

Time will tell if Republican strategy will pay off

Oregon voters watched Monday as political drama took center stage in Salem when Republican members of the Senate returned after a week-long walk out.

The result was the passage of the Student Success Act, a multi-tiered piece of legislation that will funnel money into schools but boost taxes.

Two other controversial bills — each opposed by Republicans — evaporated, seemingly part of the deal to bring Senate GOP members back to the Capitol.

Voters, though, should remember that the Senate GOP walkout was never about funding education. Republicans have consistently stated on the record that they support giving more funds to Oregon's schools.

No, the walkout was a move of desperation, prompted by the lack of urgency from Democrats to work with their GOP colleagues. With a supermajority, Democrats hold supreme power in the Legislature. The sentiment seemed to be that if Republicans were not going to play political ball, then Democrats would just go ahead and greenlight their legislative priorities.

Except even with a supermajority the old fundamental of democracy — working along a bipartisan route to solve problems — reigns.

Even if it means Republicans walking away for a week.

In the end, GOP senators, including Cliff Bentz who represents Grant County, had little choice but to evacuate the capital and deprive Democrats of the needed quorum to vote on the education bill.

Time will tell if the tactic will pay off. Now, it appears to have been only marginally successful. Yes, Republican did gain some political traction — the vaccination and gun bills were dropped — and more funding for schools is now a reality.

Yet at least one major elephant — the cap and trade bill — is still standing on the Oregon political porch. House Bill 2020 is controversial across the eastern side of the state and for good reason. GOP lawmakers, most notably Bentz, have worked hard this session to put the brakes on the carbon emission legislation — if only to develop a better, more equitable plan in the future. So far, his Democratic colleagues don't appear to be listening. We hope that changes.

In the end, the walkout, while politically unseemly, did produce more funding for our local schools. No matter what one's political persuasion, producing more money to educate our children is always a good idea. And sometimes good ideas can be a rare species inside Oregon's Capitol.



GUEST COMMENT

Why I hate wolves

By Reg LeQuieu
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Wolves kill in packs, driving, exhausting, surrounding and terrifying until they have singled out an animal — infant, healthy or aged, it really doesn't matter. Then they close in, snapping and snarling, tearing first at genitals and bellies, mutilating and ripping, spilling intestines that will be dragged, stepped on and seized by jaws that tear the life right out of the victim from the inside out. The term "gut-wrenching" takes on a whole new meaning here. It becomes a horrifying death, both frantically fast and agonizingly slow. These predators frequently settle in to feed before the victim succumbs.

I have to question the premise that we want to preserve this — even reintroduce and increase this — as the fate of more and more animals.

Unlike predators, the sportsman kills from a distance; there is the striking absence of eyeball-to-eyeball impact and the indescribable horror of claws and teeth tearing the living flesh

and crushing bone. There is always the desire for a humane, quick kill; there is usually that result. With predators there is never the desire for a humane, quick kill; there is seldom that result.

Predators put on their horror show year-round, terrifying daily, killing indiscriminately. Wolves, especially, raise the stress level of the prey species exponentially, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The sportsman, by vivid contrast, hunts from afar, only during two months in the fall, and kills discriminately — selectively. The benefit to the prey species is obvious — and profound.

To prefer the "natural" inhumane and cruel treatment of animals to man's less natural but more humane beneficial treatment just does not make ethical sense.

It is legitimate for man, the hunter, to largely supplant the role of the predators when we multiply and fill a geographic area. If we are going to partake of this natural bounty and utilize it for some of our own food and recreational needs, we do have to reduce the predators. That

we can manage the resource and harvest humanely is a huge bonus to the resource. If they could, they would thank us for it — and curse us for the reintroduction of wolves.

The pioneers who eliminated the wolf did so not because they misunderstood the wolf, but because they understood the wolf intimately.

They witnessed the wolves' idle cruelty and wanton killing; they saw the waste and experienced the loss of their own livestock. They learned to hate the wolf because that is what the wolf taught them to do; they responded to what they witnessed as any rational person would. They were the true friends of animals.

Our shared hunting heritage is tied up with values that lead to improving the human, as well as the animal, condition. What the proponents of predators desire will be worse for both the hunter and the hunted — and the unintended consequence will also be reduced opportunity to view wildlife for the non-hunter.

I hate cruelty; you should too!
Reg LeQuieu lives in Mt. Vernon.

GUEST COMMENT

Why deny the Democratic majority a quorum?

By Herman Baertschiger Jr. and Cliff Bentz
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Legislators should use every tool available to protect their constituents. When the majority party proposes laws that place Oregonians at risk, one of those tools is the refusal to provide a quorum.

The requirement that a "quorum" be present before a body can act is to assure that action is based on more than just a few opinions. In the Senate, a body of 30 people, a quorum consists of no fewer than 20 senators. There are 18 Democrats and 12 Republicans in the Oregon Legislature.



Oregon Sen. Cliff Bentz

This tactic is justified because the Democrats' corporate activity tax and cap and trade tax are inequitable, regressive and damaging at every level. Other bills brought by

Democrats restrict personal freedoms and are equally extreme. Topping this off is the Democrats' willingness to pass a \$2 billion gross receipts tax before stopping the real harm that the Public Employees Retirement System continues to wreak upon Oregon children's educational opportunities. Essentially, the Democrats are pouring \$2 billion

of your money into a bucket with a huge PERS hole in it. Yes, if ever there were a time to step out and say "stop," it is now.

The Republican senators' decision to walk out should be understood for what it is: a predictable response to legislation that is seriously flawed. Or, to quote our Democratic governor, Kate Brown, who was the Senate Democratic Leader in 2001 at the time of a Democratic boycott: "Under certain circumstances, it's fair to say we would use all tools available to us and stage a similar boycott."

Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass, is the Senate minority leader. Bentz, R-Ontario, is a state senator representing District 30.

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