

# Opinion

## Editorial

### Out of session

Often in the past, the best thing you could say about the Washington state Legislature's biennial budget-setting session was that, at long last, it was over. Extended sessions, and extended extensions, have been the norm as legislators staggered to a frustrated finish weeks after their putative deadline.

This year, the lawmakers finished on schedule — for the first time in a decade — delivering some huge spending packages, tax hikes and other noteworthy legislation before their Sunday adjournment. That was more likely to happen with a Democratic governor and Democratic control in the House and Senate because, simply put, they could actually pass things with a majority. And they did. Split control of the two legislative bodies sucked any positive energy out of many previous sessions. Both parties weaponized the word “compromise” until it was meaningless in the face of legislative stagnation, and the resultant lawmaking was inadequate to the state's needs.

The push to finish the 2019 session was dramatized by the usual last-minute machinations and late-hour negotiations, with some Republicans complaining about what they said was a lack of transparency in the process. But Republicans have defiantly finessed the “hide the budget” gambit in the past. Their grouching now sounds disingenuous.

This time Gov. Jay Inslee and the Dems largely got their way on major topics such as spending, taxation, school funding, climate change action and environmental issues. That's not to say that everything was wrapped up with a partisan bow. A lot of the fundamental grunt work of state government — providing services and support for the state's various populations, constituencies, counties, cities and other public agencies — gets done far down-page from the headline-grabbing controversies. And when it comes to asking, at the local level, “what did they do for us,” the answer is likely to be found in the hundreds of line-item entries in the state capital and transportation budgets. Those are the appropriations that have direct relevance to our individual communities.

National politics played a big role in state politics as they applied to the 2019 session. If you're a Republican lamenting loss of influence in Olympia, there is no getting around the effect of anti-Trump sentiment in the 2018 elections, which saw Democrats grab the reins in the state House and Senate. It's hardly likely to get better for the state GOP in 2020. But Republicans can still succeed at the local level, as was demonstrated in the 12th Congressional District, which includes the liberal-tilting Methow Valley.

Sen. Brad Hawkins and Reps. Mike Steele and Keith Goehring are all Republicans. But while they are conservative, they don't usually make a big ideological thing about it. They may hew to the party line on some major issues such as spending and taxation, but as a locally practical matter they are attentive to the needs and wants of their divergent communities, which are spread over a huge swath of central Washington.

How does that play out? For the Methow Valley alone, the support of our 12th District delegation was largely responsible for capital budget earmarks for the Twisp civic building and the Winthrop library (see story on page A1). Out of a nearly \$5 billion capital budget, the \$3 million-plus designated for those two projects amounts to two lines of type in a very long list. But their value to the Methow Valley is immeasurable, and a “thank you” is in order for the 12th District delegation's efforts.

Some other legislative actions, such as lifting the levy lids on local school levies, launching an initiative to improve rural broadband service and providing affordable health care, could have direct effects on the Methow Valley as well. It will take some time for those actions to play out in a way that we can see their benefits.

Many of us may care fervently about the fate of Puget Sound orcas, climate change action, combating opioid addiction and reducing gun violence, all of which are important issues addressed in the 2019 session. Still, as former Speaker of the House Rep. Tip O'Neill famously observed, “all politics is local.” Neither citizens nor their representatives should ever lose sight of that.

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### Climate change action

Dear Editor:

In early February, on Super Bowl Sunday no less, nearly 50 citizens from the Okanogan and Methow valleys met in Tonasket, out of a common concern for our currently warming planet and resulting changes in the climate. It was exciting to see folks from all walks of life gather together, including the agricultural, ranching, business and service communities.

The record-breaking forest fires in eastern Washington and British Columbia were one motivation for attendance. Many attendees voiced health concerns from breathing the smoke and its effects on our children, local agriculture and tourism. Others expressed concerns about the current historic rising global temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, arctic jet streams moving southward, ocean acidification, loss of marine and land habitats, and extreme, costly weather events across the country. There is a growing realization that we have a short window of time to address the causes of climate change, in order to avoid irreversible damage to the climate that has sustained us for thousands of years.

In addition to many other activities, many of us are excited to become involved in our new Okanogan County chapter of the Citizen's Climate Lobby. This non-partisan organization has great appeal and potential, as it respects and encourages people from all walks of life and political persuasions to become involved. As a matter of fact, both Republican and Democrat members of Congress have recently introduced bills in both the House and Senate, called the “Energy Innovation and Carbon Fee and Dividend Act.” These bills hold out the potential of creating new jobs and industries, gradually reducing greenhouse gasses, and giving cash dividends generated by fees on fossil fuels, to all citizens in the United States.

We hope to talk with everyone in Okanogan County who is interested in these important issues. We will work hard to pass on a strong economy, and a safe, healthy and beautiful environment to our children and grandchildren. Please get in touch if you have questions or would like to get involved! Inquiries can be addressed to Andy Jones, andyjsail@gmail.com. Keep an eye out for our Facebook page coming soon!

Andy Jones  
Tonasket

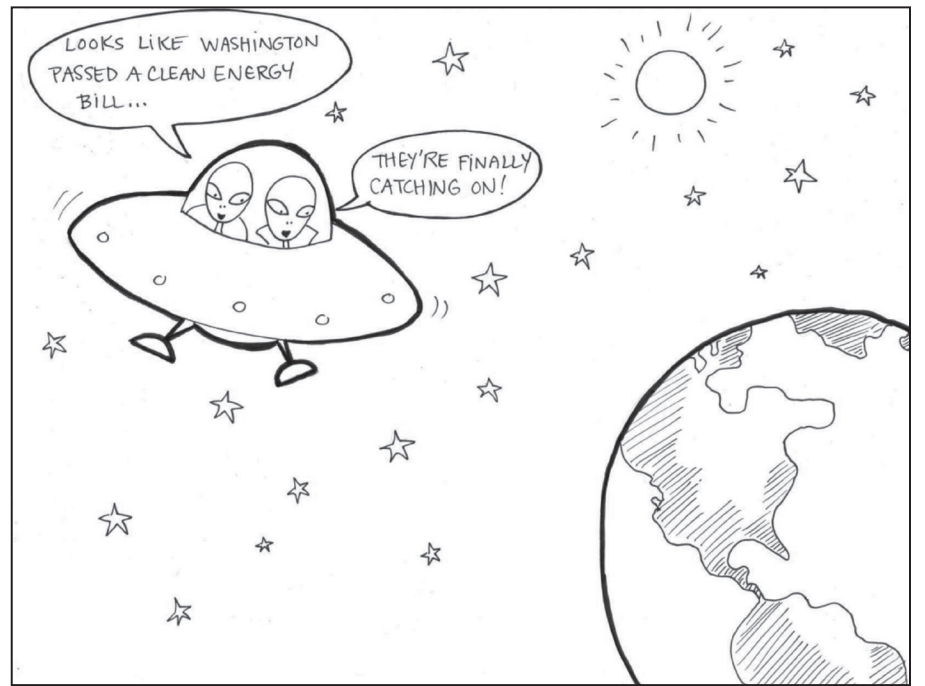
### Be chemical-free

Dear Editor:

As our hillsides bloom with the colors of spring, our lawns are also stretching their legs with new growth. We are now entering the time of the dandelion! Each spring, this persistent weed pushes its way to the surface, gracing our grass, sidewalk cracks and gardens with their gorgeous yellow rays of sunshine.

For many, dandelions are a sign of hope. Hope for wishes to come true, hope for a better understanding between people and plants, hope for a fruitful season after a harsh winter. For some, dandelions are a source of nutritious food and powerful medicine.

Sadly, for others, dandelions are something to be eradicated. Some people think those cheerful blossoms are a disgrace within what should be a pure lawn. As a result, millions of pounds of herbicides are sprayed on them every year. These herbicides not only kill dandelions, they also harm the entire ecosystem. Walk up to a “pure” lawn and, in addition to the missing dandelions, you also won't find the many beneficial insects and pollinators or other lovely opportunistic plants that provide food and shelter for many. The choice to spray herbicides may be seen as a personal right, but the damage ripples out beyond the localized area it was sprayed. These herbicides sink into our soils



By Tania Gonzalez Ortega

and waters and they negatively affect you, me and this beautiful valley we live in.

If you are a business owner, homeowner or someone who tends to a lawn or green space, I urge you to cultivate a wild and beautiful area that is free from chemicals. Revel in the abundant clover that feeds our bees and fixes nitrogen in the soils. Kiss those sweet violets as they fill the lawn with their purple and white blooms. Spend a joyful afternoon making flower crowns with the little wild daisies and dandelions. Together, we can stop the insanity of poisoning our valley for a monoculture of green and instead enjoy the wonder and beauty of a diverse ecosystem based on reciprocity and interdependence.

Rosalie de la Forêt  
Carlton

### Thank a nurse

Dear Editor:

In the two weeks since state Sen. Maureen Walsh suggested that nurses in rural hospitals “play cards for a considerable amount of the day,” I've attended births, palliated life's end, and fought disease at all ages in between. As a rural physician, I get to do a little bit of everything. But, I do nothing without the steadfast and tireless work of the women and men of our hospital's nursing staff. Rather than working on a tertiary care center's subspecialty wing with similar patients and routine work flows, nurses in our county's Critical Access Hospitals manage acutely ill patients in the emergency department, circulate in the operating room, manage the inpatient census, and jump in to labor and delivery to assist with both a mother and a newborn.

I echo physicians from across the country, whose recent responses recognize nurses' essential role in teaching doctors to care for patients, exemplifying the compassion and selfless dedication to others that is requisite to the healing art of medicine. I have also been a patient, birth partner and new father in our county's hospitals, where some of my highest and lowest moments of life were met with our nurses' love, care and tears of joy and heartache.

If you know one of our county's nurses, please thank them for the work that they do, and thank them for the day they'll be there for you and your family. If you witness them in action, stand in awe, but don't think you'll catch them playing cards.

James Wallace, MD  
Chief Medical Officer  
Three Rivers Hospital  
Brewster

### The Barr tab

Dear Editor:

Now that roughly 90% of the Mueller Report has hit the streets (we're being “protected” by Billy Barr from the really good stuff), Dan Newhouse thinks we ought to just move on, nothing to see here, everything is peachy.

Try to keep up, Dan. Even in Billy's bowdlerized version, it's not hard to see that Mueller's myrmidons had to stop short of throwing Trump in the cooler for two reasons only. One, the Russians aren't stupid enough to tell clowns like Trump what's actually

going on. Two, while Trump and his minions lied continually, destroyed evidence and quite obviously hid their tracks, 19 years ago the geniuses at the Office of Legal Counsel decided a sitting President can't be indicted for that or anything else. The upshot of No. 2 is that you can't even make a legal accusation, because, in the absence of an actual indictment and trial, the person accused has no official opportunity to defend himself, which is basically unconstitutional. It's a pretty little Catch-22 that ought to get its inventors nailed to the nearest tree by their ears.

Of course, Dan may not understand this: Mueller spells it out, but Dan's not, after all, a lawyer (if he even read the report). He just wants to keep his job, like so many of our legislators on both sides of the aisle and at all levels of government. If keeping the job means going along with the lies and malfeasance of the creep at the top of the food-chain, whatever.

Another reason Dan wants to move on, I suspect, is that his conscience is giving him fits: He's not actually a bad person, nor, I think, is he as manifestly deluded as a lot of his pals. Slamming kids in cages, stealing health care from sick folks, accusing doctors and parents of murder, pandering to misogynists and racists and dictators ... I suspect that this kind of stuff is not precisely what Dan had in mind when he originally signed up. He probably just figured it beat getting a real job. Y'know, Dan, there's an easy way out.

Alan Fahnestock  
Mazama

### Methow shows metal

Dear Editor:

Wow! Another metal drive — number 13 since 1998. We are often asked when or if the valley will run out of scrap metal, but there seems to be no end in sight. We counted 350 vehicles coming in with loads ranging from 20 to over 4,000 pounds, and the total weight collected was nearly 90 tons, slightly more than last year. This year a Mazama family found a cache of old rusty stuff buried by a former resident of long ago. We suspect there's more where that came from around the valley!

We're always impressed by those who make multiple trips as they work through a big cleanup project. We know how much work this is and are glad to be part of their effort. A huge shout out to Chad Patterson and the crew at Cascade Concrete for their continued support and the generous use of their site for this event. Thanks too to the staff of Okanogan Energy Inc. for their help picking up the metal collected in the Home-stream Park cleanup, and pick-up for a resident needing a hand. Over 50 volunteers give of their time to make this annual event happen. We are very grateful to you and couldn't do it without you! Way to go Methow Valley — what a great way to wrap up Earth Week!

Betsy Cushman  
Executive Director  
Methow Recycles

## Exercise your freedom

Letters must be fewer than 350 words and may be edited for libel, grammar and taste.

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