

TO: Senate Rules Committee

FROM: Chuck Sheketoff, Silverton

DATE: March 17, 2021

RE: Holding Legislators Accountable to Oath: SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3, and SJR 4

I am writing to urge you to take action on this package of bills that will hopefully put an end to the practice of the minority party walking off the job when they have policy differences with the majority party. This is not a partisan issue. While the most recent incidents have been by Republicans, in the past Democrats have engaged in this tactic, as well. The offensive practice of walking out to stop a quorum could be performed by a bi-partisan minority united around a particular issue. Whether partisan or bipartisan, it is offensive.

Oregonians rightly expect our elected officials to do their jobs. When legislators walk off the job in protest about a particular issue they jeopardize efforts to help Oregonians with other bills that address other significant problems we are facing.

Lawmakers of both parties must be held accountable when they waste taxpayer money by walking off the job. Members of the Legislative Assembly are supposed to show up for work and take action that improves, supports, or opposes legislation. Stopping the legislative process should not be an option. The House and Senate have no shortage of procedural rules that allow members to oppose legislation, amend legislation, and delay (sometimes permanently) action. Walking off the job should not be a part of the mix.

I urge you to act favorably on the issue, with SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3, and SJR 4 being possible vehicles.

When your colleagues purposefully don't show up for work (have unexcused absences) they shouldn't get paid. There should be significant fines to discourage the behavior that grinds the legislature to a standstill. Legislators who engage in walk-outs should not be allowed to use campaign or PAC contributions to pay their salaries and fines. If they miss multiple days (say 10?) with unexcused absences they shouldn't be allowed to run for office again.

Your task at hand is to enact legislation so that a minority of lawmakers – whether by party affiliation or some other affiliation - can't shut everything down by walking off the job.