

## EDITORIALS &amp; OPINIONS

The Bulletin  
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright  
Gerry O'Brien  
Richard Coe  
Publisher  
Editor  
Editorial Page EditorAlmost dead last  
is not a great place  
for Oregon to be

Oregon's corporate activity tax can be a fiscal bonanza for schools. It's lots of money. The most recent projected gross revenues from the tax are \$1.64 billion for the 2019-21 period and \$2.29 billion for 2021-23.

Can you dream up ways to spend those billions to help students learn? Anybody can.

Is there a cost? What if we told you Oregon was now ranked almost dead last — we are 49th — in the country in corporate taxes.

Approval of the corporate activity tax has been a bragging point for legislators. They brought home the bacon for schools. State Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, used former state Rep. Cheri Helt's vote against the tax in his campaign against her. He said she "voted against funding for Bend-La Pine Schools."

When you bring home the bacon, of course, you take the bacon from somebody. In the case of this tax, it takes the bacon from corporations. The tax applies to taxable Oregon commercial activity in excess of \$1 million. To quote the state, the tax is computed as \$250 plus 0.57% of taxable Oregon commercial activity of more than \$1 million. Only taxpayers with more than \$1 million of taxable Oregon commercial activity must pay.

Now that doesn't sound all that terrible, right? Except, well, \$1 million may sound like a lot of money. But you don't have to be an Intel to bring in \$1 million in revenue. For instance, you don't have to sell a lot of new cars to hit \$1 million. And the tax only lets businesses count a fraction of their expenses. So a business could actually be failing and still have to pay the tax. Now that is terrible.

If that doesn't get your attention,

Should Oregon reverse law  
on cold, allergy medicine?

Methamphetamine spread like crazy in the late 1990s and early 2000s with people cooking up the drug in home labs. One part of the recipe: pseudoephedrine. You could go down to the drugstore, buy up a bunch of cold or allergy medication and with other ingredients and a dose of stupidity start brewing.

Legislators in Oregon put the sale of drugs with pseudoephedrine behind the counter. They required a prescription. Home cooking of meth became more difficult.

It also made it more difficult and more expensive for some patients to get relief.

Well, illegal drug makers found other ways to make meth. Cold and

allergy sufferers still face more hassle and cost to get what can be for some more effective relief. Oregon is now the only state "that requires a prescription to purchase common cold and allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine, which are available over-the-counter in every other state," according to Sam Barber of the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians.

House Bill 2648 would sort of reverse the law. It would limit the purchase of such products to people over 18 and would require people to show a photo ID. No prescription required. State Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, and state Rep. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, back the bill. Should it become law?

how about tax pyramiding? That's when a tax applies to multiple layers of a product's life cycle. Think about cross-laminated timber or blueberries. They both can go through several stages in the production process and be sold on to the next business at the next stage. At each stage, if the product stays in Oregon, the manufacturer could be paying the tax — making it a tax on a tax.

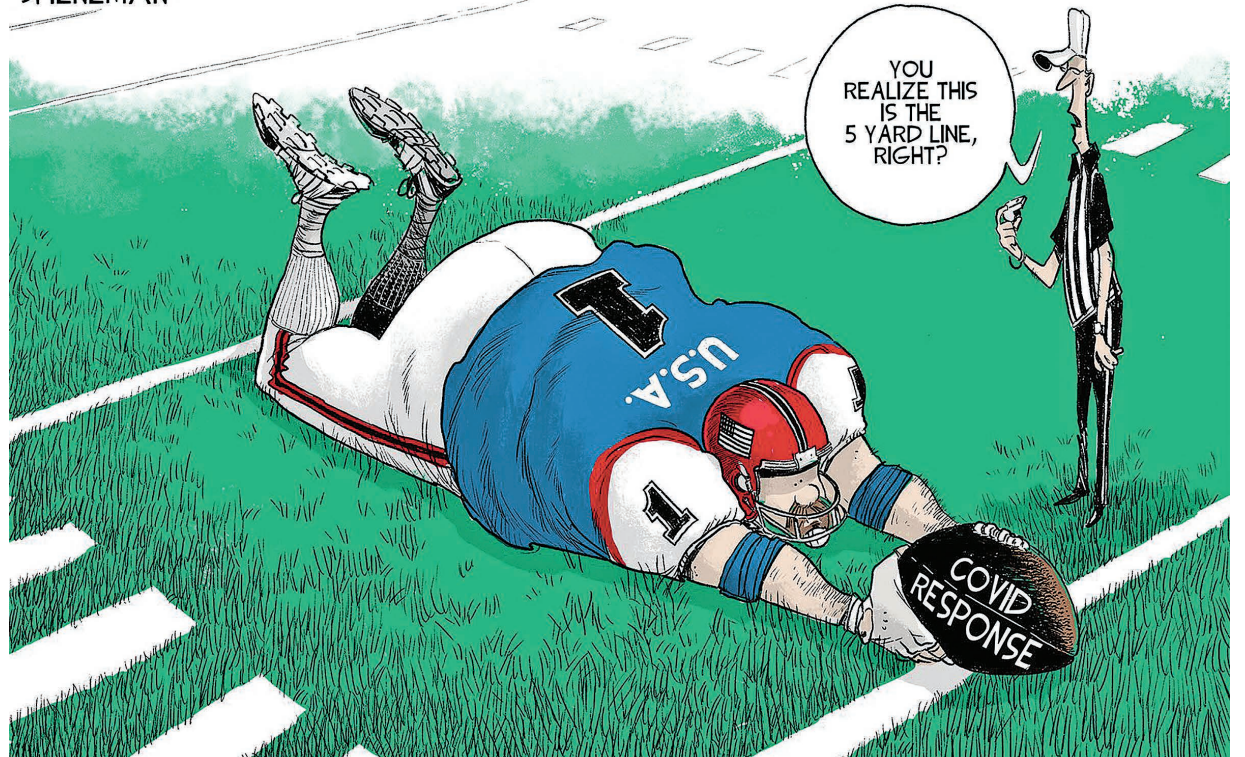
Many people still would say Oregon legislators were right to pass the tax. Schools need the money. Business needs to pay its share! OK, three more things to think about.

First, if schools need the money, why should only businesses pay the increased taxes? Shouldn't all Oregonians be chipping in?

Second, what about the perception of businesses who do business in Oregon or who might think about coming to Oregon? Some may like the tax because it shows the state's commitment to education. Others may wonder what else might be coming if Oregon legislators are willing to pass a pyramiding tax that also may tax businesses even if they are losing money.

And last, look at where the Tax Foundation puts Oregon's corporate tax rank. We are 49th. That's the second worst in the country. Yes that's one ranking by one organization. And in so many other ways, Oregon is a great place to do business and live. But for business owners and their number crunchers it's a clear signal Oregon may not be the best place to do business.

SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



## Unions want laws that work for unions

BY BEN STRAKA

As organized labor continues its push for the deceptively named Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act on the national stage, let's not forget that union leaders in Oregon have, time and again, lobbied lawmakers in Salem for their own set of rules designed for essentially the same reason — to tilt the playing field entirely in their own favor and away from workers.

They've done it successfully for years, turning Oregon's collective bargaining laws for government workers into some of the most lopsided in the country.

But union bosses always want more. The latest damning example is House Bill 3029, sponsored by a trio of House Democrats at the request of Oregon AFSCME, one of the state's most powerful government unions.

The seemingly innocuous measure would have allowed union "card check" campaigns — a type of expedited union drive in which organizers collect signed authorizations from workers — to be completed electronically rather than using paper copies.

It sounds entirely reasonable. After all, many of us regularly bank online, shop online and sign legal documents electronically. There's nothing necessarily wrong with transitioning Oregon's labor laws into the 21st century.

Except what AFSCME leaders really wanted in HB 3029 was to organize unions using modern technology but also, to deny those same capabilities to any dissatisfied workers seeking to challenge them.

In fact, AFSCME leaders wanted this unfair advantage so badly that they outright lied to lawmakers about it.

## GUEST COLUMN



Straka

During the bill's first committee hearing, AFSCME Associate Director Joe Baessler claimed it was an innocent measure designed to bring Oregon law "in line" with existing federal regulations for private-sector unions.

What he conspicuously neglected to mention was that while federal regulations do allow for electronic signatures in union campaigns, they allow them for all types of campaigns, including workers' attempts to change or remove their union.

My organization notified committee members of the falsehood, and lawmakers quickly introduced an amendment to fix the bill.

Specifically, the amendment would have extended the same electronic capabilities described in HB 3029 to all types of union-related campaigns equally.

Problem solved. AFSCME leaders would still get what they supposedly "wanted," and the amended bill would accomplish precisely what they had told lawmakers their goal was in the first place.

Apparently not. As it turns out, union leadership isn't too pleased with the idea of a level playing field.

When asked in the next committee hearing about why AFSCME's original version of HB 3029 sought to give union organizers the benefits of modern technology while denying it to others, Baessler was forced to acknowledge the truth about the bill and gave a shockingly honest com-

ment about AFSCME's disregard for dissenting workers' rights, saying, "We didn't think (campaigns to change or remove a union) was a priority... and we still don't."

Say again? AFSCME specifically crafted a bill to allow union proponents to organize with the click of a button while denying similar capabilities to union dissenters, all because it didn't think they were a "priority"?

That's kind of like saying workers should be able to sign up for union membership online but should have to send a physical letter via horse-drawn carriage at high noon on the equinox during an odd-numbered year while standing on one foot should they ever wish to resign because they're not a "priority."

But that would be ridiculous. Oh wait... AFSCME does that, too.

Are such things really because union leaders believe nonmembers and those who don't agree with the union's one-size-fits-all model aren't a priority? Or is it because, in reality, stifling any dissent is their priority?

Try as they might, union bosses aren't fooling anybody. Make no mistake, they want laws that work only for themselves and their supporters, not all workers.

HB 3029 is the latest example of that. The bill died in committee soon after the amendment was proposed, presumably because — when given the choice — AFSCME doesn't feel that online organizing is enough of a "priority" if it means workers could potentially dispose of their unions online, too.

One can't help but wonder what they're worried about.

■ Ben Straka is a policy analyst for the Freedom Foundation, a national nonprofit specializing in fighting government union abuses.

## 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 columnists 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.

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## The media knows much less than it thinks

BY JENNIFER RUBIN

The Washington Post

The Dunning-Kruger effect is a form of cognitive bias in which we humans tend to believe we know far more than we think. The least-informed people are often the most certain because, as Cornell University psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger put it, "those with limited knowledge in a domain suffer a dual burden: Not only do they reach mistaken conclusions and make regrettable errors, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it." Put differently: You do not know what you do not know.

The current media environment aggravates this dangerous tendency because media figures are supposed to have emphatic takes on everything immediately. Disastrous! Brilliant! Those are the responses that get clicks and eyeballs. It is a whole lot less sexy to say "We actually don't have enough

information to tell," or even "It's a close call."

This plays out all the time in breaking-news situations, most recently with the pause in the distribution of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. People with zero expertise in public health, immunology or any other relevant body of knowledge pounced. "Dr. Fauci, the CDC and the FDA are all wrong!" Well maybe they are, but novices do not have most of the information needed to make an informed opinion.

Let's consider all the things pundits did not know as the news broke. Many decided that the Johnson & Johnson pause would aggravate vaccine hesitancy and therefore do more harm than good. But do they know:

Which people are vaccine hesitant and why?

If, for example, the people at issue are illogical MAGA types who have adamant biases against the vac-

cine, the Johnson & Johnson news will likely have zero effect. And sure enough, a large contingency of those who won't get vaccinated fall into this category. A recent poll shows that 43% of Republicans are determined not to get a shot. A steady segment of the population remains staunchly anti-vaccine. Perhaps some people are impervious to logic. (This doesn't mean we give up on them. As the administration figured out, the way to convince people is not through the media, but through conversation with people they know and trust.)

Might the pause actually increase confidence?

That is what Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, argues. An initial poll suggests he is right. (This might, in part, be because of the nonstop appearances Fauci made on Tuesday to explain the pause.)

Does new information change

minds on vaccines, or does it confirm people's predispositions?

Confirmation bias is now a well-known phenomenon. (Also watch out for the "illusion of causality," when people assume there is a causal connection between two unrelated events.)

Despite a year of nonstop information about the necessity of wearing masks, for example, many people still believe mask-wearing is some kind of ruse. Media types often expect the public to follow the same logical progression they do. When it doesn't, it confounds them — over and over again.

Do we know all the reasons for the pause?

It's possible the primary reason was to inform physicians that the normal treatment for blood clots, a blood thinner called heparin, may make a patient's reaction worse or kill them.

So where does this leave us?

When news of this sort breaks — especially when it involves topics about which political pundits have no prior experience — several things should happen. Experts in the field, not political reporters, should step forward to provide insight. Reporters should be asking the right questions, not pontificating based on incomplete data.

They should be wary of their own confirmation bias and other cognitive mishaps. They should inform the public as to how the decision was made and why.

In short, the media needs to know what it does and does not know before it grades government officials on their performance. Chances are, Fauci, the world-renowned expert in immunology, has better judgment about the ethical and scientific issues surrounding a pandemic.

■ Jennifer Rubin writes opinion for The Washington Post.