

Short session needs bipartisan overhaul

The Republican boycott of cap and trade effectively prevented Democrats from enacting climate legislation, but their absence also prevented the Legislature from accomplishing much of anything during this year's short session.

That's not how Oregonians want their Legislature to function. Politics might be the only profession where taking off can lead to political victory or at least a stalemate, but no one likes it.

Senate Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., R-Grants Pass, sent a letter urging Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, to "focus on budget adjustments and policy fixes," the original intent of the short session, rather than pushing through big and controversial bills.

Oregonians in 2010 approved Ballot Measure 71 to amend the state's Constitution to establish annual sessions. The outcome wasn't even close. Voters supported the measure about 68% to 32%.

The new law went into effect in 2011, setting up the regular or long session at 160 calendar days in odd-numbered years and limiting the session in even-numbered years to 35 days.

The short session also comes with some limiting criteria. House members can introduce no more than two bills, and state senators get one each. Interim committees can propose no more than five bills. The executive branch can present no more than five bills at the request of the governor. The same goes for the judicial branch at the request of the Oregon chief justice.

Those limits made sense then and still do. A month and some days does not allow much time to get through thousands of bills the regular session handles. There's scant time to hold hearings and take input from experts and from the people laws could affect.

And Baertschiger is right about what persuaded voters to approve annual sessions. They wanted lawmakers to deal with budget fixes or tweak laws that had unintended consequences sooner rather than every two years

or when the governor called a special session. But now in year eight, the experiment has been uneven. Lawmakers — primarily Democrats — have used the short session to introduce sweeping legislation.

They tried in 2018 to push cap and trade. The complex legislation did not gain much traction. That led to the conflict in the 2019 regular session when Republican senators took off to block passage. And it set up the showdown that ended this session, which escalated to the point of House Democrats issuing subpoenas to compel their Republican colleagues to return to the Oregon Capitol.

Legislators in the two chambers could avoid this with rules specific to the short session requiring bills have bipartisan support or bipartisan sponsors before they get any hearing. Even committee bills could have that requirement, the same for what comes down from the governor's office or the judiciary.

The House and Senate would have to adopt their own sets of rules for this end, but it could help ensure controversial legislation or bills that require a lot of examination and fact-gathering don't make it very far. It also would avoid walkouts that dam up the entire legislative process and put other meaningful and vital legislation in jeopardy. And having bipartisan support, of course, would not guarantee any bill's ultimate passage.

The two chambers could even create an end-around: As long as two-thirds of the House and Senate agree, they could dig into something like cap and trade. They already have a similar rule that allows for the a five-day extension of the short session.

Of course, passing these kinds of rules would require Democrat support. And they should support it. The Democrats right now look like the stereotype so much of rural Oregon sees them as: political know-it-alls who want to dictate to Oregonians what is best for them.

That's the very attitude that widens Oregon's urban-rural divide rather than helps to close it.



FARMER'S FATE

The midnight chicken safari



Brianna Walker

It was nearly midnight. High school football practice was starting soon. And the blonde heroine in our story — let's call her Sandy Dee — was just getting her ducks in a row — or perhaps I should say pullets in progression.

The night was dark, as she and her son left the house. Her son started heading for her car, but Sandy Dee wasn't quite ready to leave. In her compelling South African accent she asked her strapping 6-foot-something son for a little help first. She was intentionally vague as she led her son around the house, past the barn and into one of the outbuildings where a large dog crate sat amidst some feathers.

"Help me load this into the car," she smiled in the moonlight.

I can imagine the grumbling on the part of the uniformed football player, as he and his mom packed the fluttering crate back to the back of her SUV.

Task over, her son climbed into the driver's seat and started off for midnight football practice. Just a mile down the road, Sandy Dee motioned him to pull over.

"Aw, Mom, are you really going to do this?" he grumbled. "What happens if someone sees us?"

"Just pull over and turn off the lights!" she said, with what I imagine to be crazed excitement in her voice.

They parked off to the side of the road, and her son obediently turned off the lights. Gently open-

ing their car doors, they walked quietly to the back of the vehicle. Feeling a bit like a criminal, Sandy Dee noiselessly opened the back door and unlatched the dog crate. She instructed

her son to man the crate door as she pulled out the first black and white hen.

"Hello girl, it was nice to know you. Enjoy your new life. Good-bye!" she sing-songed as she gave the chicken a little push over the fence into the neighbor's pasture.

She did this five times. Picking each bird up, petting it lovingly, then setting it off to make friends with the goats and horse who occupied the pasture.

"Mom, why are you talking to them?" he groaned in embarrassment as she was saying goodbye to the last one, giving her an extra big push as she fluttered down to her next adventure. Sandy Dee ignored him, and he continued, "And what if a cop stops us because we're littering chickens?"

"Well then we'll have to think up a Plan B real quick!" she laughed with a carefree shrug and started back toward the passenger seat. "I'm more worried about sitting through your football practice in a vehicle that smells like chicken poop! Let's hide the crate down here in the bushes and pick up it up on our way home."

So they pulled out the dog crate and nestled it down into the bushes and weeds, feeling more criminal-like than ever — but also not wanting to breathe that fowl odor for the next few hours. Football practice went well, and at 2:15 a.m., Sandy Dee and her son once again pulled over along their neighbor's fence and killed the car lights. They got out and began feeling around in the weeds to find the left-behind dog crate.

"Now if a cop sees us," her son moaned, "he'll think we're stealing dog crates!"

"Well then you better hurry your butt up and get that crate in the back!" Sandy Dee hollered, making a crazy dash for the passenger door.

Or at least that was Sandy Dee's confession when I noticed five new chickens in my pasture the next morning. Sitting on my porch, with a notepad and coffee, I watched my new hens fluffing around the pasture for delicious morning treats, and imagined my friend and her son doing a drive-by-chickening. Humming the song from Grease, I put my pen to the paper, and wondered: What do city people do for fun?

Look at me, I'm Sandy Dee Pranking friends with poultry Won't go to bed till the hens wings are spread I can't, I'm Sandy Dee

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stop shaking hands because of virus

To the Editor:

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has not stopped at airport gateways in Seattle and Portland. Lots of us are frightened, especially older folks.

I think a small step for those of us who are involved in social activities is to stop shaking hands until this epidemic is not so pervasive.

My favorite alternative is to use the Vulcan salute when greeting others, where you spread your ring and index fingers to form a "V."

That may not be the choice for everyone, but it is a good start! I

think we can still be polite but not shake hands for a while.

David Irwin
Mt. Vernon

Health officials should be in charge of coronavirus response

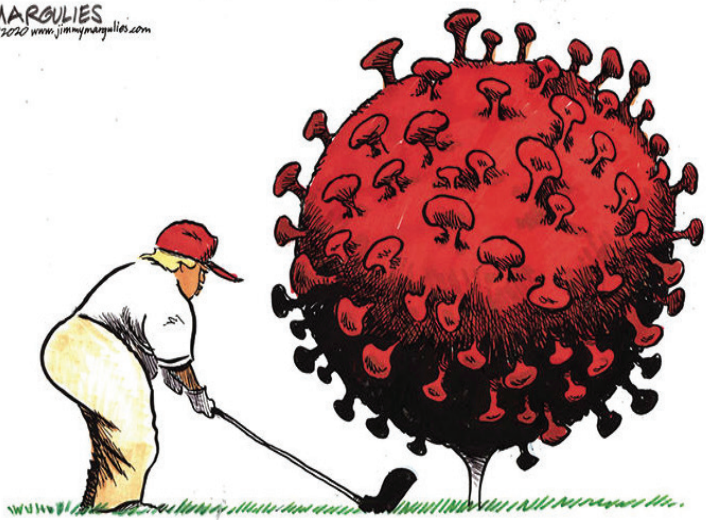
To the Editor:

I understand that the Grant County Court recently appointed a deputy sheriff to be the incident commander of a new task force to address the new coronavirus. Every IC I have worked with had a vast amount of experience dealing with the program

they have been assigned to. How does search and rescue experience qualify one to be an IC? Why is our county health department not in charge? What is the purpose of our county Office of Emergency Management? I would feel a lot more comfortable having someone with health experience dealing with the on going COVID-19 outbreak. If we have an outbreak in Grant County, I would hope we would make use of the health professionals and our emergency management coordinator that Grant County already has in place, instead of a deputy sheriff experienced only in search and rescue. Come on, Grant County, you deserve better.

Chris Labhart
John Day

MARGULIES
©2020 www.janemargulies.com



Trump Addresses The Coronavirus

WHERE TO WRITE

GRANT COUNTY

- **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.

Blue Mountain EAGLE
Published every Wednesday by
EC MEDIA group

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
- Reporter.....Steven Mitchell, steven@bmeagle.com
- Sports.....sports@bmeagle.com
- Marketing Rep.....Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
- Administrative Assistant.....Christy Smith, office@bmeagle.com
- Office Assistant.....Alixandra Hand, office@bmeagle.com

- 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES (including online access)
- Grant County\$45
 - Everywhere else in U.S.....\$57

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER send address changes to: Blue Mountain Eagle 195 N. Canyon Blvd. John Day, OR 97845-1187 USPS 226-340

Copyright © 2020 Blue Mountain Eagle All rights reserved. No part of this publication covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping or information storage and retrieval systems — without written permission of the publisher.