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Senate Republican Office

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**In Case You Missed It: Medford Mail Tribune says
"take a knee" on Cap-and-invest**

[Mail Tribune: House, Senate use different playbooks on carbon cap](#)

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Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek pulled out a Super Bowl analogy in calling for lawmakers to push ahead with an ambitious carbon tax proposal despite the brief 35-day legislative session.

The Legislature, she said, is like the New England Patriots, famous for quickly scoring points when time is short.

"We're going to work hard on the field, and we're going to get that ball across the goal line," Kotek said.

The analogy falls apart, however, when you realize that the House and the Senate, while both under Democratic control, are operating with different playbooks.

Senate President Peter Courtney and Majority Leader Ginny Burdick suggested holding off on passing the cap-and-invest legislation known as the Clean Energy Jobs Bill until the full-length 2019 session. They have a point.

The bill would set a cap on greenhouse gas pollution statewide that would decrease every year, and establish a price for every ton of emissions. The state's biggest polluters - energy utilities, fossil-fuel corporations - would be required to hold allowances for each ton they emit, by reducing their emissions below the cap, purchasing or trading for allowances or arranging for offsets.

The proceeds, estimated at \$700 million a year, would be spent to promote clean energy projects, train workers and provide utility bill relief.

That's not necessarily a bad idea, but it's complex legislation to push through in 35 days, and it's not the only major initiative on the table. Lawmakers also have vowed to tackle health care reform, gun control, state employee retirement changes, bond funding for Oregon State University's Cascades campus in Bend. All in a short session originally designed to make budget adjustments and other tweaks that couldn't wait for the next long session.

Supporters of the Clean Energy Jobs Bill worked throughout the 2017 session putting it together, and have worked since to drum up support. But without a buy-in from Senate Democratic leaders on a push to pass it this session, it could stall. It also would go back on a deal made with voters when short sessions were added in 2010.

For years, Oregon did its legislative business only in odd-numbered years, passing a two-year budget and wrangling over everything else in marathon sessions that sometimes stretched for more than six months. Courtney was among those lawmakers who urged voters to allow annual sessions to help the Legislature be more efficient. The measure that passed capped short sessions at 35 calendar days and long sessions at 160 days.

This year, it's possible the Legislature could face a budget shortfall of \$200 million to \$300 million because of the federal tax reform bill passed by Congress, but state economists have yet to predict precise figures. If that's the case, that should be lawmakers' top priority, and balancing the budget could get in the way of many items on the wish list.

Courtney has said Clean Energy Jobs should pass in 2019, and vowed not to wait any longer than that, but he fears a divisive battle this year could "tear us up."

A last-minute touchdown drive may be exciting on the football field, but it leaves the losing team bruised and angry. Rather than throwing up a hail Mary on cap-and-invest, lawmakers might be better off listening to Coach Courtney, taking a knee and going to overtime in 2019.

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