

# Legislators should clearly state what bills would do

State Senate President Peter Courtney held a news conference before the 2021 legislative session to announce steps to keep the legislative process accessible to Oregonians.

“We have never seen a session like this before. We need to keep members and staff safe,” he said. “Legislative staff worked hard to come up with a plan that is safe and transparent. Every session, Oregonians make their voices heard on issues they care about. We need these voices.”

But if you don't know what the Oregon Legislature is talking about it's hard to voice your opinion. Consider Courtney's Senate Bill 846. It's a model of translucency, not transparency. The bill shifts money around. It also potentially reduces the kicker tax refund.

Does the language of the bill clearly state that it potentially reduces the kicker? No.

Does it even mention the kicker? No.

Shouldn't a bill that potentially reduces the kicker clearly state that? Yes, we think so. Do you?

Now if you are fluent in the budget-speak of the Legislature you could figure it out from the language of the bill — maybe. What the bill

does, in part, is repeal transfers to the general fund of \$15 million from the state's insurance fund and from an operating account of the Department of Justice. The money stays where it is, at least temporarily. It just doesn't get shifted over to the general fund.

That matters because it effectively reduces the general fund by that \$15 million. That affects the kicker. The kicker is Oregon's unique law passed by voters. It occurs if state revenues exceed forecast revenues by 2% or more over a two-year budget cycle. If that happens, the excess, including the trigger amount, gets returned to taxpayers.

No final determination has been made if there will be a kicker for the 2019-21 biennium. But the kicker is on target to kick, according to the latest revenue forecast. And because Senate Bill 846 is moving forward, the amount returned to taxpayers would be less.

Look, legislators need to be able to move money around, such as in this bill. They need to be able to balance the budget and line money up how they want to spend it. They also should be transparent about what they are doing and clearly state in a bill if it would reduce the kicker.



MIKE SMITH — WAVECAST/2021 DIST. BY KING FEATURES/SUNDAYCATE/MS.

## OFF THE BEATEN PATH

# Sunrise sojourn

In a group discussion, a question arose.

“Why would someone get up in the dark of night in order to be somewhere by sunrise?”

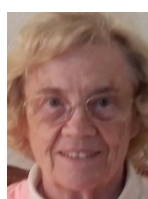
For my dad when I was young, that meant he ventured out early to be ready for the best locations for trout fishing or pheasant hunting. For my mom, a pre-dawn departure with family might mean the gift of a trip to the coast or the mountains.

For some, the sunrise is not an outing or activity. The sunrise itself is the gift.

While visiting Morocco, a small group of us camped in tents at the edge of the Sahara Desert. Our leader made an announcement.

“Tomorrow morning members of the Berber tribe will lead you on a hike to the top of tallest sand dune to watch the sunrise.”

The Berbers arrived in the pre-dawn darkness. They asked us who needed assistance hiking up the dunes. I was determined to travel on my own efforts. I'd seen those TV nature specials where explorers walked on top of the sand.



Jean Ann Moultrie

Well and good until I hit the area of the steepest climb. The travelers hiking ahead of me mused up the sand until it was so soft I sank to my knees with each step.

The other travelers reached the top. The Berbers shouted encouragement down to me, and acted as though some dire consequences would strike me if I didn't make it. Finally, Abraham loped down the dune to my side.

“Sure, I'd like some help.” I reached out my hand so he could pull me out of the sandy quagmire.

He grabbed me by the arm and before I could scramble to get my feet under me, he dragged me up the dune and dropped me at the top just as the sun inched up. Was I deeply moved by the beauty? I was so thirsty I thought I might perish from dehydration. I gulped water that Abraham scrounged up for me. The sunrise? Not as spectacular as I thought.

I turned from the sunrise, scanned the dunes behind us and spotted a camel train in a valley as they plodded across the landscape like a moving necklace across the neck of a dune.

The camel train view hangs in my mind like a framed photograph.

That excursion wasn't the last I heard from Abraham “who saved my life.”

“Hey, lady, I have souvenirs to sell you.” Abraham pulled a leather bag from his robe, and spread out the contents of the bag on a cloth. “Ancient fossils... I make you good price.”

We'd been cautioned about counterfeit goods. I bought a piece, not sure if it was authentic or manufactured. There is an area rich with fossils — it could be real. No matter. My fossil choice — what looks to be a fossilized shrimp. A small price to pay for someone who “saved your life.”

The author, a Grant County resident, was able to view a Moroccan spectacular sunrise from the countryside pre-dawn launch of a hot air balloon.



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oregonlegislature.gov.

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### 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.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Attend John Day's town hall April 8

#### To the Editor:

Curious about what you read, hear or see with the city of John Day? Do you have questions that aren't being answered? I am inviting the residents of John Day to a town hall meeting at the newly remodeled Trowbridge Pavilion at the Grant County Fairgrounds. It will be at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 8. We will have some refreshments available and plenty of seating. We will also have it available by Zoom, or you can write us your questions beforehand. It is important that we gather as much input from our residents as possible before we put together our 2021 budget.

We will have presentations available, and all of the councilors and staff will be available to answer questions. We try to keep you all informed, but we still hear the “I didn't know” or “Why can't they fix the streets?” comments, and this will be a great way to hear the facts from

us directly. Everything is on the table from streets, pool, treatment plant, downtown revitalization, housing, police and more. Put together your comments and please show up. I know it is short notice, but this is important, and this is an opportunity to see us face to face and help make some very important decisions.

Ron Lundbom  
John Day

### Please keep active

#### To the Editor:

I have a dog who is overweight. She's a short heeler mix and spayed. I'm tall and 69, and overweight by a few pounds. OK, 25, but who is counting? For the past 10 years I've had a regime of taking morning walks along the river, by the pond at Clyde Holliday State Park. I take said dog (age 6) along as she is a couch potato and wants nothing to do with being outside (unless there's a fly inside — can anyone explain this phobia?). After I helped my husband of 50 years work at feedlots and on various

Eastern Oregon (remote) ranches, I miss the active lifestyle. Jim left for his heavenly home last October, but we enjoyed two years walking the trails together. Lots of wildlife can be seen, even in winter. A particular joy was watching an otter family (six in all) eating fish from the pond. This lasted for two days, and they disappeared into the river system. Geese, ducks of all kinds, some bald eagles, blue herons and osprey are seen often. Deer are usually present. Britches and I avoided one buck in particular, who was following a doe — we turned around when he put his eyes on us! So far, no sighting of cougar or bear, but I did see an elk or two in the past few years. If I miss a few days I can really feel it! My legs get heavy and feet burn, so I try and go at least six times a week for 30 minutes each. When it warms up I will go longer. I was grateful the snow wasn't too deep, but put on good boots. I always carry a cell as one never knows and I'm sometimes alone. COVID-19 lockdowns aside, this is one freedom I don't plan to give up!

Mya Ennis  
Mt. Vernon

**LETTERS POLICY:** Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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