

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Speak up on carbon limits bill

Global climate change is a real problem, and a serious problem, but Oregonians can't solve it alone.

The key word in the phrase is, of course, global.

Oregon is a tiny part of the world, and our contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions, most particularly carbon dioxide, are infinitesimal.

But the potential effects of a bill setting limits on carbon emissions in the state — a bill that Democrats who control Oregon's Legislature seem hell bent on passing — are rather more significant.

And immediate.

Sen. Cliff Bentz, the Ontario Republican whose district includes Baker County, estimates that House Bill 2020, as drafted, would boost gas and diesel prices by 15 cents as soon as it takes effect. Bentz said the legislation would also result in higher prices for natural gas and for electricity.

Which is to say, the fuels that drive our economy, that keep people employed, will cost more.

Such sacrifices might be justifiable if the law also had the potential to significantly reduce the harmful economic effects of a warming climate — effects, such as worsening droughts, that could be especially problematic for agriculture, which is so vital to the economy in Baker County and the rest of Eastern Oregon.

But given Oregon's minuscule carbon footprint, that's just not the case.

Indeed, House Bill 2020 could make things worse, globally speaking, by shifting production of such things as cement from Oregon to China, where emissions controls are less stringent.

Although Bentz told the Capital Press recently that he's 95-percent sure the Legislature will pass some version of House Bill 2020 this year, citizens still have a chance to try to persuade lawmakers to craft a final version that minimizes the economic harm.

Residents can attend an event Monday evening at 5 o'clock at the Community Event Center, 2600 East St., to give testimony to a legislative committee.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



BERNIE SANDERS LAUNCHES HIS CAMPAIGN.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Existing gun control laws can help

### Editorial from Newsday:

Gary Martin, the man who shot five co-workers to death and injured several police officers last week in Aurora, Illinois, was legally barred from owning the .40-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun he used. Had it been confiscated, or its purchase prevented, his victims might never have been shot.

It's a tragic story that repeats itself again and again.

Martin, who died in a shoot-out with police, was convicted of felony aggravated assault in Mississippi in the early 1990s and served five years in prison. But Martin was able to buy the gun in 2014 from a licensed dealer, and he did so five weeks after receiving a gun license in Illinois that the state never should have issued to a felon.

The state police say Martin's conviction in Mississippi didn't surface until weeks after he later applied for a concealed-carry permit, which required fingerprinting. They sent Martin a letter saying state law gave him 48 hours to give up the gun. But he never did, and he never submitted the required paperwork to show he had disposed of the weapon. Aurora police are required to get that paperwork and forward it to state police, but in this case and most others, the state police said they

### Letters to the editor

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did not bother to follow up.

Stories of mass murderers who kill with weapons they possessed illegally thanks to poor enforcement of existing laws and regulations are too common:

In 2015, Dylann Roof killed nine people in a South Carolina church with a pistol that a drug arrest should have kept him from buying. The FBI blamed a paperwork error and a delayed background check.

In 2017, Devin Patrick Kelley killed 25 people in Sutherland Springs, Texas, after legally buying four guns, including an AR-15-style rifle. Had the Air Force followed the law and informed the FBI that Kelley was court-martialed and imprisoned for a year for choking his

then-wife and fracturing her son's skull in 2012, he would have been barred from buying those weapons.

In 2018, Nikolas Cruz was charged with killing 17 high school students and adults in Parkland, Florida, with a Smith & Wesson M&P 15 rifle he purchased legally in 2017. But the month before the shooting, the FBI received a tip that Cruz said he wanted to kill people, had said so online, and might commit a school shooting. He had previously gone to a mental health facility. Had the FBI investigated further, as its protocols require, Cruz could have had his gun confiscated or gotten help. But the legally required investigation was never conducted.

There is an awful lot of ruckus raised in this country about the need to pass more restrictive gun laws, and some new ones are needed. Universal background checks, limits on ammunition clip size and safe-storage laws in homes with children, for instance, are crucial. But everyone also must demand that law enforcement agencies do a better job of enforcing existing laws, and that these agencies examine the bureaucratic culture that permits dangerous owners to have weapons. Tools already exist to get guns out of the hands of those legally barred from possessing them.

# What instructions? Bookshelves made easy

My wife and I built a bookcase recently and only once did she have to fix me with the sort of withering gaze that mothers generally reserve for their small children who have flooded the kitchen with pancake syrup.

For me this counts as a major accomplishment.

(Also the episode didn't involve syrup.)

Lisa and I have assembled several pieces of furniture and the exercise tends to highlight the inherent conflict between our approaches to construction.

And by conflict I mean the way a sane person (Lisa) becomes increasingly annoyed at another person (me) who frequently grunts and gesticulates in an alarmingly spastic way.

And who peers at a set of instructions with the perplexed expression of an archaeologist who has unearthed a stone tablet etched with the runic symbols of a language dead since the Bronze Age.

And who seems to think a screwdriver is used to pounds nails and in many other ways to gouge paint from the pristine surface of a shelf.

The problem is that I have no patience.

Actually the problem is that I have no skills of a mechanical sort.

The absence of patience merely increases the volatility of the situa-



JAYSON JACOBY

tion, much in the way that mixing certain materials will blow up the high school chemistry lab.

(This was not my intention. But it appears nobody in the school system considered the wisdom of giving teenage boys access to beakers of sulfuric and hydrochloric acid, which substances were stored, conveniently enough, next to Bunsen burners.)

I deal with my lack of aptitude by treating the assembly guide not as a blueprint but as a series of general suggestions, to be consulted occasionally between energetic bouts of whacking and trying to wedge the corners of pieces into anything that resembles a notch. Or that can be made to resemble a notch with the aid of a hammer and a chisel.

During any construction project I mutter the phrase "it's bound to fit eventually" as a sort of mantra.

(I employ the same haphazard approach with cooking, with results that my former chemistry teacher would recognize immediately. As would the people who work at those companies that clean up after

natural disasters.)

I don't wish to quarrel with the manufacturers of fine furniture products but I believe they have an unreasonable reliance on the value of crude drawings to help people turn a stack of boards and a plastic bag of hardware into something that will hold books without collapsing.

I find it especially annoying when the instructions have a larger, and ostensibly more detailed, illustration to explain some particular step in the process.

This seems logical.

It is not.

If the sequence isn't clear in the smaller rendering — a sequence, let's just say, that involves the simultaneous insertion of one piece into another while twisting one nut clockwise and a second nut, several feet away, counterclockwise, a maneuver which clearly requires at least one more arm than most humans have — well, a larger depiction of this impossible feat doesn't make it any less impossible.

Lisa is far more forgiving than I am about the utility of instruction manuals.

She insists — and not without a certain plausibility, I must concede — that if you simply follow the directions, and never proceed to the next task without verifying that you've completed the current one,

then you almost can't avoid ending up with an item that at least superficially resembles the one pictured on the box.

Like all fantasies, this one is tempting to believe.

Sadly, it ignores the grim truth that not even the most comprehensive instructions — and I've yet to come across one I would so describe — can anticipate every way, or even many of the ways, in which an amateur assembler can go wrong.

(An amateur who is unskilled as well as impatient being, of course, the sort most likely to botch the job. I can, and indeed I have, misinterpreted assembly directions in ways that the people who wrote them would not believe unless they had actually seen the mistakes happen. Which, fortunately for them, they did not.)

What I wish is that companies sold items that are fully assembled but have one flaw — a board facing the wrong way, for instance, or a screw of the improper length jutting in a place likely to pierce a vital organ.

This is where I tend to end up anyway. I have, much as certain animals evolve, developed a proficiency for tearing apart — sometimes quite literally — a piece of furniture to fix a step I messed up along the way. I still wind up with multiple parts unused, usually including

stout pieces that seem designed to bear a considerable load, but most generally the item stands on its own for at least several weeks.

(And when it ceases to do so the resulting injuries, most generally, are minor ones.)

This newest bookcase is sturdier than most of my previous efforts, as I anchored it to the wall with a pair of metal brackets included in the kit (I even used both of them.)

Which is not to say I don't feel a twinge of trepidation whenever I recline on the sofa beside the bookcase, my head resting in a position where, based on my eyeball calculations, the second shelf would strike my forehead if the thing topples over.

The instructions called for each bracket to be attached to a wall stud, but this wasn't possible due to a disagreement between the bookcase's dimensions, the span between studs and the place we decided to put it.

In my own inimitable way I worked around this problem with the creative use of a couple of those hollow plastic anchors designed for drywall. When I finished I gave the shelf a healthy tug and was gratified that it seemed not to budge so much as a micron.

But I haven't yanked on it since.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.