

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Baker's summer bounty

First the bicyclists pedaled through. They were followed by fireworks and bronc riders and barrel racers.

And then another bunch of two-wheelers — these powered by gas engines rather than legs — arrived. Miners Jubilee starts Friday, and still to come are Shrine Weekend, the Baker County Fair, the Fair in Halfway and a variety of other events.

Baker County is in the midst of its busy summer season, and it's a reminder of why this is such a fine place to live.

It is a cliché to say we offer something for everyone, but this claim, however stale, also happens to be apt.

Whether you prefer to sift through tables of potential treasures at Sumpter's three yearly flea markets (during the Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day weekends), stroll among the vendors' booths at Geiser-Pollman Park during Miners Jubilee, watch some of Oregon's finest high school football players or applaud the animal husbandry skills of Baker County youth, you'll find something to keep you occupied.

None of this would happen, of course, without the dedication of dozens of people — quite a lot of them volunteers — who organize the many events that the rest of us enjoy. If you get the chance, these selfless individuals deserve a thank you.

We've even been fortunate — so far, anyway — in terms of weather. It's been a pleasantly mild summer, with just two days reaching 90 degrees (90 on July 12, 91 on the 13th). And conditions look to be almost ideal for Miners Jubilee, with sunny skies and high temperatures in the upper 70s to mid 80s.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

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.

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Why GOP senators walked out

In a democracy, the majority rules. But when the Democratic majority decided to trade Oregon's economic free-market system for one of central government control — while ignoring our constitution and making a shambles of Oregon's rural and low-income economies — we walked.

These parts of House Bill 2020, which would have imposed greenhouse gas-emissions limits on businesses and forced them to buy allowances whose cost, (set by the state), would get passed on to consumers, were particularly egregious.

The bill's regulatory cart is way out in front of the technology horse. The bill forces drivers to pay ever higher fuel prices years before the development of electric trucks and before installation of the infrastructure needed to allow meaningful use of electric or hydrogen-powered vehicles. Likewise, there's a constitutional problem. The billions that Oregonians would be forced to pay in carbon taxes couldn't be used to construct such infrastructure because that money is constitutionally restricted.

HB 2020 would increase the cost of fuel by 22 cents a gallon on Jan. 1, 2021, without regard to significant in-



CLIFF BENTZ

creases in the cost of fuel already in the pipeline. Those include Oregon's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (now five cents a gallon and on its way to 25 cents over the next few years); the 10-cents-per-gallon gas tax authorized by HB 2017; the international ban on bunker fuel for sea transport, estimated to increase the cost of diesel by 20% to 30% effective January 2020; and the recently enacted Corporate Activities Tax which exempts fuel sales, but does not exempt other costs of fuel such as freight. HB 2020 callously stacks its 22 cents per gallon on top of these increases.

Democrats tried to design HB 2020 so that its 22-cents-per-gallon cost would not be considered a tax, even though you have no choice but to pay and the government gets to spend it. This unconstitutional approach kept the verboten word "tax" out of the bill, sidestepped the three-fifths legislative vote requirement and flouted the prohibition against use of an "emergency clause" in a tax bill. (Emergency

clauses are often used to prevent referral of legislation to the people).

Finally, the Democrats silently changed how to measure Oregon's carbon reduction. Instead of factoring in the amount of carbon sequestered by Oregon's forests and sea, the bill tallies only emissions reductions. This seems innocuous, but the result skyrockets the cost of the scheme and ignores Oregon's natural carbon sinks which, if used appropriately, could help Oregon become a major global player in the sequestration of carbon.

Yes, Oregon's Republican senators walked and yes, HB 2020 is dead. But it will be back. Maybe the demonstrations against the bill, the three brave Democratic senators who also opposed the bill, the Senate walkouts, and the thousands upon thousands of emails supporting the death of 2020 will prompt the majority to actually address the many and damaging shortcomings of cap and trade. And maybe this time they will have the courage to let Oregonians vote on it.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz, a Republican from Ontario, represents the district that includes Baker County.

Your views

Disappointed by political signs at Haines parade

I have enjoyed attending the Haines 4th of July parade for 35 years. However, over the past several years several floats and groups of folks have displayed very divisive and tasteless political comments. (Flush Governor Brown down the sewer, if it's brown flush it down, several folks around us thought the slogan was attacking Hispanics.) Parades should be for everyone and come together to celebrate. It's not a time to get on a soapbox and spew your political feelings. The com-

mittee that is in charge of the parade could tamp this down by screening the parade applicants and insist on no divisive partisan entries and slogans.

Next year is an election year and there are sure to be a number of groups that will want to exhibit extreme tasteless political views. This should not be what a 4th of July parade is about. I would hope that a parade is one place we could set aside our political views and enjoy a coming together. I am not the only one who feels this way. Many folks that stood around me did not like the politi-

cal floats and the applause was very spotty. People come from all over the area and do not necessarily side with the radical groups. Several groups said that they would not come back next year. We attend many parades in a year and you seldom see hateful and divisive slogans in them. Most parade organizers know that folks will stop attending if it becomes a protest assembly. If you agree, please contact the Haines parade committee and share your concerns.

Dave Lange
Baker County

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from The Oregonian:

The final weeks of the 2019 legislative session made for some ugly politics. In between Senate Republicans' walkout and Democrats' hobbling of Oregonians' ballot-initiative power, partisan conflict metastasized — both in and out of Salem. Sine die, it seemed, marked the opportunity for legislators and Oregonians as a whole to break from the drama and hit the reset button.

That reset, however, has yet to occur. Frustrated by the death of a carbon cap-and-trade bill, Gov. Kate Brown announced recently that she may resort to executive orders to carry out some of the ideas and policies included in House Bill 2020. While Brown is right to continue pressing for carbon-pricing legislation, she should abandon any efforts to implement such controversial policies by fiat. What Oregon needs most is thoughtful leadership that rallies people behind a common goal, not flexing of political muscle.

There's already been far too much of that. Senate Republicans, mired in minority status, staged a walkout twice this session, fleeing the Capitol in order to deny the Senate a quorum. The first time, they disappeared to delay a vote on a new business tax for educa-

tion, returning only after securing promises to kill two unrelated bills. The second time, they stayed out even longer, holding legislative operations hostage to block passage of HB 2020 which, they argued, would hit rural communities and their industries especially hard.

Their message, however, was soon drowned out after Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, warned that any Oregon State Police troopers sent to bring him back to Salem better be bachelors and "come heavily armed." But such muscle flexing ultimately won't help Republicans, despite the bill's demise. Boquist now faces a formal complaint in the Senate, as he should — there's simply no conceivable defense for making such threats. And Republicans have handed Democrats a potent weapon in future elections. Why should voters choose Republicans when they admit — twice in one session — that their only tool to effect change is a constitutional gimmick? While legislators must stand up for the interests of their constituencies, they also must let voters be the ones to hold lawmakers and their work accountable.

It should be noted that HB 2020 was not doomed by the Republicans' no-show, but by

three Democratic senators who ultimately decided that the legislation posed more pain than promise for their constituents.

That should resonate with Brown because Oregonians' support or opposition doesn't depend so much on whether they believe climate change is real. Rather, it's how they weigh the difficult set of facts underlying any action to price carbon in Oregon.

Climate change is already having devastating effects on lives and livelihoods around the world, from intensifying wildfires to deadly heat waves and starving wildlife populations. Scientists have sounded the alarm that we are running out of time to stem the worst effects of climate change.

But Brown and leaders still need to acknowledge the tensions that make acting on that moral obligation harder to do.

Carbon pricing legislation is necessarily about inflicting economic pain on those engaging in acts of pollution in order to change behavior, whether it's people driving gasoline-powered cars or farmers raising methane-belching cows. That uncomfortable reality becomes even trickier if options for changing behavior don't exist or are exorbitantly expensive.

At the same time, Oregonians' share

of emissions is so tiny that even drastic reductions in Oregon would have nearly zero impact on national emissions, much less global. How should policymakers weigh the obligation to act for the common good versus the hit of a gas price increase of up to 72 cents a gallon in year one? And while cap-and-trade legislation could fund breakthrough research that yields global benefits far beyond any reduction in Oregon emissions — perhaps the single best argument for enacting cap and trade — what's the right level of investment versus devoting dollars to mitigate the harm felt by individuals?

As obvious a problem as climate change is, convincing people what to do, how much to do or even whether Oregon should do anything at all is far more complex. To Brown's credit, she said she will first push for a legislative solution before resorting to executive action. She is also directing her carbon policy office to work with rural manufacturers and transportation entities to figure out how they can meet emissions goals.

But this past session showed that even with a supermajority of Democrats, carbon pricing isn't a slam dunk. Brown should not treat it as if it should be.