72 years of life, was during the winter of 1915 when he worked under a grant from the Carnegie Institution measuring the heads of 1,500 Chippewas and Mandans in North Dakota. When asked why he was measuring heads, Joe replied, "The whole matter is a deep, scientific secret." Of the Indians he said, "They are the only true aristocrats I've ever known. Nothing in God's world ever surprises them. They ought to run the country, and we ought to be put on the reservations."

When Joe ran out of funding for his head-measuring project he strolled into New York City and lived there the rest of

his life. In 1917 he began his life's work, a literary work, which he called "An Oral History of Our Time." Of this project he said, "Since that fateful morning, the oral history has been my rope and scaffold, my bed and my board, my wife and my floozy, my wound and the salt on it, my whiskey and my aspirin, and my rock and my salvation. It is the only thing that matters a damn to me. All else is dross."

By 1943, Joe claimed the history was 11 times as long as the Bible. It was composed entirely of conversations overheard, of interviews, (his opening question of anyone was always, "Did you ever have a painful operation or disease?") and of stories he gleaned from the back alleys and barrooms of Manhattan. "I have fully covered what might be termed the intellectual underworld of my time." All of this was written, margin-to-margin, both sides of the page, in thousands of little spiral-bound nickel notebooks, the sort that fit in a shirt pocket. Joe didn't believe in typewriters. "William Shakespeare didn't sit around pecking on a dirty, damned, ninety-five-dollar doohickey, and Joe Gould doesn't either."

Joe panhandled for his food and drink, and for the notebooks and the pencils that were the building blocks of his art. He didn't want money for himself. He said, "I'm the foremost authority in the United States on the subject of doing without. I live on air, self-esteem, cigarette butts, cowboy coffee, fried-egg sandwiches and ketchup."

Joe has been gone since the early 1960's, but there are still stories running around the East Village about how the countermen at the diners in that end of New York City would hide the ketchup when they saw Joe coming down the street because it was his practice to order a fried-egg sandwich, eat it, then dump a bottle of ketchup on his plate and eat that with a spoon. Joe said, "I don't particularly like the stuff, but I make it a practice to eat all I can get. Ketchup

is the only grub I know of that is free of charge."

The manuscript of the "Oral History" has vanished. There are some scholars who maintain that it never existed. I believe it did and that it lives on a shelf in some academic tomb. In his pocket, in a ratty envelope, Joe always carried a will, bequeathing two thirds of the manuscript to the Harvard Library, and the other third to the Smithsonian Institution.

Here are a couple of quotes that we can attribute to Joe Gould, excerpted from pieces of the "Oral History" that were published between 1932 and 1962:

"Nearly everyone is perplexed by the human instinct to either lord it over other people or bow down to them. In the eyes of the Infinite, all pride is dust and ashes."

"When I had all the sunlight that filtered through Western mountain peaks I had moods when I wanted the gloomy coolness of libraries. When I was gorging myself to repletion with facts sufficiently useless to be interesting I would all of a sudden be seized with an intense longing to be again on horseback speeding into the sunset when the ice was breaking up in the Missouri river."

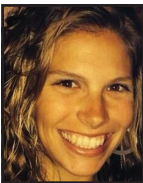
Very little of Joe's personal thoughts survived to be written down. His moniker, Professor Sea Gull, was given to him because he claimed to have translated the entire works of Longfellow into the sea gull language, which he recited daily, "so the birds will have an equal chance to investigate human folly." If you listen closely, you can still hear sea gulls quoting Longfellow.

Joe wrote one poem in English and it expresses the essence of the writer's quest. I have attempted to live my life by its tenets.

"In the summer I am a nudist, in the winter I am a Buddhist."

J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.

## Legislation offers chance to enjoy diverse wildlife



DANIELLE MOSER



MIKE TOTEY

OTHER VIEWS

Wildlife conservation efforts across the United States are at a critical point. More than one-third of American species are at-risk of extinction and in need of proactive recovery.

The Oregon Conservation Strategy, developed with the best available science, identifies 294 at-risk Oregon species and provides recommendations on how best to meet each species' needs. However, Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife is woefully underfunded to adequately implement the Conservation Strategy.

A 2015 task force created by the Oregon Legislature found that to fulfill its statutory mission, ODFW is in need of nearly \$50 million per year in additional revenue. As a changing climate continues to place pressure on Oregon's habitats and wildlife, now more than ever, investments in conservation must rise to meet the need.

Fortunately, on April 7, the United States Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, of which Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley is a member, moved forward legislation that will greatly assist in meeting ODFW's funding need. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is a bipartisan bill

that would allocate \$1.3 billion per year to state fish and wildlife agencies and Native American tribes, providing Oregon with nearly \$25 million per year to implement the work identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

If the legislation passes, funding will go towards proactive conservation programs, aiding wildlife populations before they become threatened or endangered, while also helping to recover those that already are.

For decades, conservation efforts have proven to be incredibly effective at restoring species, some of which were once on the brink of extinction. Today, we face a new wildlife crisis; one in which the magnitude of the solution must match the magnitude of the challenge.

Mary Wahl, chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission agrees: "Oregon has a strong history of protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and the lands and waters that support them. This new funding opportunity sets the stage for addressing key conservation issues of the 21st century, especially the impacts of the changing climate and ocean on Oregon's ecosystems."

By prioritizing passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, this Congress will ensure that our fish, wildlife and outdoor recreation traditions will endure for the benefit of future generations.

Failure to fund these conservation efforts will not only endanger Oregon's at-risk species, but also threaten the many Oregonians employed by the outdoor recreation industry and the communities that rely on

them. Without healthy habitats and thriving species, outdoor enthusiasts would not be able to fuel this important industry. Additionally, by investing in proactive conservation, we can avoid putting more species on the path toward extinction.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act represents an historic opportunity to simultaneously benefit wildlife, conservation, sportsmen and women, the economy and taxpayers. The importance of this bill cannot be overstated.

Curt Melcher, director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife says: "From my perspective, passing this bill would be the most significant moment in fish and wildlife conservation in the United States this century. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would allow us to fully implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy and truly begin to address species conservation proactively instead of the reactive, emergency approach."

After several years of being stalled in Congress, this legislation is now closer than ever to being a reality. We thank Merkley for voting in favor of the legislation in committee and urge the rest of our Congressional delegation to support this high priority legislation and in doing so, ensure present and future generations have the opportunity to enjoy the diverse array of fish and wildlife that call Oregon home.

Danielle Moser is the wildlife program coordinator for Oregon Wild, and Mike Totey is the conservation director for the Oregon Hunters Association.