

Dem-GOP split exemplified in school funding

It was no surprise that Gov. Kate Brown signed Oregon's Education budget last week, following passage in both the Democratic-dominated state Senate and House.

It was a clear example of what happens when one party dominates all three seats of power — it has the ability to craft such legislation exactly how it pleases. And Democrats did just that. Every single Democratic vote in the state Senate backed this budget, but not one Republican did. It was a party-line vote in the House, too.

None of that should be surprising. People with power tend to use that power. People of another political party tend to vote against its opposition's plans.

But here is what surprised some observers: the Republican education proposal would have spent more money on the education budget than the Democratic one. Yes, you read that right. The stance of both parties came as an unusual twist to some politicians, even on the national scale.

Granted, there was some political grandstanding in those GOP votes.

The Oregonian reported that Sen. Alan Olsen, R-Canby, said in a floor speech: "The day after the resurrection of Christ, we will witness the death knell of our education system." Olsen then paused for a moment of silence.

So yes, there was a little bit of hyperbole involved. And plenty of attempts to tar the other side.

But many of those votes weren't grandstanding at all. Many were based on the needs of their districts, needs that would not be met by the

Democratic-backed budget.

That's because most Oregon Republicans with seats in the Senate and House are from rural areas. Most of those places are not growing at the pace of the state's urban core, and most are not seeing steady economic gain. That means a "status quo" education budget will harm their districts.

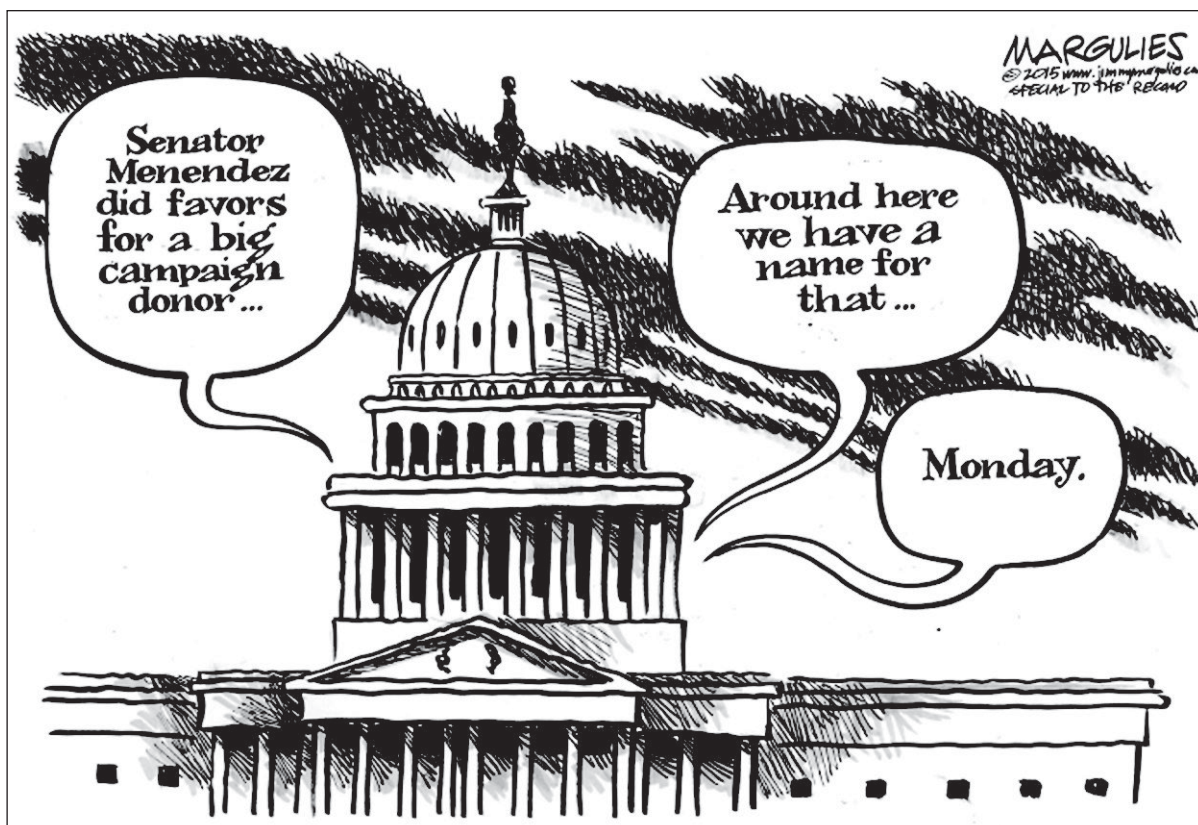
As local school officials noted a month ago, some districts in Grant County are expecting a slide back to the budget-cutting days under this new biennial budget. They worry that the recovery they had just begun in the current budget cycle will be lost.

So far, what the big-city Democrats are hoping is that this budget will be enough to keep the schools afloat while they work to remake the system from preschool on up. Meanwhile, rural Republicans predict it won't be enough to keep what is already one of the worst state K-12 education systems in the nation from taking another step backward.

We know money isn't the sole answer to anything, and that just throwing dollars at a problem is no way to solve it.

But in this case a chance has been lost to continue improving our investment in the schools and our youth, especially in the still economically depressed rural and frontier areas.

It's a given that school districts across the state will make do with the dollars they get; there's no other option. But this is one case we believe the Legislature's action will only deepen the urban-rural divide, and students will bear the brunt.



FROM OTHER VOICES

Glyphosate cancer link should be weighed in context

EO Media Group

The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer last month issued a paper classifying glyphosate herbicide, sold under the trade name Roundup by Monsanto Co., as "probably carcinogenic to humans."

The finding made headlines because genetically modified "Roundup Ready" corn, soybeans and other crops are staples of U.S. agriculture. Critics have used the report to call into question the safety of GMOs generally and of glyphosate-resistant crops specifically.

It's disturbing any time commonly used products are found to have a link to cancer. While the cancer research agency's finding shouldn't be dismissed out of hand, it must be taken in context.

The finding is the opposite of what the Environmental Protection Agency and other regulatory and research agencies have concluded.

The European Union's Glyphosate Task Force said evaluations

done over the past 40 years consistently confirmed glyphosate "poses no unacceptable risk to humans, animals or the environment." One of the largest epidemiology studies involved approximately 57,000 U.S. farmers who apply herbicides, the task force said in a prepared statement.

The task force said there are "serious deficiencies in terms of methodological approach" in International Agency for Research on Cancer's findings and that the classification should be withdrawn.

In reaching its findings, the agency does not conduct original research. It evaluates available literature.

The German Federal Institute of Risk Assessment, which in 2014 declared glyphosate non-carcinogenic, called the agency's classification a "surprise" and contrary to studies done by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and even a prior study by WHO.

The finding is not conclusive. The agency classifies substances on a scale of 1 to 4. Substances in

Group 1 are classified "carcinogenic to humans" because there's enough evidence to conclude that they cause cancer. Group 1 includes birth control pills, alcoholic beverages, mineral oils and the sun.

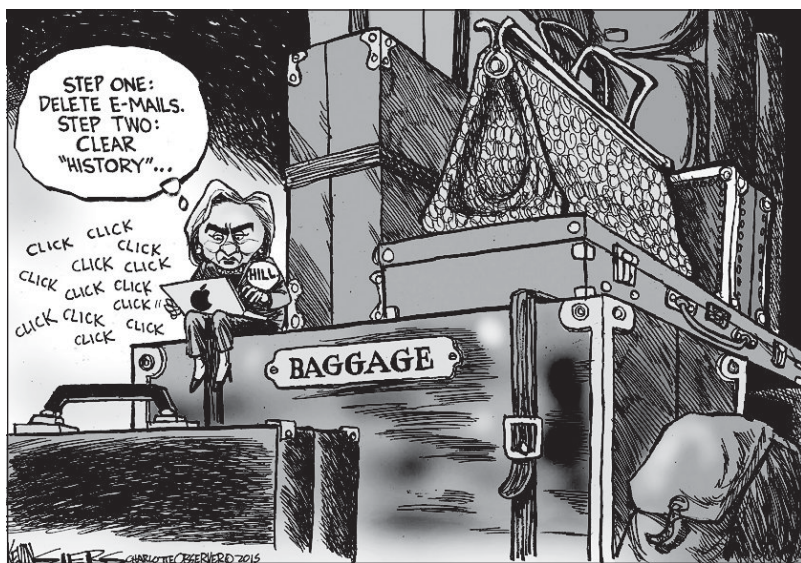
Glyphosate is classified in Group 2(a), which means "there is limited evidence of carcinogenicity in humans and sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals."

The report said "limited evidence" means a positive association has been observed, but other explanations have not been ruled out.

While glyphosate and other chemicals warrant continuing study, nothing in the agency's report suggests it shouldn't continue to be used responsibly.

And what of the implications for biotechnology? It's a conventional herbicide, not genetic engineering, that's at issue. The technology still presents the best opportunity to provide farmers with increased yields to feed an increasing population.

— The Capital Press



COMMENTARY

There is hope for alcoholics

By Terry Steele
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

In recent times, I began to hear the diagnostic term of "incurable alcoholic."

I've been somewhat confused of just what this could mean. It has always been my understanding that the only way an alcoholic could quit drinking (and stay quit) was if they themselves truly wanted to. So I assume this term would refer to any alcoholic who did not want to recover from active alcoholism.

I had a friend who died, leaving his family and friends way too early. This person was assumed to be an incurable alcoholic.

The problem I have with this term is that it leaves an alcoholic individual with an excuse to continue to drink alcohol. But for those of you who truly want to quit, nothing will work except

total abstinence. No promises of "a cure," no expectations of controlling your drinking, absolutely nothing but total abstinence will work to achieve maintained sobriety.

This last March, I had an extremely important anniversary. I marked 30 years free from a disease that had ruined my life and had dealt misery to those around me.

I have known a few alcoholics who remained decent people, even though they drank heavily. However, when I boozed, I was about as far as you could get from being a decent person. Perhaps my bad behavior helped to motivate me to be free of active alcoholism.

I have an enormous respect for Alcoholics Anonymous and fully believe they have done way more to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety than all the other different methods used. I chose not to go

this route simply because I am for the most part a loner.

AA has a number of good steps that they encourage an alcoholic to abide by. One guideline is to stay sober "one day at a time." I was not a person who could think in terms of just one day at a time. For me, it had to mean that I would raise myself up from the mire of a worthless existence and remain sober for the rest of my life.

One of their truly worthwhile steps is to apologize to those they have hurt. So to anyone reading this that I've harmed physically or emotionally, or by any other possible abuse, I want to say from the bottom of my heart, "I am sorry."

And finally, I want to say to any active alcoholic reading this, please don't give up the fight, because it is a battle that can be won.

Terry Steele, a writer and photographer, lives in the Ritter area.

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