

Special session fiasco highlights legislative dysfunction

Gov. Kate Brown missed an excellent opportunity when she declined last week to call for a special session of the Legislature to amend Senate Bill 1013, a new law that revises the crime of aggravated murder and tightens which crimes carry the death penalty.

In a classic example of unintended consequences, lawmakers passed the law during the last legislative session believing the new law would not be retroactive. That means they believed the law would only apply to crimes going forward, not to individuals already in prison facing a sentence of death.

As soon as the law passed, though, the Oregon Department of Justice said the law could very well apply to people already on death row, creating the possibility many of their original sentences could be modified.

Many law enforcement and state district attorneys never liked the bill to begin with, and some lawmakers — including Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena — didn't vote for it. The dilemma the law created is a serious one, and a great deal of confusion remains about the impact of the bill.

There was enough gray area, then, to make a special session to revise the bill necessary and prudent. That the governor has declined to do so raises its

own set of questions that voters should be able to get answers to.

The new law always left a lingering sense of unease to anyone committed to democracy in Oregon. That's because such sweeping adjustments to the criminal code should be decided by the people. After all, it was voters — not lawmakers — who originally agreed to amend the state constitution in 1984 to legalize capital punishment. Voters should make that difficult call because the ramifications of the death penalty are extremely serious and long lasting.

On this bill, lawmakers simply didn't get it right. They had the opportunity to do so but failed. The legislation, like so many other bills, was overshadowed by the big debate regarding the state's effort to create a byzantine law to address carbon emissions. The bill deserved more attention and it didn't get it, and now voters are left with few options other than to, once again, shake their heads at what is becoming more and more of a dysfunctional legislative system in Oregon.

The special session could have promptly, and effectively, addressed the issue, made the necessary modifications to the bill and been done with it.

Instead voters have another legislative mess to try and clean up.

Surely, we can do better than this.



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GUEST COMMENT

Businesses need disaster plan

The data is staggering: An estimated one in four businesses won't reopen after a major disaster.

The economic impact is crippling: The loss in revenues, inventory, property, wages and even jobs has an incredible ripple effect on local economies and global supply chains.

The human impact is devastating: The stress and loss that comes from a disaster can be overwhelming, to say the least.

Yet, studies show an estimated two out of three small businesses — or in some studies as high as three out of four — don't have an emergency plan in place. As we've experienced firsthand in Oregon — from droughts in some parts of the state to severe flooding in other parts — it's not a matter of if a disaster will strike, it's a matter of when.

Being prepared for any kind of emergency means a business will rebound sooner with less impact to its financial reserves. Since September is National Disaster Preparedness Month, there is no better time than now to take steps to prepare:

- Review your hazard and flood coverage to ensure your policy is in effect before a disaster strikes.
- Keep your insurance policy information, phone numbers for your insurance agent and the



Jeremy Field

claims department handy.

- Know who you can call to help you clean or rebuild your business and have a restoration plan in place so you can focus on the task of quickly reopening your business.

Preparedness cannot be stressed enough, but once disaster hits, the SBA Office of Disaster Assistance has staff on the ground within days to coordinate federal, state and local recovery efforts.

- Keep an updated list of all your employees' contact numbers and email addresses to ensure safety, as well as keeping everyone in the loop about the recovery progress.
- Obtain a line of credit or have enough cash to run your business for at least three months.
- Move your important business records, personal memorabilia and anything that's irreplaceable to an offsite location. Save as much as you possibly can to the cloud.

Many people I talk to are surprised to learn that in the wake of a declared disaster, the SBA assists in the rebuilding and economic recovery of a community by providing affordable, timely loans to businesses of all sizes, nonprofits, homeowners and renters to cover

uninsured losses.

For businesses of all sizes and private nonprofit organizations, the SBA provides up to \$2 million to repair or replace damaged real estate, leasehold improvements, furniture and fixtures, inventory and machinery and equipment. Economic Injury Disaster Loans are also available to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and most private non-profit organizations that have suffered economic injury caused by a disaster. These loans provide working capital to a business or organization until normal operations can resume.

While a key component to the SBA mission is to help small businesses recover following a disaster, we also want to mitigate that loss. I urge Oregon small businesses to not become a sobering statistic. Take the time this month to put an emergency plan in place using the many no-cost resources at your disposal. It's an investment of your time that will have exponential returns.

Jeremy Field is the regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration Pacific Northwest Region, which serves Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. The SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small businesses with resources to start, grow, expand or recover.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More families lament the loss of Raddue Campground

To the Editor:
The Moores, the Reeds and the Medlins homesteaded in the Fox Valley in the late 1800s.

With all seven generations of our family, we have regarded Raddue as our melting pot destination.

Raddue was a place for hunting, fishing, picking huckleberries, the fiddle and guitar music playing around the campfire and a safe haven for everyone to come and enjoy our heritage.

This year was intended to gather all of our family at Raddue and celebrate our lives and a special birthday for a family member.

The Raddue Campground was inaccessible to everyone that traveled so far, and a promise of a birthday wish was not kept.

Let's put into perspective what is really important to us. Our her-

itage, our family and the sacred places our generations have been able to enjoy.

Cheryl Renner
Boise, Idaho

Sheriff costing taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars

To the Editor:
I hope the 1,065 voters that re-elected Sheriff Palmer are paying attention to how much he is costing taxpayers. Tens of thousands of dollars have been paid by taxpayers in lawsuits resulting from the sheriff's failure to obey the law. I thought the sheriff was supposed to enforce the law, not ignore it.

Now the county has paid more than \$18,000 to an office deputy on administrative leave that is also married to the undersheriff.

Concurrently it appears Under-

sheriff Mobley was also placed on administrative leave on March 18. Meanwhile county attorney Carroll states he was back "actively employed" by April 25, yet refused to provide the actual dates the undersheriff was on leave. So is this Grant County's example of transparency in government?

It also appears the sheriff has a problem in his hiring practices. Although innocent until proven guilty, sheriff's office deputy Tyler Smith, also on administrative leave, has been arrested by Oregon State Police on "multiple charges of attempted adult rape, child neglect and fourth-degree assault." Is this the picture Grant County voters want their law enforcement to reflect?

Perhaps it's time for voters to take a short pause for another "reality check."

Fred Fitzgerald
Monument

WHERE TO WRITE

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: toccc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.
- **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
- **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca

- 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.
- **SALEM**
- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Website: oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **WASHINGTON, D.C.**
- **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.



Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

- Publisher**.....Chris Rush, crush@emediagroup.com
- Editor & General Manager**.....Sean Hart, editor@bmeagle.com
- Reporter**.....Rudy Diaz, rudy@bmeagle.com
- Community News**.....Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
- Sports**.....Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
- Marketing Rep**.....Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
- Administrative Assistant**.....Makenna Adair, office@bmeagle.com
- Office Assistant**.....Alexandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

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