

The 'haves' and 'have-nots' in government

On occasion, we are reminded that the budget process used by the Oregon Legislature and state agencies is a bit curious.

According to the Oregon Blue Book, the state's revenue budget for the current biennium is \$85.8 billion. Of that, 26.1% is the general fund, which comes mainly from the state corporate and personal income taxes, the cigarette tax and the estate tax.

About 44% of the state's revenue comes from money state agencies take in as fines and fees in return for services. Some of that money is dedicated under law or constitutional amendment to specific agencies or purposes.

About 1.5% of the revenue comes from the state lottery.

Instead of having all of the state's revenue from taxes, fees and the lottery flow into the general fund, much of it flows into cubbyholes within various state agencies instead.

As a result, when legislators write the budget, they are debating the highest and best use of their lunch money. Most of the rest of the state budget is already spoken for.

This results in haves and have-nots among state agencies and a sort of legislative panhandling exercise as agency heads try to make ends meet.

An example: Oregon Water Resources Department Administrator Tom Byler recently paid a visit to a legislative committee asking permission to raise fees for water transac-

tions and dam inspections by 17% just to keep those divisions functioning. Even with the increase, several people will be laid off.

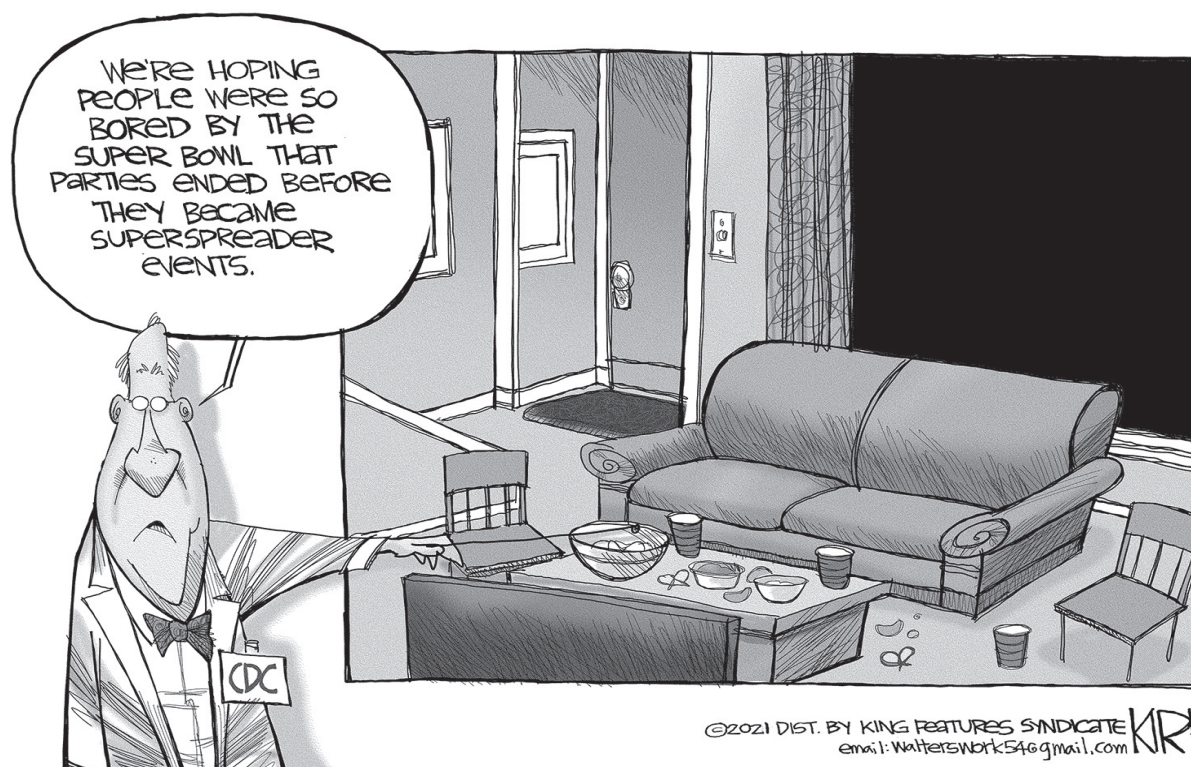
The implication is the Legislature doesn't have the money for OWRD and some other "have-not" agencies to do their job. The reality is the money is tucked away elsewhere.

The Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation is an example of a "have" agency. Under a couple of constitutional amendments, 7.5% of state lottery proceeds are earmarked for the department. In the current biennial budget, that's \$107.3 million — more than twice the OWRD's entire budget. Much of the rest of the Parks and Recreation budget, \$98.7 million, comes from user fees, and stays within the department.

Assuming that transferring water rights and inspecting dams in a timely manner are important, it should be up to legislators to assure the agency is adequately funded. That is not currently the case, because of the cubbyholes.

We cannot tell legislators how to put together a state budget, but we do know that the current system leaves some "have-not" agencies dependent on squeezing every penny out of farmers and ranchers and others who need water, inspections or other state-mandated services.

The time is long overdue to discuss this shortcoming that leaves some agencies chronically underfunded.



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EDUCATION CORNER

Learning to write isn't easy

Writing is a lifelong skill. Children are able to start developing skills used in writing as early as kindergarten and even preschool. Developing the skill of writing starts with language development and learning to share information orally with others. It can begin with show and tell, where children share a special thing and simply say, "This is my truck." Or the parent asking the child to tell them about their day.

Writing is at the highest level of processing our brains are able to perform. It is also not a natural skill that comes with body development. It has to be learned according to our geographic region we live in. Eating, walking, talking and observing are all natural things that most all of us grow equipped to do, but writing is a whole set of complex skills that must be developed.

To be able to write there must be a strong foundation built of other skills such as language development, analyzing and understanding the elements of reading. If a child struggles with one of these three, they are apt to struggle when it comes to writing.

Language development is the ability to talk and share information. Prior to the use of any form of written texts, heritage was passed down through stories, songs or chants, and taught by elders of the group. They often used pictures to jog their memories, which would be considered the first form of written texts.

Being able to understand information and apply it to one's own life is also key in being able to express



Dr. Scott Smith

orally to others. This is a skill that needs nurturing prior to being able to put ideas into writing. Talking and discussing information with children helps them develop those skills. Asking questions such as: "What do you think? Where do you think that water goes?" or "How would you fix that?" will build their ability to understand and apply information that will then be more likely to transfer to their writing.

The third is understanding what reading is within our language communication. Understanding that symbols represent letters and sounds and are placed together to create words is important. Words are formed into sentences that communicate a writer's thoughts and information.

If a child or student is unable to express information orally, they will not be able to complete their writing task because on the developmental scale they have not learned enough oral language to apply it in writing.

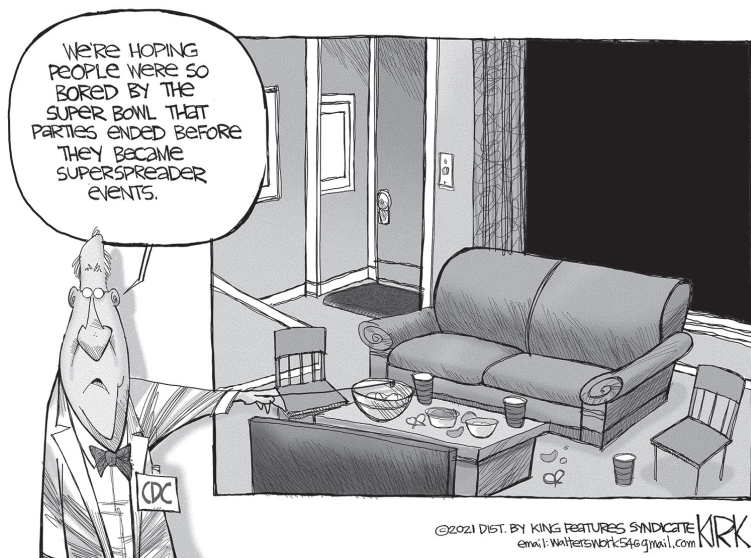
Once children are able to talk openly about a subject or object, they are ready to begin their writing journey. If a child or student is struggling with writing, step back and allow them to process using their oral language skills. They still often not be ready to do their own writing and additional scaffolding may be needed for them to be successful, but processing orally first will help students get their thoughts in order, which is critical. Hav-

ing them dictate the information is also a great scaffold especially if you guide them with the proper phrasing.

Writing is also something that often isn't once and done, which is sometimes difficult for children to learn and understand. When first learning to edit their own work, they might not be able to identify how it needs to be changed. When we read our own writing back, our brains often do an auto-correct so the child may struggle to recognize their mistakes. Assisting and having children read both their sentences and the edited sentences will help them build the ability to recognize changes they might need to make when they are editing their own work.

Most children love to make little folded books. The idea is to take paper and fold it to create pages, allowing the child to place the components of a book on each page such as a cover, title, beginning, middle and end. Having them create these books can be a first step toward learning the writing process just as they did centuries ago with hieroglyphics. Writing is a process, and not an easy one, but with support and guidance, we can all learn to communicate through writing.

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their parent-teacher liaison.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Jan. 6, 2021, A Lament: 13 Folds For Sicknick'

Old Glory did some duty, I have never seen before
Old Glory did some duty, my heart and soul deplore
I have seen her waving half-mast, to honor those that died
But, not banner for betrayal, while our nation watched and cried
Old Glory did some duty, in the hands of hostile few
Old Glory did some duty, in the grasp of hands that coup
I have seen her tucked and folded, and clutched by widowed hands
But, not in wretched servitude, to insurgent hostile bands
Old Glory did some duty, far beyond the pale
She was corrupted and conscripted, and democracy assailed
I have seen our beloved banner, guard and praise our border
But, I have never seen Old Glory, bludgeon law and order
Old Glory did some duty, which disgraced our nation's mall
She shared this field of conflict, with banners held as tall
I have seen her gladly flapping, with the answers in the wind
But, not endorse despotic swag-gers, to redoubt what Dixie sinned!
Old Glory did some duty, within historic halls
She flouted fidelities' virtue, to submit to proud-boy brawls
I have seen her draping the coffins, of heroic hearts now still
But, not breach a cowered Congress, to kidnap or to kill
Old Glory did some duty, for

which she was not to blame
She will fold 13 times for Sicknick, and renounce the hands of shame

I have seen her raised for valor, in the grasp of Ira Hayes
But, as this forsaken Pima Indian, PROTECT ... or count her days!

...

The Raven-ous Rebellion
Once upon a midday dreary, while they counted votes yet wary
Over many a fierce and furious volume of forgotten horror...

While we watched no longer napping, suddenly there came a rapping,
As of someone loudly rapping, rapping at Our Chamber's door
Tis some vanquisher we muttered, rapping at Our Chamber's door—
ONLY THIS, BUT NEVERMORE!

Submitted at the request of a reader in the Ritter area. In honor of Officer Sicknick, his flag folded 13 times.

Wayne Spletstoser
Shedd

'U.S. bears a special responsibility to take action to address the climate crisis'

To the Editor:
In response to the Eagle's thoughtful editorial, "U.S. can't take on climate change by itself," I want to draw attention to a remarkable document on climate change and national security.
"A Climate Security Plan for America: A Presidential Plan for

Combating the Security Risks of Climate Change" is endorsed by more than 20 admirals and generals, including Rear Admiral David Titley, former oceanographer and navigator of the Navy, and General Gordon Sullivan, former chief of staff of the Army. This 2019 report states:

"The U.S. is contending with an international environment colored by the announcement of the intent of the U.S. to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, a loss of American prestige and international leadership as a result, a lack of trust between the U.S. and its partners and allies, and significant moves by other nations, such as China, to fill that global leadership vacuum. China, for example, is positioning itself as a regional and global leader in investments in climate resilience and clean energy transitions. This challenge to U.S. leadership on climate change, particularly from near-peer competitors, can have significant implications for U.S. national security well beyond this issue."

About half of the carbon dioxide we emit stays in the atmosphere for centuries or more. As a result, global temperature increases are a direct function of cumulative emissions. Notably, the United States is the greatest cumulative emitter, with twice the historical emissions of second-place China. And as the world's most significant emitter, the U.S. bears a special responsibility to take action to address the climate crisis.

The pandemic has taught us the importance of hedging against catastrophic risk. President Biden should be congratulated for embracing U.S. leadership on this crucial issue.

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