

EDITORIAL

Softening
the blow
from the
carbon bill

There are plenty of symbolic ways to describe Republican State Sen. Cliff Bentz's campaign to convince his Democratic colleagues that a bill intended to reduce Oregon's carbon emissions will harm the state's economy, especially in rural Eastern Oregon, far more than it will help the environment.

He's failing to gain traction.
His voice is being drowned out by louder ones.
Or, if you prefer an option with a bit more literary cachet, Bentz is tilting against windmills.

But however quixotic his quest, Bentz, whose district includes Baker County, deserves credit for his efforts on behalf of our county and region.

House Bill 2020 hasn't gotten as much attention recently as it did earlier in the legislative session, being supplanted by more pressing matters such as the recent walkout of Senate Republicans and their subsequent compromise with the majority Democrats.

But the low profile was only temporary. The bill's backers haven't lost their enthusiasm for the idea.

Nor has Bentz given up on his goal of, if not quashing the legislation — something he has acknowledged is unlikely — then at least mitigating its effects on his district.

Those effects could be severe.
Bentz has estimated that the bill, if it becomes law, could result in gas prices rising by about 15 cents.
During a public hearing in March in Baker City, officials from Ash Grove Cement, one of Baker County's largest private employers and property taxpayers, told lawmakers that the company wouldn't be able to operate its Durkee plant and meet the law's requirements.

Bentz doesn't mince words when talking about HB 2020, telling The Malheur Enterprise newspaper recently that, without significant changes, he believes the legislation "will be a disaster for this part of the state."

His latest trial balloon is a five-year exclusion from the bill's mandates for an area including Malheur County and the southeastern part of Baker County, including the Ash Grove Cement factory.

Other amendments would help to insulate various types of companies, including cement producers, from the requirements of HB 2020.

Bentz's fears aren't limited to how the bill could harm industrial concerns, either. He has also pointed out that by boosting fuel prices, the legislation could put Oregon fuel suppliers at a major, perhaps crippling, disadvantage with Idaho businesses that are, in some cases, just a few miles away.

Ideally, Democrats in Salem would recognize that any bill which could doom thriving businesses unless it's larded with exemptions, and that would have a minuscule environmental benefit, is not responsible legislation.

But that doesn't seem to be the case.
In the meantime Bentz is doing what his constituents elected him to, which is to defend their interests.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



SATs to add "Adversity Score" for college admissions

Your views

Editorial missed point of speaker's testimony on war

On May 13 your paper published an editorial denouncing my testimony before the Education Committee of the Oregon State Legislature ("When Salem's Right Not to Listen").

Your editor wrote:
"DeCoursey, with his 'cherry-picking' nonsense, seems to be implying that there are multiple episodes comparable to the Holocaust in modern history, and that Oregon lawmakers, for political reasons, chose it alone."
I did not "seem to be implying" any such thing. I began my testimony before the Committee citing the statistic that 80 million people died in World War II, and 50 million of them were civilians who never touched a weapon. All 80 million died by reason of their religion, race, nationality or politics.

The thrust of my testimony was that the schools should not obsess over members of one political or religious group of victims. The whole war was a failure of civilization. We need to stop the war culture. We need to stop celebrating war and selling it to children as a fun video game. We need to stop promoting war in the schools as a fun vocation. Every human death is a

tragedy, and this society is criminal for promoting war, which inevitably results in mass killings.
The transcript of my testimony as it was (partially) read to the Committee, and as it appears in the Legislative record of the hearing, can be found at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/198087>.
The video of my interrupted testimony can be seen at http://oregon.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=6&clip+id=26837

Mark H. DeCoursey
Salem

GUEST EDITORIALS

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Hello, young Oregonians. This editorial is for you. House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney have a surprise party planned for your future. And the present will be billions in debt.
The Kotek/Courtney plan will reduce the high rates that school districts, cities, the state and other public entities have to pay into the state pension system in the short term. But you know how it does it? It passes much of the \$27 billion in unfunded liability of Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System on to the future.
Almost two-thirds of the reduction in

rates is financed by stretching out the finance period. It's like stretching out a car payment so long your kids get stuck with it.
Without the Kotek/Courtney plan, the state's unfunded liability is projected to be zero in 2035. With their plan, it would still be about \$12 billion in 2035.
Their plan does attempt to make some other good changes to require cost sharing by public employees. For instance, public employees who joined the PERS system before 2004 and enjoy better benefits than newer hires would get 2.5% of their salaries diverted into paying down PERS debt.

Newer employees would only divert about 0.75% percent. That's an important change that has been long sought by many trying to truly reform the PERS system.
But guess what? Oregon labor unions have vowed to fight in court almost any change that would affect their benefits. We can't predict what may happen in court, though the only part of the Kotek and Courtney plan that may be immune to a court challenge could be extending the finance period. Young Oregonians, get ready for the billions in debt some Oregon policymakers and unions want to pass on to you. It truly is a plan for the children.

Editorial from The New York Daily News:

The Trump administration's trade war with China was foolish from the start. Exactly how foolish is underlined twice in red in a series of Daily News reports by Chris Sommerfeldt.
Last year, President Trump's tariffs on Chinese products provoked punishing retaliatory tariffs on U.S. agricultural products. In turn, the administration created a \$12 billion fund to alleviate U.S. farmers' economic pain, as well as the political pain unleashed by farmers furious over their damaged livelihoods.
As part of that desperate bailout, over the last five months, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has bought \$62 million in pork from Brazilian-owned meatpacking giant JBS SA, owned by brothers Joesley and Wesley Batista — convicted in Brazil for bribing hundreds of officials.

Technically, the \$62 million went to the Colorado-based subsidiary JBS USA. Thus, USDA says the pork "pork" is, um, kosher. Yet in November, a far smaller sum — \$240,000 — was blocked from going to the Virginia-based Smithfield Foods when Sen. Chuck Grassley noted that the firm was owned by a Chinese conglomerate.
So how did JBS slip through the cracks at this "America First" administration, especially considering the Batistas are under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice for possible violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act? We're old enough to remember when Republicans railed against the idea of indiscriminate multi-billion-dollar corporate bailouts, especially ones that might benefit foreigners.
There's an old Brazilian saying: Compror gato por lebre. It means to buy a cat thinking it was a rabbit, or to prop up foreign crooks in the name of aiding patriotic Americans.

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the

- accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do

- not include this information cannot be published.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.
- Mail:** To the Editor, Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814
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Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Lynette Perry,

Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.
Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.
Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.
Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.
Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.