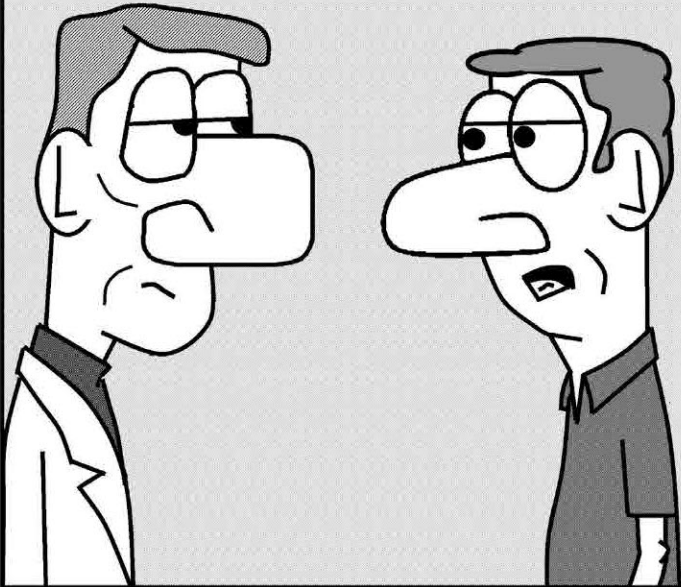


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TOUCHED BY C G HERNDON



YOUR ARROGANCE IS CONVINCING, BUT IT'S YOUR CONDESCENSION THAT REALLY DRIVES THE POINT HOME.

The final four

As Paul Harvey used to say: “Here is the rest of the story.” In other words, this entry will focus on the final four bills that I have filed for the next session.

The first bill is perhaps the most important bill I have ever filed. It relates to the potential threat of our being

An idea whose time has come

Partisan politics aside, good ideas often come from either side of the aisle and this legislative session one of the best ideas for the state of Oklahoma overall comes from an Oklahoma City Republican.

editor's notebook



DOUG RUSSELL
NEWS EDITOR

State Sen. David Holt has filed legislation to end the exemption that the state legislature has given itself from the Oklahoma Open Meetings and Open Records acts. The move comes not a moment too soon, as lawmakers are meeting in secret

to “iron out” differences in policy that will affect every single person in Oklahoma, no matter what region or city they are from.

The *Journal Record* recently reported that seven of the eight members of the state senate’s delegation to the Joint Legislative Water Committee secretly met on Dec. 21 to discuss water policy issues, including ideas for transporting water between basins — and for selling water out of state.

Oklahoma City Republican state

Sen. Brian Crain, the Senate co-chair of the joint legislative committee, defends the meeting, saying that the meeting was held simply to see where committee senators stood on various water-related issues. State Sen. Jerry Ellis, a Valliant Democrat, said he was concerned about the secrecy of the meeting. After all, the Legislature’s joint committee had been meeting publicly for several months.

Ellis says that the idea of out-of-state water sales was a contentious one at the meeting, and why wouldn’t it be? Legislators have been wrestling with the idea for some time now and the state is embroiled in several legal battles concerning the water in Southeast Oklahoma.

Crain claims the senators on the joint committee needed an opportunity to discuss out-of-state sales behind closed doors. Why? What is there about the sale of water that needs to be kept secret, especially from those in Southeast Oklahoma, who will be most affected by any decision the state makes?

Could it be that the Republican-led Legislature, which is poised to do away with the personal income tax or, if not that, with many of the tax law’s exemptions, plans on us-

ing the water of the Kiamichi Basin and other areas of Southeast Sooner State to fund the billions of dollars needed for infrastructure improvements? The idea of selling water out of state to pay for necessary services has already been bandied about. Are meetings like the one held on Dec. 21 really necessary to bring the ideas up again — but this time without a public outcry?

Crain says the meeting was necessary so senators could speak freely. Why? If the senators are truly interested in performing the public’s business in a way that would best benefit Oklahomans overall, they should be more than willing to be honest and frank in a public forum rather than only in private.

At present, the Oklahoma House of Representatives and Senate are exempt from the Open Meetings and Open Records acts, but Senate Rule 7-7 requires Senate committees to comply with the provisions of the Open Meeting Act, including publicly posting an agenda for meetings. It seems pretty clear that Crain violated Senate rules, but I doubt anything will come of that. Perhaps he and others like him would think differently if they faced criminal complaints through the Open Meetings Act.