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Did Oregonians Vote for That?

By Rep. E Werner Reschke and Rep. Carl Wilson

As the legislature enters the final week of the 2019 session, Senate Republicans have left the State Capitol in protest of many things. Their absence means many policy & budget bills remain unpassed. However, a continuing resolution, passed and signed before Senate Republicans left, will keep state government humming along for at least the next 3 months.

At the center of the Senate Republican protest is House Bill 2020, a Cap & Trade mechanism on carbon emissions. Republicans in both chambers have argued this bill will decimate Oregonians who live outside of Portland. Under HB 2020 gasoline prices are expected to jump 22¢/gallon to begin with and go up significantly from there. Heating by natural gas is also expected to take a major leap in price, causing average working families significant stress on their personal finances. All of this to lower Oregon's carbon emissions to a level deemed acceptable by the extreme environmental intelligentsia.

HB 2020 was really the straw that broke the camel's back. But there is a far more fundamental reason for the Senate Republican absence from the State Capitol and that has to do with the strong-arming Democrat leadership who have a super majority in both House and Senate as well as control the Governor's office. This absolute control on the legislative process has meant that Democrat leadership could do whatever they want, and indeed they have. Republican Members have argued all session long they have been shut out from any meaningful input on almost every single policy shift from historic norms — many put in place by the citizen initiative process. It is this unwillingness of Democrats to allow Oregonians a direct voice on Cap and Trade, but also the new sales taxes found in HB 3427, overturning Measure 88 (granting undocumented people driver's cards) and special deals for special interests in tax exemption status — all major policy changes, being passed by Democrat super majorities without Republican support, and more importantly, without a vote from the people. It is this blatant disregard for Oregon's working families that is at the heart of the Senate Republican walk out.

If you asked the average Democrat in Oregon if this is the agenda they approved when they voted in 2018 I bet they would say "no." Many Democrats are realizing their local party in Oregon now reflects Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez far more than Barbara Roberts. Oregonians have a built-in pioneering spirit, which values both entrepreneurship and the environment. But when the pendulum swings too far in one direction, Oregon voters usually snap it back. I believe we can safeguard our environment without having to kill our natural resource economy and dramatically raise the cost of living for everyone else.

Oregonians did not vote for Salem to usurp more control and create a more intrusive role in daily lives of Oregonian, but rather for State Government to be more accountable and transparent to the voters.

So far those in the super majority aren't hearing that message.

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