

I am writing in regards to SB261, which prohibits members of Legislative Assembly from soliciting or using contributions to pay fines or legal expenses, replace salary, defray expenses or otherwise compensate members for monetary losses incurred as result of unexcused absences from sessions of Legislative Assembly.

I understand that it was difficult to conduct business at the Capitol when most of the Republican Senators walked out several years ago. However, they did so to protect individual freedom to make medical decisions, among other things. That was the year when HB 3063 (mandatory vaccination bill) passed the committee and the House of Representatives and would probably pass the Senate if the Republican Senators did not walk out.

HB 3063 was a very bad bill. If passed, it would make it so that my 7 year old child would not be able to attend school. My child has SEVERE ANAPHYLACTIC allergies to FIVE different food groups. For this reason, following the suggestion of our pediatrician, we are vaccinating very slowly. However, unfortunately, a medical exemption does not apply in this case and we are forced to use a philosophical exemption for vaccines. When we were vaccinating fully, my child couldn't eat anything but meats; once we slowed down vaccinations, he is able to eat a slightly more varied diet, so I know that slowing down vaccines has helped. HB 3063 was a bad bill because it would put my son's health in danger or it would deny him education, all in the name of the greater good – public health. But what about the health of my child?

That year I did not have a good Mother's Day – I felt I failed as a mother because I didn't do more – I did email and call legislators to try to explain our situation, but I didn't go to the Capitol to fight more. Monday after Mother's Day was too good to be true – the Republican and the Democratic Senators reached a deal, and HB 3063 would not move forward. I am forever grateful to the Republican Senators who were willing to protect the doctor-patient relationship and not to leave it up to the state to make medical decisions.

I am not in favor of ultimatums, but when a bad bill is drafted, there needs to be a mechanism in place to stop it from moving forward. HB 3063 was such a bill. There was no true emergency to push it through – Oregon vaccination rates are extremely high. A few cases of measles in Oregon should not have sparked such a wide-sweeping bill; instead, mandatory vaccination just for measles could have been proposed, as was done in Washington state (where the cases of measles were much higher than in Oregon).

Democratic legislators have used walkouts before as well. It is part of Oregon Constitution. I see no good reason to make such an amendment; instead, I would encourage the two parties to compromise and meet each other in the middle, as was done two years ago when a deal was reached and the tax bill for education was passed.