

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Walkout may result in changing quorum rules

Do you think Gov. Kate Brown should do more to get schools to reopen? Do you think the state should do more to vaccinate seniors sooner? Do you think the state should look to speed up reopening of businesses? Those are reasons why Oregon Senate Republicans on held a protest and walked out of the legislative session Thursday, Feb. 25. The GOP says their efforts to get Brown's attention to these issues have gone unacknowledged. So they held a walkout to get her attention.

Yes, they got her attention. But Republicans didn't compel her to make any changes. And we can't imagine she will fundamentally change her approach.

Perhaps Senate Republicans did succeed in a few ways. Just getting people's attention these days takes more than making a speech. The protest got the Oregon public's attention for at least a news cycle. And in that moment, Republicans highlighted what the difference might be if they were governing.

They also reminded their fellow legislators they still have the power to shut down the making of new laws.

Oregon is one of only a handful of states that requires by its constitution that two-thirds of lawmakers must be on the Senate floor and the House floor for work to be done. The narrow Democratic margin in the Senate means the Democratic majority is not walkout-proof. A walkout is some of the only raw power Republicans in Oregon really have.

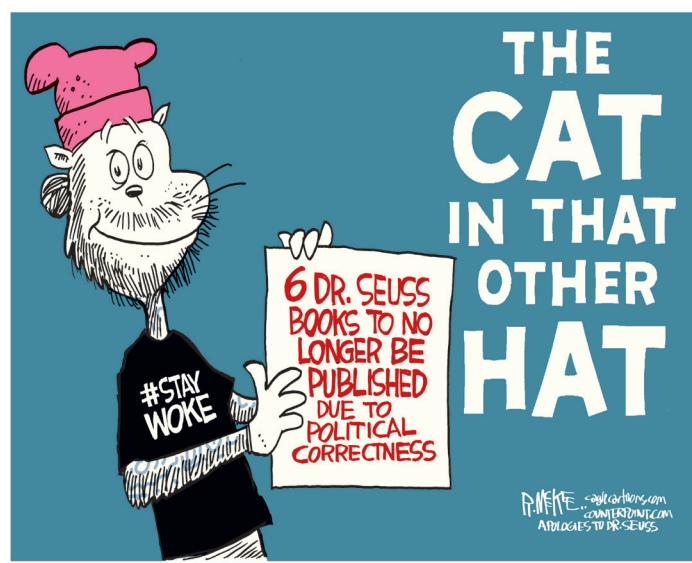
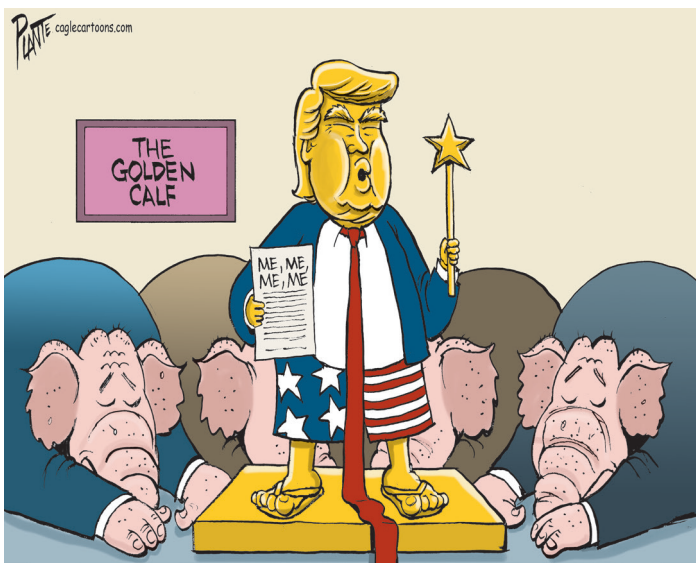
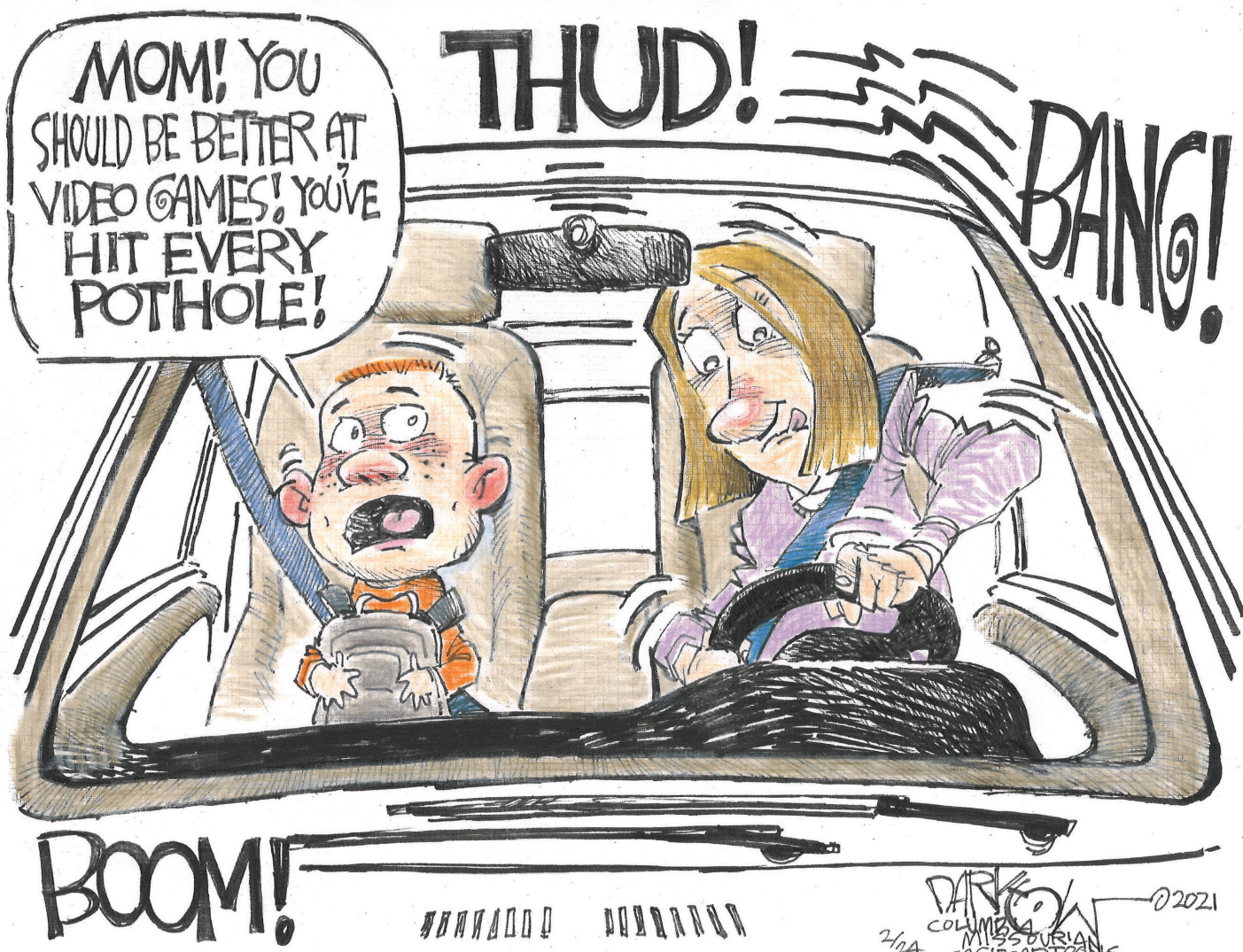
For how long? Will voters tire of this tactic? It seems inevitable that through a bill or an initiative a measure will get on the ballot for a constitutional amendment to change Oregon's quorum rules to a simple majority.

That might not be something to celebrate. Yes, it would work in the favor of Democrats now. It is, though, one of the few tools to prevent a tyranny of a simple majority.

Oregon voters are roughly evenly split between Democrats, unaffiliated voters and Republicans — in that order. There is probably far more that unites Oregonians than divides them. On some issues at least, majority opinion is slim or hard to find.

Democrats hold power now. They may not always. Democrats have used the power of the walkout before, in 1971, 1995 and 2001.

In these unsettled times, Oregonians need legislators and a governor who find ways to work together, not write new exclusionary rules.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Agrees with Dunham's previous letter

I want to commend Connie Dunham for her articulate response to Rich Wand-schneider's letter to "Republican friends." It seems this month he wants to direct his attacks toward "libertarian friends," claiming "they forget, of course ... the staunchest libertarian puts a boundary at the point at which his or her liberty infringes on the liberties (or the well-being) of others."

I would encourage Rich and anyone else reading this to carefully consider the weight of expressing opinions and ideology on behalf of others. It takes a humble mind to admit you don't know enough about a topic to be critical of it, and his supposition that the libertarian's concern for "other's well-being" ought to compel diligent mask-wearing is based on a false belief that it is "other's well-being" for whom libertarians draw their boundaries on personal freedom. While it is certainly noble to be concerned for the welfare of others, it is not integral to the libertarian worldview.

Additionally, Rich incorrectly places the burden of proof on libertarians who are allegedly harming others by refusing to mask. Only in corrupt, utterly evil places of the world do we accuse one of a crime without evidence. How can we hold someone accountable for harm caused when we have no proof they have, in fact, harmed another (supposedly by unknowingly spreading coronavirus)? If my liberty infringes on another's, hold me accountable, but don't assume that I am causing harm based on hypotheticals and ever-changing models. Doing so leads us down a dark path.

Rebecca Patton
Enterprise

Kudos to the Cloverleaf Hall vaccination team

Recently I received my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Cloverleaf Hall convention center.

I was a bit apprehensive about the long lines, canceled appointments and potential vaccine shortages that you hear about

in the news. I arrived at the site a few minutes before my appointment and stood in a line of three. I was greeted by a lady at the first table, given a short questionnaire to complete (2 minutes), then was sent to the next table — no line. The young lady checked my card and gave me the "shot" and pointed me to the next table.

Again, no line. The young lady asked my name, did her computer thing while another lady placed a piece of tape on my coat on which she had written my departure time "11:45." You have to wait 15 minutes before you can leave to make sure you don't have any adverse reaction to the vaccine. It's important to note: my departure time was the same as my appointment time. Other than the 15-minute waiting period, the whole process took approximately 4 minutes.

This was the most-organized, streamlined event I've ever attended and should be a model for the nation. Congratulations, amazing job. And this "crew" of amazing people did approximately 400 vaccinations that day.

Richard Underwood
Lostine

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