

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
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Walkout may only succeed in changing state's quorum rules

Do you think Gov. Kate Brown should do more to get schools to reopen? Do you think more should be done to vaccinate seniors sooner?

Do you think the state should look to speed up reopening of businesses?

Those are reasons why Oregon Senate Republicans walked out on Thursday. They say their efforts to get Brown's attention to these issues have gone unacknowledged. So they walked out to get her attention.

Yes, they got her attention. But Republicans didn't compel her to make any changes. And we can't imagine she will fundamentally change her approach.

Perhaps Senate Republicans did succeed in a few ways. Just getting people's attention these days takes more than making a speech. The walkout got the Oregon public's attention for at least a news cycle. And in that moment Republicans highlighted what the difference might be if they were governing.

They also reminded their fellow legislators that they still have the power to shut down the making of new laws.

Oregon is one of only a handful of states that requires by its constitution that two-thirds of lawmakers must be on the Senate floor and the House floor for work to be done. The narrow Democratic margin in the Senate means the Democratic majority is not walkout-proof. A walkout is some of the only raw power Republicans in Oregon really have.

For how long? Will voters tire of this tactic? It seems inevitable that through a bill or an initiative a measure will be put on the ballot for a constitutional amendment to change Oregon's quorum rules to a simple majority.

Perhaps Senate Republicans did succeed in a few ways. Just getting people's attention these days takes more than making a speech. The walkout got the Oregon public's attention for at least a news cycle. And in that moment Republicans highlighted what the difference might be if they were governing. They also reminded their fellow legislators that they still have the power to shut down the making of new laws.

That might not be something to celebrate. Yes, it would work in the favor of Democrats now. It is, though, one of the few tools to prevent a tyranny of a simple majority. Oregon voters are roughly evenly split between Democrats, unaffiliated voters and Republicans — in that order. There is probably far more that unites Oregonians than divides them. On some issues at least, majority opinion is slim or hard to find.

Democrats hold power now. They may not always. Democrats have used the power of the walkout before, in 1971, 1995 and 2001.

In these unsettled times, Oregonians need legislators and a governor who find ways to work together, not write new exclusionary rules.

Get an early warning for earthquakes

When contractors were digging at OSU-Cascades in 2019 to reclaim the pumice pit, campus officials took the editorial board on a tour. We saw the geographic fault line running through the property. An eye-catcher.

OSU-Cascades isn't putting a building on the fault, of course. But it was a reminder that as much as it may feel like fault lines are a somewhere-else-in-Oregon issue, they are really all over the state. Mostly, they are quiet.

The Cascadia Subduction Zone off Oregon's coast is the one that's really "active" in geological terms and has produced intense earthquakes. Its last quake was in 1700 with a magnitude of 9.0. They have come as

few as 190 years apart or as often as 1,200 years apart. The state says Oregonians along the coast can expect to be without services and assistance for as long as two weeks if one hits. Central Oregon will be a staging area for relief efforts.

Beginning in March, Oregonians will get a new tool to at least give a few seconds warning, perhaps before the earth starts shaking for an earthquake.

That's the best scientists can do, so far. Those few seconds can make a difference, though.

The ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning will go live on mobile devices in Oregon on March 11. If you search ShakeAlert and Oregon on the web, there's more information. It's worth checking out.



We can have healthy communities and affordable housing in Oregon

BY MOEY NEWBOLD

Whether it's the Zoom Effect or the curse of being a region known for its unsurpassed livability, Central Oregon is feeling a housing crunch. Affordable housing is almost nonexistent and available inventory is at all-time lows.

There is a prevailing narrative that the way to solve these issues is to simply bring more land into Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) or to allow for more housing in our rural communities. Doing these things will not solve our housing affordability issues and instead come with real and lasting consequences.

Where and what we build matters. Haphazard sprawl takes a toll on our communities. High infrastructure costs, negative health impacts, and environmental degradation are the price of hastily attempting to solve one problem without considering the long-term impacts on the people you are trying to help.

The places we live have a direct effect on our health. What is your neighborhood's air quality like? Do you have child care and health care nearby? Are your neighbors welcoming and supportive? How long is your commute? The answers to these questions make an impact on how long people live and what quality of life they lead. Studies show that the location of our homes determines up to 80% of our personal health outcomes.

When we build housing further away from community centers, we push people away from job opportunities and services. While longer

GUEST COLUMN



Newbold

commutes add to overall traffic and pollution (including the greenhouse gases that cause climate change), they also have profound health impacts. A longer commute reduces life satisfaction, physical, and mental health — so much so that workers who commute 31 miles or more can expect to die sooner than people who live closer to their jobs. Expenses go up when owning and maintaining a car is required for living in far-flung locations.

Developing housing in community-oriented settings means people aren't required to spend 20% of their income and a good chunk of their time driving to access the jobs, parks, schools, health care, and services they need. Housing prices and demand are typically higher in neighborhoods that meet these needs — just look at walkability scores touted by Realtors. But across Oregon, people with low-wage jobs are priced out of living in these vibrant, mixed-use areas with safe transportation options. It isn't that these types of neighborhoods are inherently more expensive to build (in fact, the opposite is true when infrastructure is accounted for); it is because there are not enough of them.

Central Oregon's approach to housing should balance health equity and affordability. We know that the

past century of racist and exclusionary housing policies barred Black and Latino people from the neighborhoods that offered jobs, good healthcare, safe transportation, and well-funded education systems. In many places, basic city services like lighted sidewalks and clean water were not provided. As a result, people living in high-poverty neighborhoods today have poorer health than their peers in affluent (often predominantly white) neighborhoods. We can't risk replicating planning that increases inequity and separates families from the social and environmental fabric of a thriving community.

The answer to the housing crisis is not to continue with outdated models of sprawling suburban development. Instead, we should add more housing and transportation options that prioritize health and equity. Oregon's statewide land use planning system provides a framework for cities to grow this way, and encourages the creation of compact and thriving cities and towns that leave rural areas open and intact for farming, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

We need to tackle the housing crisis with real solutions that don't sacrifice community well-being. Instead of adding housing in places where jobs and services don't already exist, we can improve the fabric of our cities and add homes to make more complete communities. Before hastily jumping into rushed expansion, let's consider what we want our community to become and ensure our plans lead us there.

■ Moey Newbold is director of urban planning at Central Oregon LandWatch.

Letters policy

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.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columns and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

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

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How a generation of 1930s rocketeers led us to unlock the secrets of Mars

BY DAVID VON DREHLE

The Washington Post

On the campus of the California Institute of Technology, circa 1936, a little group of scientists and hobbyists began to get serious about building rockets. This was crackpot science at the time, and back then, crackpots weren't generally encouraged. Today we give them IPOs and make them billionaires.

But the rocketeers were led by a visionary scientist named Frank Malina, who was a favorite of the esteemed Caltech professor and bon vivant Theodore von Karman. Von Karman's sponsorship kept them going, even as campus wags dubbed them "the Suicide Squad" on account of the volume of shrapnel their haywire experiments produced.

Perhaps mindful of insurance premiums, von Karman helped to arrange the acquisition of a remote testing ground in the Arroyo Seco — the dry

creek bed — north of Pasadena's famous Rose Bowl stadium, at the edge of the San Gabriel Mountains. And that is why, some 85 years later, if you go to that dry gulch you'll find the magnificent Jet Propulsion Laboratory, one of the world's citadels of science, exploration and advanced manufacturing.

Many of the cheers that erupted when the rover Perseverance settled gently on the surface of Mars the other day were voiced by the people of JPL, the descendants of those dauntless Caltech crackpots. Perseverance is more than a catchy name for this mission; it's a one-word summation of the JPL culture. Perseverance through the early skepticism about rocket technology; perseverance through the misguided space shuttle decades; perseverance through high-profile failures to arrive at a mission that bristles with confidence and purpose.

Those who watched the rover land on Feb. 18 get the picture. A package

full of miracles, launched into space atop an Atlas V rocket last year, finally drew near to the Red Planet and began falling through the thin atmosphere, pulled by weak gravity. Suddenly, a parachute deployed at precisely the right moment and a heat shield fell away, tumbling downward as we watched from many millions of miles away. Closer to the surface, the lander began firing rockets to steer its final descent, until — just above ground — the rover itself deployed on wires like a spider on its silk. Perseverance settled gently, and the lander flew off to die.

Now Perseverance is on the move, beginning what promises to be a long career of exploration, prowling a now-parched seabed for signs of long-ago life. The rover carries a drone helicopter on its belly — another miracle to be revealed on another day — as it makes its way over the Martian terrain. Among its tasks is to package up some scientific samples to be collected and returned to

Earth by a future mission.

This is JPL's sweet spot — where starry-eyed imagination meets can-do engineering. JPL has sent Voyager craft into interstellar space; flown a probe that encountered the rings of Saturn; synced up with Venus and Mercury; and snapped close-ups of volcanoes on moons of Jupiter. When NASA lost its way after the glories of the Apollo lunar missions and nearly vanished into the sucking black hole of the space shuttle program, its JPL field center kept the true flame of exploration kindled in Pasadena. The shuttle — too small to be very useful, but big enough to absorb virtually every available dollar — was dangerous, by far the deadliest craft in the history of spaceflight. Scientifically, it was a three-decade dud.

Human spaceflight has always had an edge in sexiness and romance over the tirelessly productive JPL robots. With Perseverance, that gap may be starting to narrow, though. Choosing

its own landing spot, guiding itself to that perfect touchdown, and immediately snapping a selfie of its own Martian shadow, the automobile-size rover displayed a brand of intelligence amazingly anthropomorphic. And it's just getting started.

We will unlock the secrets of Mars — not by sending vulnerable human flesh into its desperately harsh and deadly environment, but by sending ever wiser, ever harder ambassadors designed to be our eyes, ears and hands. And not just Mars, but, as Buzz Lightyear says: to infinity — and beyond. It is a possibility worth dreaming of despite derision, worth working for despite obstacles, through decade after decade along a dry creek bed in Pasadena. And when it comes true in spectacular style, it's worth all the cheers and tears of joy that a roomful of visionaries and geniuses can muster.

■ David Von Drehle writes a twice-weekly column for The Washington Post.