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Oregon sanctions on Iran? An idea whose time should not have come

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Guest Columnist

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A bill to ensure that Oregon state funds are not invested in companies with interests in the energy sector of Iran (House Bill 4110) passed the Oregon House this Thursday, Feb. 16, with little notice. The bill was introduced by Reps. Greenlick, Hoyle and Widener. It passed the House unanimously and will probably soon pass the Oregon Senate. That is unfortunate. The bill's passage adds to the tension that can lead to a catastrophic war with Iran.

The bill gives Oregon's support to the extreme sanctions being imposed on Iran. These sanctions prevent Iran from selling its oil and from participating in the international banking system. Such extreme sanctions are essentially embargoes and embargoes are acts of war.

The sanctions are unlikely to be effective. Sanctions have not been effective against Cuba and were not effective against Iraq. They affect the people much more than the government. Remember the 500,000 children who died because of the sanctions against Iraq, and Madeleine Albright saying the sanctions were worth it? Do Oregonians agree with that?

The sanctions are just one aspect of the pressure being placed on Iran by the United States and Israel. Iran's scientists are being killed and violent elements opposed to the regime are being supported. Iran is being surrounded by a massive military buildup and is continually being threatened with war – directly by Israel and less directly by the United States.

The last section of HB4110 reads: "This 2012 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2012 Act takes effect on its passage." One has to ask just who is threatening the public peace and who is causing an emergency?

The stated purpose of all this pressure is to force Iran into negotiations about their nuclear program and prevent them from developing a nuclear weapon. But even the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, and the Israeli Defense Minister, Ehud Barak have said recently that Iran is not making a nuclear weapon. The sincerity of the U.S. desire for a negotiated settlement should also be questioned, since many Iranian proposals for such negotiations have been rebuffed.