

“DEMOCRATS HAVE IT THEIR WAY”

Many, including newspapers that endorsed them, think they abused power

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The Oregon Legislature would have been hard-pressed to please the state's anxious population this year, given the state of the state's economy. But the Democratic leadership took the lemons it was handed and made some very sour lemonade.

It is evident from reactions around the state that Oregonians think the Democrats in Salem have abused their position of power. Just as the GOP muscled out the Dems from any real involvement in crafting legislation a decade ago, so, too are the Democrats in this session.

For evidence of the discontent, here are some excerpts from newspaper editorials, written by editorial writers who endorsed many of the Democrats they are now criticizing:

THE OREGONIAN (6/25)

One of the more devilish playground tricks played by bullying third-graders is the old switcheroo, as in: "Do you want me to hit you? 'Yes' means 'no,' and 'no' means 'yes.'" It was a tactic intended to take advantage of confused victims, and it usually worked.

That's more or less what Democrats on the Joint Ways and Means Committee did late Wednesday, slipping in some language intended to induce or take advantage of voter confusion in hopes of keeping the Oregon Legislature's recently passed tax package intact.

ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD (6/18)

For a state legislature to be held in low esteem is routine. State lawmakers have to deal with problems for which there are no easy solutions, such as lots of people wanting more from the state than they are willing to be taxed for.

Still, it is odd. Eight months ago most of these legislators, and all the members of the House, got elected to the offices they now hold. If they understood what most voters wanted, and if the majority had done it, you would expect the majority of people who paid attention to be pleased.

THE GRESHAM OUTLOOK (6/13)

What happened to the moderation and business-friendliness that East County's Democratic legislators promised when running for office last fall?

It certainly disappeared entirely this week — if indeed, it ever existed at all — when the whole block of them voted the straight party line to raise taxes permanently on businesses and high-income earners in Oregon.

(Salem) STATESMAN-JOURNAL (6/12)

The Oregon Senate on Thursday sent a flawed package of tax increases to Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who undoubtedly will sign them.

... But the tax increases won't end when the recession ends. The Legislature made them permanent, after even larger short-term increases.

Democratic leaders claimed "tax fairness" as the rationale for making businesses and higher-income families pay more. But it is unconscionable to use the recession as an excuse to pursue partisan ideology.

(Corvallis) GAZETTE-TIMES (5/13)

Gov. Ted Kulongoski and legislative leaders say they're ready to go out and make the case to Oregon voters about why the state needs increased taxes, at a time when roughly one out of every eight of those voters is unemployed.

Here's our advice: Better have a Plan B ready. ...

... When the session began, the Democrats in power said they'd work hard to accommodate the views of the minority Republicans. Taking another look at the Republican (budget) proposal — and asking thoughtful, if pointed, questions about it — would be a good way to prove the sincerity of that promise.

Get ready to duck

The Democratic leadership in Salem has swung the political pendulum well to their side of the equation. They'd best be prepared to duck when it comes swinging back, as it almost surely will.

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