

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
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Landlords deserve more help from Legislature

Don't throw people out of their homes in the middle of a global pandemic. As a policy choice, that was a fairly easy one for Oregon legislators to make.

But what then should the state of Oregon do about the landlords who aren't being paid rent?

The Legislature has marched on a journey through distinct stages:

1. Extend the eviction moratorium. It's now through June 30.

2. Give landlords help. Landlords that are willing to forego 20% of their back rent can apply for payments for the remaining 80%. The state put about \$150 million in that fund — for starters.

3. Get sued. The allegation in a suit filed for landlords in U.S. District

Court says the state action and actions by local governments should be void because they are an unconstitutional taking of property and violate contract guarantees. Landlords question if they will ever get their past due rent. We can't tell you what the courts will decide.

4. Do something else? Now a new stage is taking shape as the Legislature gets set to meet again. Before the Legislature extended the eviction moratorium, it discussed the 80%

state payback program for landlords or another option — tax credits. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, proposed tax credits that would enable landlords to get back 100% of lost rent. It failed to pass. But it will be back on the table when the Legislature convenes.

Senate Bill 87 creates a similar income tax credit "for lost rental income of landlord, forgone due to prohibition on evictions and rent nonpayment actions during COVID-19 emergency

period." As written, it may be that a landlord would not get back 100% of lost rent immediately. It might be paid off over the years because the credit "may not exceed the tax liability of the taxpayer for the tax year."

We don't question the importance of an eviction moratorium during the pandemic. But the state also should not balk at bills such as SB 87 that attempt to make landlords whole. Tenants deserve protection. So do landlords.

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

My Nickel's Worth

Bentz ignores his oath

Cliff Bentz took less than a week to ignore the congressional oath of office he took Jan. 3. Recall that President-elect Joe Biden received over 7 million more popular votes and 74 more electoral college votes than the incumbent. Despite over 60 court cases and 90 judges finding that claims of widespread voter fraud in the presidential election were unsubstantiated, Mr. Bentz joined 146 other Republicans and voted to ignore the will of the people and overturn the election results.

He should know better. He is an attorney. He knows the law. He, like all of us, heard the hourlong phone conversation the president had with the Georgia secretary of state pressuring him to "find votes" and "recalculate." In the United States, it's not who yells the loudest, makes the most unsubstantiated claims and bullies the most election officials to change results who earns the office. It is the person the people choose with their votes. That is democracy.

So do us a favor, Mr. Bentz. Take the American flag pin off of your lapel. You're not fooling anyone. We can clearly see by your actions that your allegiance is not to our country, democracy, or the Constitution, but to your political party and maintaining power at any cost. Shameful.

— Ginny Adams, Sunriver

Bentz should go

Rep. Cliff Bentz should be removed from office, as three days after he was sworn to protect and defend the United States of America from enemies, both foreign and domestic, he for voted to reject the Electoral College votes from the state of Pennsylvania for Joe Biden. There was no voter fraud, the secretary of state approved the votes and Joe Biden won.

Under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, Section 3 states "no person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an



oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may, by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability."

The Bulletin reported that Rep. Cliff Bentz, Oregon's sole Republican member of Congress, said in an interview impeachment wouldn't be a "productive exercise." He also said "Trump shouldn't resign."

The residents of the 2nd Congressional District need a representative who supports the U.S. Constitution and works to improve the lives of citizens, and Bentz should not continue to support domestic terrorists. Cliff Bentz should resign.

— Jerry Hubbard, Sunriver

What kind of Republican?

When U. S. Rep. Cliff Bentz was elected to Oregon's District 2, I was hopeful. His record suggested com-

monsense and bipartisan skills. But his first official act challenged certifying the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. This encouraged conspiracy theorists, who sided with President Donald Trump, falsely claiming he and Mike Pence had won the election. This fantasy was debunked in over 50 lawsuits and disputed by Democratic and Republican election officials in every state. Moreover, it led to violent armed insurrection by Trump supporters who occupied the U.S. Capitol and prevented the Congress from doing their constitutional duty, an act of sedition. So, Rep. Bentz, what kind of Republican are you?

Full disclosure: I come from three generations of Midwestern Republicans and have associated them with family values, fiscal restraint, law and order and taking responsibility for one's actions. We need to have those conservative ideals represented, but President Trump has violated them attempting to remake Republicans in his image: corrupt, immoral, anti-democratic and delusional. Like all would-be fascist dictators, Trump promised to make the country great

again by denigrating and persecuting some "other" who was victimizing fellow citizens, blaming Mexicans first, then blacks, gays, women, finally Democrats and even Republicans who disagreed with him. Trump claimed journalists were "enemies of the people" and replaced them with his propagandists who invented "alternative facts" and QAnon conspiracy theories. In this way, 74,000 voters were conned into voting for his reelection and lost. So, Rep. Bentz are you a traditional or Trump Republican?

— Don Kunz, Bend

Leave the violence behind

How did we get here? Is this who we really are?

Retired Republican U.S. Sen. Alan K. Simpson tells us: "Part of the Republican Party is heading toward cultism, and there are various kinds," "There's the homophobe cult, the abortion cult, the conspiracy cult and the no-mask cult. There's the follow-law-and-order cult and the get-government-out-of-your-life-and-leave-me-alone-cult. "Hate," Alan Simpson says, speaking of toxic partisanship

and cultural tribalism, "corrodes the container it is carried in."

The Trump cult has shown the world that it embraces all of these cults and has inflicted domestic terrorism on all of us. Yes, this is who we really are.

The recent chamber of commerce discussion by newly elected Central Oregon legislators was an example of the choices we face. Here is what I heard. Sen. Tim Knopp led off stating a goal of getting our small businesses open by getting big government off their backs. Rep. Jason Kropf addressed the same goal and proposed a concrete, science-based, care for yourself AND your neighbor, empowering plan: wear your mask, wash your hands, get the vaccine when you can, we will save lives and livelihoods and reopen safely.

COVID-19, with the worst times still ahead, and cults are the enemies assaulting us, not a specter "big government" and not the need to wear a .5 oz mask.

We are the democracy in this country. You and I. Do your part. Vote for someone not defined by a cult. Leave the violence and the hate and the blame behind.

— Steve Carlton, Bend

Please reconsider

One of Rep. Cliff Bentz's first acts as Oregon's newest congressional representative was to voice support for those who question the legitimacy of Joe Biden's election. He should reconsider that position and get on the right side of history. As a law school graduate, Bentz presumably gained sufficient knowledge of the Constitution to know that there is no legitimate constitutional basis for challenging Biden's election. Even if he did not, that more than 60 state and federal judges found no such basis should provide him a clue. History will not look favorably on lawmakers who cynically chose politics over law and reason.

Bentz, therefore, should give more thought to his decisions going forward. His entry into national politics was a decidedly inauspicious beginning.

— Rob Brazeau, Bend

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We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin.

Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

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Please address your submission to either My Nickel's

Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
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Fax: 541-385-5804

A surprising first impression of Cliff Bentz

"The difference between the Senate and the House," Lyndon Johnson famously said, "is the difference between chicken salad and chicken shit."

There are a few sobering realities about being a freshman in the U.S. House. For all of the esteem of being a member of Congress, Westerners especially reside too much on a commercial jet. When I covered those men and women as a Washington, D.C., correspondent, I often wondered which time zone their body clock was in. In that often weekly commute, they take a beating.

The second reality is that being a freshman means you've only been given access to a coffee klatch or cocktail party with 435 others. Once inside, the challenge is to move through that population and make

deals and alliances. To get ahead in the House demands shoe leather and relentless energy.

And that gets to my initial skepticism about Cliff Bentz's decision to succeed Greg Walden, who represented Oregon's vast 2nd Congressional District for 22 years. Walden was a freshman at the age of 42. Bentz is 69, which gives him relatively little time to gain seniority. Oregon's most consequential freshman congressman, Ron Wyden, became a House freshman at the age of 32, half Bentz's age. In his first term, Wyden tore up the track.

If you talk to people who watched Bentz in the Oregon Legislature, you gain the impression that he runs very deep. "Thoughtful" and "smart" are the adjectives you hear about the man.

The leap from a statehouse to Con-



STEVE FORRESTER

gress is profound. Congressman Les AuCoin, who represented Astoria in the House for 18 years, told me: "Congress is not a bigger version of a state legislature." Going from the state capitol to the national capitol "is like moving from chess to three-dimensional chess."

Given that first impressions are everything in politics, it was surprising to see the newly minted Congressman Bentz join the House Republicans who tried to keep alive President Donald Trump's illusion about widespread voter fraud in the November election.

Bentz has said he cast that vote — to object to the electors from Pennsylvania — because many of his constituents had those kinds of sentiments about the presidential election. Fair enough. But every member of the House had an appointment with history on Jan. 6.

After the violent incursion of the Capitol, many Republicans wised up and realized that abetting the president's fiction had become a dangerous choice.

Bentz also voted Wednesday against impeaching Trump for inciting the insurrection.

In this era, the velocity of change in national politics, and especially in Congress, is especially rapid. Suddenly, the senators who fomented the drive to abet Trump's lost cause — Josh Hawley, of Missouri, and Ted

Cruz, of Texas — are not hot commodities. They are outcasts.

Oregon's Richard Neuberger had a rocky beginning as a freshman senator in 1954. But he quickly recovered and turned in a consequential term before his death in 1960. That was in a much different era, but it makes a certain point.

In politics, it's all about what you will do tomorrow.

It will be interesting to see how Bentz navigates the Class V rapids in front of him.

■ Steve Forrester is the president and CEO of EO Media Group, owner of The Bulletin. He was a Washington, D.C., correspondent for Pacific Northwest newspapers from 1978 to 1987. His chapter on the late U.S. Sen. Richard Neuberger will be in the upcoming book "Eminent Oregonians." This piece originally appeared in The Daily Astorian.