

Editorial: Business should not be the enemy

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The Oregon Legislature has a “Work Group for Schedules that Work.” And it’s not working so well.

Groups representing businesses dropped out earlier this month, including the Associated Oregon Industries, the Northwest Grocery Association, the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association, the Oregon Farm Bureau, the Oregon Trucking Association and the Portland Business Alliance.

Why did they bail?

They said in a letter that at the work group’s first meeting they faced attacks on Oregon employers from advocates rather than a reasonable discussion.

The work group was set up to find a compromise on a new, Legislature-mandated policy for employee work schedules.

There is a real problem that the work group is trying to address. A last-minute change in work schedule can make life difficult for an employee. It makes it hard for an employee to plan child care, get to work or even gauge how much money he or she will have. It could make it impossible for an employee to hold down a second job. Of course, employers also need to be able to have enough employees on hand to perform the needed work.

In the last legislative session, Senate Bill 888 proposed requiring employers to work with employees to set a predictable schedule. Employers would have been required to issue the schedule 21 days in advance. Employers would be required to do so unless they had a “bona fide business reason” not to.

What did the bill consider a bona fide business reason? It included mention of costs, an inability of a business to meet its needs and more. That may sound reasonable. But how would it work? Would an employer be required to prove it? It would seem to open up employers to new lawsuits.

It’s no wonder some businesses in Oregon feel the Legislature is out to get them.

Many Oregon employers are already having to adapt to or will have to adapt to a new Legislature-mandated sick leave policy, a Legislature-mandated state retirement program and a Legislature-mandated increase in the minimum wage. And there is more. Larger employers face on the November ballot one of the biggest tax increases in Oregon history. If Democrat Brad Avakian is elected secretary of state, he wants to audit private corporations that work with the state.

When is the Legislature going to have a Legislature-mandated change to help Oregon business?

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