

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

What climate action Gov. Brown might take

“In the coming days, I will be taking executive action to lower our greenhouse gas emissions,” Gov. Kate Brown has said. What does she have in mind?

We don’t know for sure, but look at what her staff was sharing with some groups before the 2020 legislative session. There are preliminary details in that presentation about what Brown might do with her executive authority. Would it be better if any climate action was done through the legislative process? Of course.

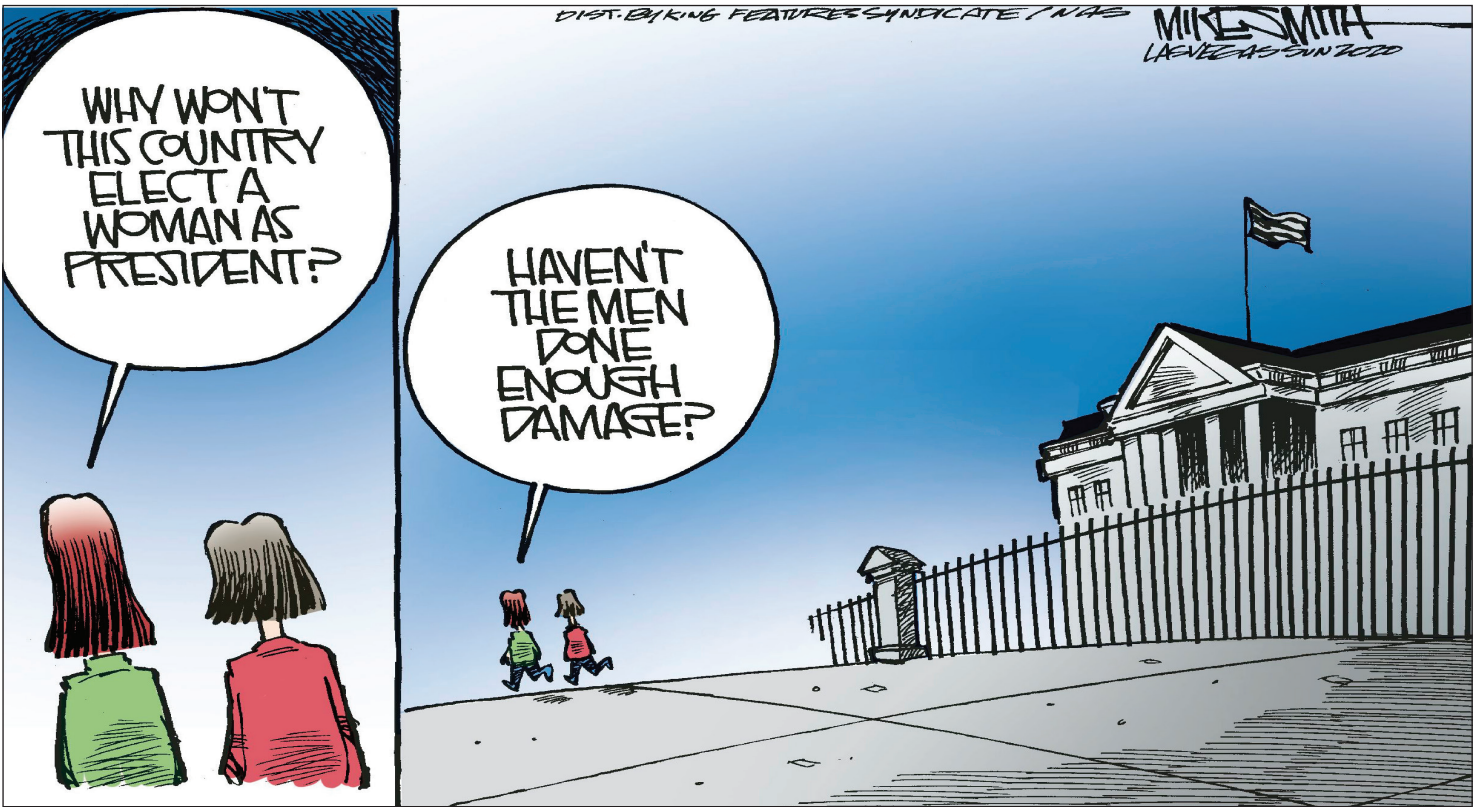
Her office believed that she could put an emissions cap that would decline over time on fuel suppliers. Suppliers could be required to procure permits for emissions that result from combustion. The amount of emissions covered by the permits would be reduced as the years passed. This could cover diesel, gasoline, natural gas and propane.

Industrial operations could be required to get similar permits that would be used to gradually reduce their regulated emissions in the same way. It would cover larger manufacturers.

The governor’s staff also highlighted some important places where they believe the governor’s executive power would be limited. The critical one is that the governor would not be able to auction permits and allowances to generate revenue for investing in green projects or mitigating costs of climate change for low-income Oregonians. That revenue component was a key part of the Democratic plan for the climate legislation. There is also likely to be more risk from court challenges if the governor uses her executive authority. And the estimated coverage of statewide emissions would be significantly reduced.

As the presentation says, the bottom line is: “Less comprehensive, less flexible, more expensive for participants.”

Of course, we don’t know what Gov. Brown intends to do. We did email her staff Friday morning to ask if this information has significantly changed. We were told that information was in an early phase of exploration and not comprehensive of the concepts in the current draft. They did not share the current draft with us. But nobody should think the Republican walkout is going to stop Brown from taking climate action.



Elizabeth Warren’s loss isn’t about sexism

Josh Greenman

“Don’t tell me this isn’t about sexism,” is what at least one feminist writer has said about Elizabeth Warren’s failure to win the Democratic nomination.

Apologies in advance for mansplaining, but it isn’t about sexism. Warren didn’t lose; she ran a good race, much better than many other men and women in the field. She lasted longer, and was much more successful in setting the terms of the debate.

What happened was she was the almost-uber-progressive candidate in a race with an uber-progressive candidate, and an uber-progressive who came to the fight with a rabid, fired-up-and-ready-to-go network of support. Like Bernie Sanders, she was for decriminalizing border crossings, ending fracking, eliminating all (or almost all) college debt and providing single-payer health care to all.

But ultimately she couldn’t out-Sanders Sanders.

Not that she was trying, exactly. She offered herself as the more responsible, detail-oriented revolutionary. That sounds neat to a policy wonk, but revolutionaries aren’t really looking for road maps. They want to hear clarion calls. Long is the list of people with the lengthiest plans on their websites who never come close to winning the nomination.

And while many college-educated voters admired the fluent way Warren could explain her novel wealth tax and her plans for breaking up big tech and restructuring American corporations, it’s rare that American politics rewards true policy creativity, whether it comes from a man or a woman. (Trump’s campaign calls for a Muslim ban and a border wall are rare and depressing counterexamples.)

If Warren wasn’t the radical, she wasn’t trying to be the steady, incrementalist moderate, either, which left her stuck in the middle of the left, claiming she was the only one who could unify disparate strands of the party. Which was kind of also Pete Buttigieg’s message, and he also didn’t make it that far.

I was personally impressed by Warren’s debating skills and by her winning demeanor on the stump. She’s amazingly smart, a very good communicator. She is sharp on the attack (not only against Mike Bloomberg) and has a John McCain-like way of disagreeing without seeming profoundly disagreeable. She seems to love the fight and be rooted firmly in real people’s struggles. The detail she offered on her policy plans is admirable.

But every politician who has strengths also has weaknesses, and those weaknesses are usually funhouse-mirror versions of their strengths. Warren got all tied up around the details she offered or failed to offer on “Medicare for All.” First, there was no price tag. Then, there was a price tag. Then, there was a transition plan that seemed to validate the arguments of many who criticize single-payer itself. What came through was a muddle on the policy centerpiece of her campaign.

To the extent electability is the thing understandably on everyone’s minds these days: Every candidate in the Democratic field has advantages and vulnerabilities in a head-to-head matchup with Donald Trump. A Warren nomination would’ve pit a Harvard professor against a guy who

presents himself as a man of the people. Many of us can see through the stupid, meaningless caricatures, understanding that Warren is far more of the people than Trump ever could be, but it’s fair to worry about how others might see the contrast, especially given Warren’s penchant for offering a solution to nearly every problem.

So, too, the Native American DNA thing. Trump, the biggest pretender in the history of the presidency, would’ve weaponized Warren’s little stumble in describing her family history. Surely some Democratic voters feared how that would play out.

If we’re going to ascribe Warren’s failure to win the nomination to sexism, we’d be calling lots of Democratic women in early voting states sexist. Warren finished third among women in Iowa, and fourth among women in New Hampshire. She didn’t win her home state of Massachusetts or her original home state of Oklahoma.

Only a fool would claim sexism has no role in influencing how the electorate looks at female candidates. Of course it does, especially in runs for president: Some share of the population is uncomfortable with a woman as our commander in chief. Plenty of critiques of women would never be leveled at men.

But only another type of fool blames sexism every time a talented but flawed female candidate doesn’t make it across the finish line with the trophy in her hand.

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OTHER VIEWS

Justice Roberts was right about Schumer’s language, wrong to selectively call him out

Editorial from The Baltimore Sun:

At a Wednesday rally outside the U.S. Supreme Court, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer had some pointed language about the most recent appointees to the high court and the prospect that they may be rolling back women’s reproductive rights under a case involving Louisiana’s highly restrictive anti-abortion law heard that morning by the court.

“I want to tell you, (Justice Neil) Gorsuch; I want to tell you (Justice Brett) Kavanaugh: You have released the whirlwind, and you will pay the price,” Sen. Schumer said. “You won’t know what hit you if you go forward with these awful decisions.”

It was later explained, through a spokeswoman, that the intent was not to threaten anyone and that the price to be paid was purely a political one by Senate Republicans who had stacked the court with right-wing ideologues. But Chief Justice John Roberts was clearly upset by the choice of words and issued a statement, something rarely done by this or any federal court, to denounce them.

“Justices know that criticism comes with

the territory, but threatening statements of this sort from the highest levels of government are not only inappropriate, they are dangerous.” He added that the justices will continue to do their job “without fear or favor from whatever quarter.”

We aren’t comfortable with the senator’s language either. But then we weren’t complacent about the strikingly similar formulation offered by Kavanaugh at his own confirmation hearings in 2018.

“Since my nomination in July, there’s been a frenzy on the left to come up with something, anything, to block my confirmation,” he told Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee. “You sowed the wind for decades to come. I fear that the whole country will reap the whirlwind.”

The only thing missing was a microphone and some courthouse steps with sign-waving supporters.

Justice Roberts had nothing to say about that comment from a fellow member of the judiciary at the time. Nor did he speak up last week when President Donald Trump aggressively went after two other Supreme Court justices, telling an audience in India that Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg should recuse themselves from any cases involving him.

It was, of course, hardly the first time that Trump saw bias against him on a federal court. Perhaps the worst example to date was his 2016 criticism of Judge Gonzalo Curiel for lacking impartiality in a matter involving then-candidate Trump’s dubious “Trump University” because of his Mexican heritage. Or there’s the time in 2018 when President Trump described a federal judge as an “Obama judge” after an adverse ruling on migrant asylum policy. Or perhaps just about any month on the presidential Twitter feed when he’s threatening someone or other, such as his prediction of war if he’s removed from office.

“If the Democrats are successful in removing the President from office (which they will never be), it will cause a Civil War like fracture in this Nation from which our Country will never heal,” he tweeted just six months ago.

Roberts hasn’t been entirely silent. He

did have some cross words over the “Obama judge” crack issuing a statement that observed, in part, “We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges.” But that was a relatively mild rebuke compared to the Schumer reprimand, which included the pronouncement that the senator’s rally remarks were “dangerous.”

Yet if judges, particularly the chief judge of the nation’s highest court, want to be perceived as impartial umpires calling balls and strikes without favor to one team or another, they need a consistent strike zone. Roberts ought to either call out all bad behavior or none at all. The standard here is impossible to discern. And it’s particularly problematic given how the federal courts are being tilted to the right with the Trump administration’s unceasingly policy of appointing judges who conform to Federalist Society criteria.

It’s fair to admonish Sen. Schumer for sliding into second with his spikes up, but then he can’t ignore the sign stealing or other equally inappropriate actions on the other side, including by the current occupant of the Oval Office.

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Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Ray Duman, 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; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durlfing, 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.