

Short session had signs of bipartisan efforts

The report card from the short 32-day state legislative session is fairly positive for Central Oregon, according to two local lawmakers from both sides of the aisle.

It is almost as important to look at what didn't get passed as what did, and what to expect in next year's longer session. Suffice to say that a good amount of money was appropriated to try to resolve pressing public issues.

Sen. Tim Knopp, Republican, and Rep. Jason Kropf, Democrat, brought home some of the goods in this short session that was remarkably absent of the contentiousness of previous sessions, which were marred with walkouts by the Republican senators and protests outside the state capitol building. Still divisions remain.

"I felt like it was a pretty partisan session," said Knopp, of District 27, which encompasses the Central Oregon communities of Bend, Redmond, Sunriver and Tumalo.

"Democrats got to move most of their agenda and killed most of the Republican bills and agenda," he said noting that about 50 Democratic-sponsored bills pass the Senate, while only three sponsored by Republicans passed.

But Knopp co-sponsored a bill authored by Kropf of District 54 that provides for a coordinated response to homelessness, a nagging issue in Bend and Redmond.

Kropf said, "I'm pretty happy about how the bill came together. There will be several pilot programs spread across the four corners of the state, so different communities with tackle this issue from different perspectives. That was a real bipartisan effort."

Here's a few of the issues the pair worked on across the aisle:

- About \$10 million was set aside for the OSU-Cascades innovation center;
- La Pine will receive money for day care infrastructure
- Crook and Deschutes counties will get renovation dollars for their courthouses. Deschutes has two new circuit court judges coming on board and the money will be used to remodel courtrooms.
- Redmond received \$9.5 million in matching grant money to build an emergency response center for training and as the center to respond to a predicted Cascadia earthquake event.
- What just missed passage, but both sides agree to its need, was a bill to raise to a felony from a misdemeanor a charge for anyone assaulting a health care worker. Examples abound during the COVID-19 pandemic of hospital workers being threatened while trying to care for patients.
- "We've been hearing from the hospital workers that the penalty is not enough to keep people from assaulting them. They wanted a stron-

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ger consequence," Knopp said. It will return for next year's session.

Also, aid for homeless students in the form of housing, meals, transportation will be back next year. While heavily supported, it just didn't make it to the Senate floor.

And more money will be considered for law enforcement to Oregon State Police officers and sheriff deputies better locate illegal marijuana grows in the central and southern Oregon.

"We have to be vigilant on those because it out of control in southern Oregon," Knopp said.

A forest thinning bill to help Deschutes, Marion, Jackson and some coastal counties with wildfire prevention will also be back next year.

Knopp warned that a lot of one-time federal money came to Oregon that the Legislature appropriated, yet the state will have to find a way to fund those programs on its own once the federal dollars end.

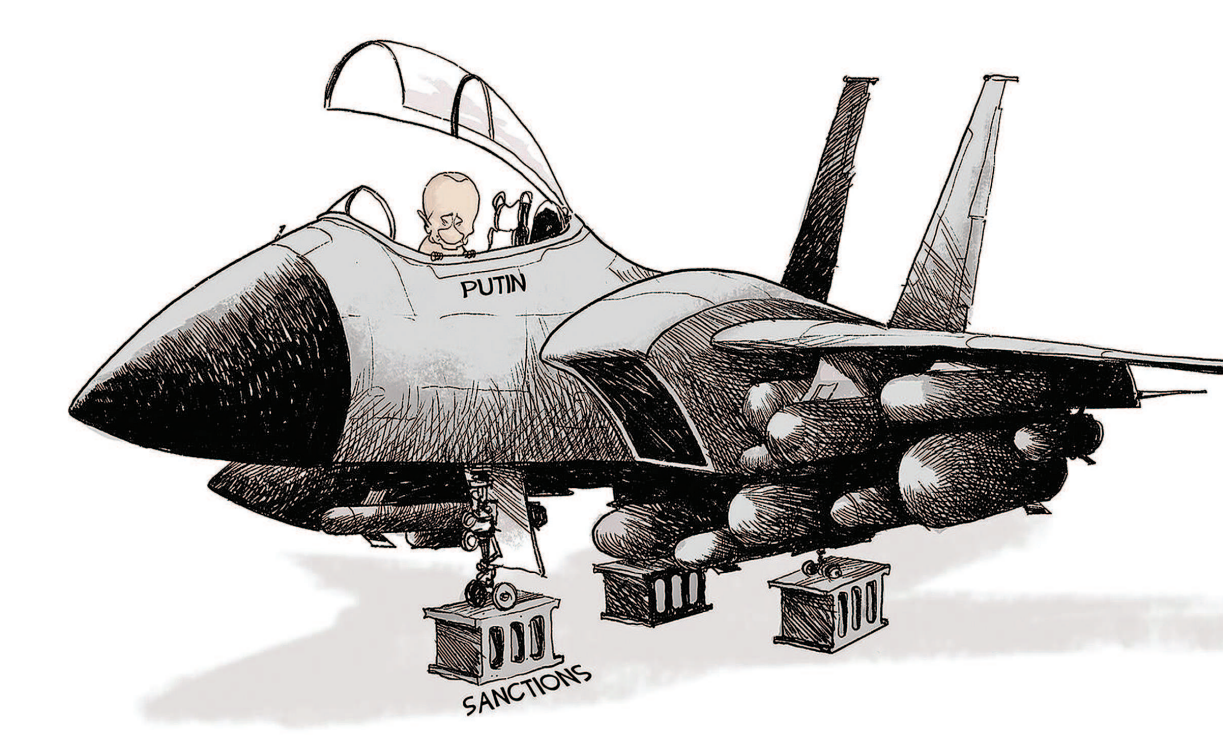
Kropf was optimistic for the region

"I think there is a growing realization at the state about what is happening out here in Central Oregon. And that is reflective in some of the investments we received this session."

Attention now turns to this year's primary election in May and general election in November. There will be a lot of turnover in the House and Knopp, the Senate Republican leader, hopes his party can pick up enough seats for a possible majority in the Senate.

Whatever the outcome, the efforts to work across the aisle have born fruit.

SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



Central Oregon is ready for equitable and climate-friendly communities

BY BEN GORDON

Today's biggest contributors to climate change are tied to our built environment. Where we live and work and how we travel determine our impact on this planet. Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation are the biggest contributor to climate change nationally. That certainly rings true for Oregon, where transportation accounts for 40% of statewide emissions.



Gordon

didn't know then that this land use system would also be one of our best tools for tackling climate change.

By thoughtfully guiding growth, Oregon has been able to develop more compact neighborhoods that reduce major carbon emitters, like vehicle miles traveled.

But we need to do more to meet this moment. As we continue to experience ongoing drought and rapid regional growth, land use planning is critical to creating a hopeful future where equity and sustainability go hand in hand.

Right now, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform our communities and tackle climate change head-on.

Oregon's Land Conservation and

GUEST COLUMN

Development Commission (LCDC) is in the midst of a Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities rulemaking process. These rules will guide future development for cities across our state with a goal "to transform Oregon's communities to be safe, equitable, sociable, and pleasant places where driving is not required, and the amount of driving is reduced."

This could be a seismic shift from business-as-usual by placing climate change, affordable housing, and equitable transportation choices at the center of how our cities are planned, built, and funded. For instance, these rules would designate Climate-Friendly Areas in our cities and direct a portion of new housing development to those areas — and these rules would also direct cities to prioritize abundant, high-quality infrastructure projects for biking, walking, and public transit in those areas.

The very first goal of Oregon's land use system is public involvement, and this process has already included thousands of Oregonians.

LandWatch and other local groups have been deeply engaged in this effort to help ensure these rules are strong and effective and that they happen soon. We don't have another decade to wait.

We know local jurisdictions will need support and resources to accomplish the vital work ahead. On March 31, there is a virtual public hearing on these rules on LCDC's website (ore-

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gon.gov/lcd/Commission) and comments can be submitted up until then. Central Oregonians need to show up to ensure this effort leads to transformative outcomes that change how our cities are built and how state transportation dollars get spent in our local communities.

At its heart, the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities rulemaking process should add up to one necessary outcome: all people should have the opportunity to thrive here in Central Oregon while we protect the environment around us.

That is why these rules need and deserve our community's attention and support.

If you share LandWatch's urgency in tackling climate change at the state and local level, join us at the virtual public hearing on March 31. Now is the time to make your voice heard about the future you want to see.

■ Ben Gordon is the executive director of Central Oregon LandWatch

Letters policy

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and 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.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and 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.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

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

The state of rural Oregon — and resilience — from the road

BY MARGIE HOFFMANN

Last week, I tuned in to President Biden's State of the Union speech roughly 90 miles outside of Bend.

While the president laid out his vision of an America recovering from the middle out, not the top down, I wove through large stands of ponderosa where the high desert meets the mountains. I crossed rivers only months away from another drought emergency declaration.

The next day, while carefully stepping through a burn scar newly blanketed in green and listening to local leaders extoll the privilege of potable water, one word stuck with me: resilience.

Rural Oregonians know all about resilience.

When I first assumed my role as state director of USDA Rural Development in Oregon,



Hoffmann

I made it a priority to get out into the field and visit the rural communities we serve. Even from a home office in Bend, it's easy to lose perspective when talking numbers. RD Oregon invested over \$635 million last year in loans, grants and guaranteed loans. We partnered with rural Oregon's public bodies, nonprofits, small businesses, and homeowners on over 2,072 projects.

These are impressive totals, but they are far more impressive when measured by their impact.

With a grant from USDA's Rural Energy for America Program, a food co-op in Astoria invested in solar energy and now passes savings on to

customers. Children in Southern Oregon will have access to critical medical care over broadband funded by USDA's ReConnect Program.

Hundreds of families in rural, suburban and tribal communities displaced by wildfires will sleep in their own beds and wake up to running water, thanks to the vision of community changemakers and our multifamily housing and emergency water assistance programs.

These are the voices from President Biden's economy of the middle. They tell stories of perseverance.

By investing in water infrastructure and broadband, rural business opportunities and the American food supply chain, USDA is helping communities build a foundation for sustained

economic growth.

Every day, RD Oregon has the privilege of working with growing local networks. As community partners, environmental stewards, and innovators, we work alongside community members to assist them in realizing their vision for the community.

Together, through USDA's Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program and the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program, we will create a food supply chain that's more robust, more diverse, and fairer, so that Oregon's farms and ranches take home a greater share of profits and keep shelves stocked in their own hometowns.

USDA's Water and Environmental Programs will help small towns replace crumbling pipes and make sure all Oregon families have safe water at home and at school, while easing wa-

ter bills. By ensuring equitable access to federal resources, we will answer President Biden's call to build from the middle out.

From my travels across our state, I can tell you one thing without a doubt: there are few things stronger than an Oregonian's resolve. Through record-breaking heat waves, annual drought conditions, wildfire season, and everything in between, however deep the crisis, whatever the ZIP code, Oregonians will come together to overcome and thrive.

Now, faced with a changing landscape and a climate in unknown territory, rural Oregonians have a chance to chart a new path. To lead the nation towards a sustainable, brighter future where all of America prospers.

I'll see you on the road.

■ Margie Hoffmann is state director of USDA Rural Development in Oregon.