

## OPINION

### VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

# Legislators should clearly state what bills would do

State Senate President Peter Courtney held a news conference before the 2021 legislative session to announce steps to keep the legislative process accessible to Oregonians.

“We have never seen a session like this before. We need to keep members and staff safe,” he said. “Legislative staff worked hard to come up with a plan that is safe and transparent. Every session, Oregonians make their voices heard on issues they care about. We need these voices.”

But if you don’t know what the Legislature is talking about it’s hard to voice your opinion. Consider Courtney’s Senate Bill 846. It’s a model of translucency, not transparency. The bill shifts money around. It also reduce potentially reduces the kicker tax refund.

Does the language of the bill clearly state that it potentially reduces the kicker? No.

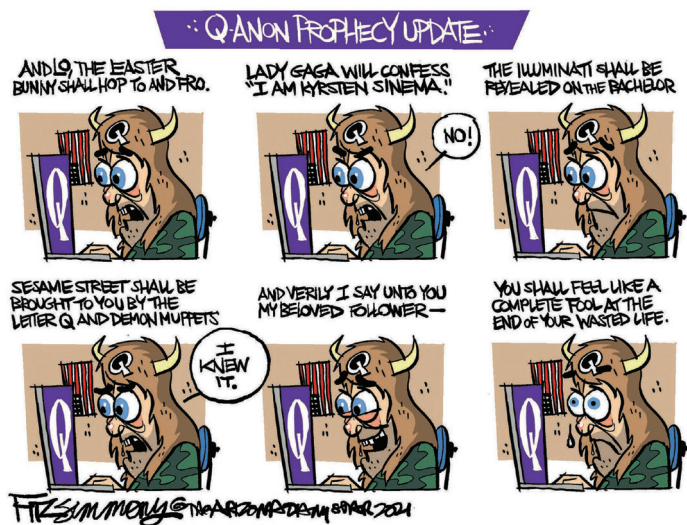
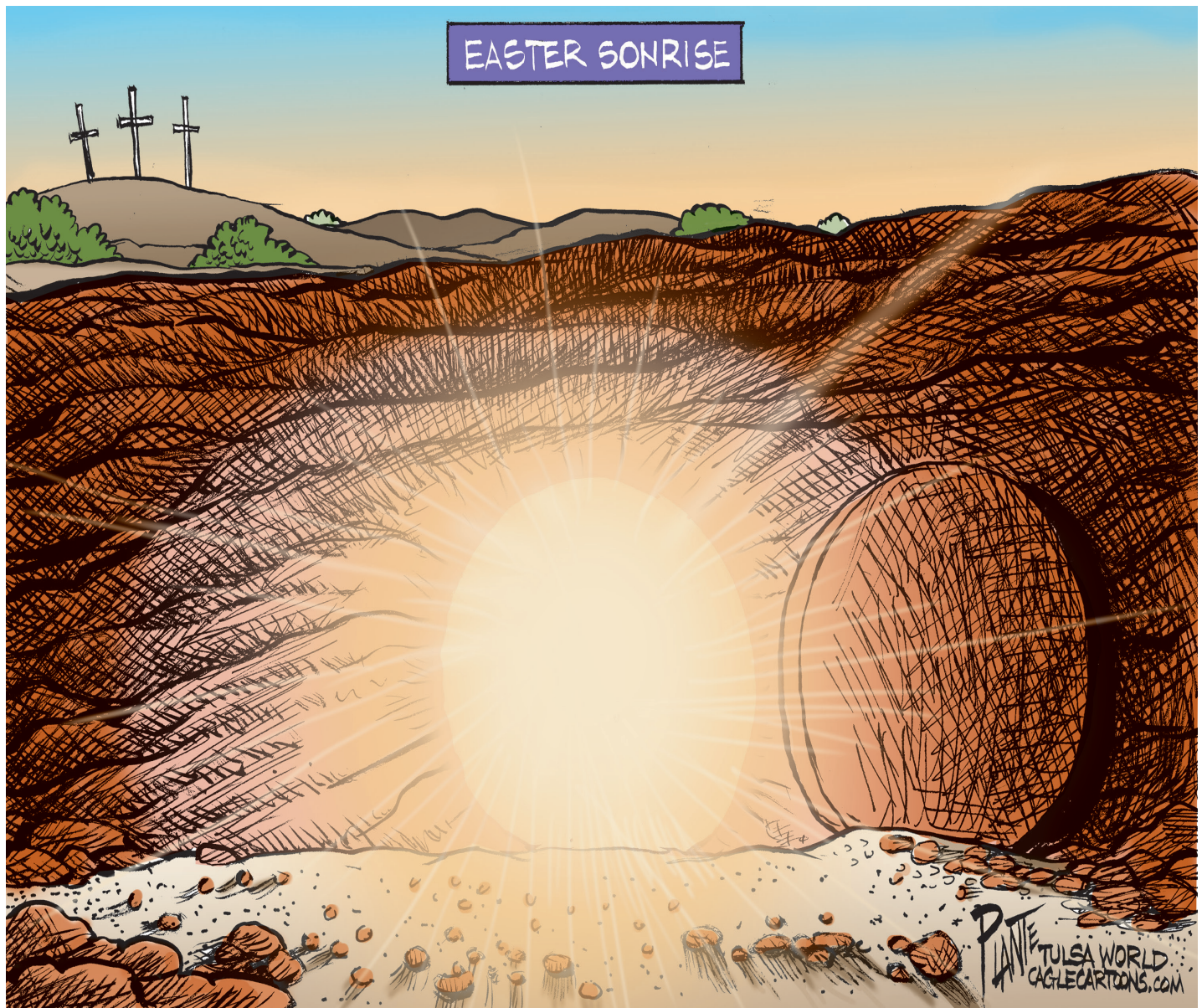
Does it even mention the kicker? No. Shouldn’t a bill that potentially reduces the kicker clearly state that? Yes, we think so. Do you?

Now if you are fluent in the budget-speak of the Legislature you could figure it out from the language of the bill — maybe. What the bill does, in part, is repeal transfers to the general fund of \$15 million from the state’s insurance fund and from an operating account of the Department of Justice. The money stays where it is, at least temporarily. It just doesn’t get shifted over to the general fund.

That matters because it effectively reduces the general fund by that \$15 million. That affects the kicker. The kicker is Oregon’s unique law passed by voters. It occurs if state revenues exceed forecasted revenues by 2% or more over a two-year budget cycle. If that happens, the excess including the trigger amount gets returned to tax payers.

No final determination has been made there will be a kicker for the 2019-2021 biennium. But the kicker is on target to kick, according to the latest revenue forecast. And because SB 846 is moving forward the amount returned to taxpayers would be less.

Look, legislators need to be able to move money around, such as in this bill. They need to be able to balance the budget and line money up how they want to spend it. They also should be transparent about what they are doing and clearly state in a bill if it would reduce the kicker.



### LETTER to the EDITOR

#### Response to Chieftain letter ‘Vaccine ethical issues are concerning’

The writer challenges the ethics of the “coronavirus vaccine campaign.” She states “we expect our young people to take a non-FDA approved biologic in pursuit of (the objective) ... to benefit the older and sicker among us.” She implies that coronavirus vaccination to young people at low risk for severe symptoms is unwarranted and potentially harmful. She argues that insufficient attention is paid to the ethics of conducting research trials in children.

We address the following misunderstandings:

1. Proposed clinical trials of new drugs undergo rigorous scrutiny by professionally trained bioethicists, medical practitioners and research scientists during a mandatory Institutional Review Board process at each study site. Studies involving children receive additional scrutiny because of more stringent requirements

for informed consent. Once clinical trials are underway, Data Safety Monitoring Boards continuously oversee safety, efficacy and adherence to ethical standards.

2. Although coronavirus vaccines don’t have “FDA approval,” they do have FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) in adults. EUA is not a perfunctory sanctioning of the vaccines; investigators must adhere to the same scientific integrity and ethical standards as for FDA approval. These standards apply for studies in children.

3. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are currently authorized for individuals over 16 and 18 years, respectively. As of yesterday (March 23) Moderna began enrolling children between ages of 6 months and 12 years (following parental consent!) into a trial endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are unaware of “planned experimental studies on newborns” as claimed by the writer. Her advice to take a “slow careful look” has long ago been adopted by professional medical ethicists and incorporated into the

clinical trial approval process.

4. The CDC reports 273 young Americans (less than 18 years old) have died from coronavirus. Not a single death has been reported from administration of over 146 million doses of coronavirus vaccines to Americans. The ethics of NOT protecting young people from severe coronavirus symptoms, including death, is what should concern us, if vaccinations are proven efficacious and safe for this age group.

5. The comment that the vaccines “just ... seems to prevent severe symptoms” is an understatement. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines dramatically reduce the incidence of COVID-19 infections and most importantly, they reduce adult deaths by 95%. The qualifier “seems to prevent” is incorrect; the benefits in adults are as clear as any scientific fact can be. These vaccines are the wonder drugs of this decade.

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