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The Observer

GUEST EDITORIAL

FROM THE EAST OREGONIAN

Unfortunate that old writings cost Bounds

Ryan Bounds' career on the federal judiciary likely came to a sudden end last week, just minutes before it was set to begin.

On Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell abruptly pulled President Donald Trump's appellate nominee — who was born and raised in Hermiston and graduated from Hermiston High School — when it became apparent that Bounds did not have enough votes to pass the Senate.

Enough Republican senators — it only takes two in the closely divided body — voiced concerns about writings Bounds authored while an undergrad at Stanford.

The New York Times reported that Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) had been attempting to persuade Republicans in their cloakroom directly off the Senate floor that Bounds' writing was disqualifying and he should be rejected.

"His crusade seemed unlikely to succeed, given that disciplined Senate Republicans have been pushing through Trump administration judicial picks with assembly-line efficiency over the heated complaints of Democrats," wrote Carl Hulse in the newspaper.

Oregon's other senator, Jeff Merkley, was equally strident in the cause of defeating Bounds' nomination. Neither senator returned a "blue slip," which had been required for a federal court nomination to proceed.

By now you are likely familiar with those deeply immature columns, for which Bounds apologized and claimed — convincingly, we'd argue — that they do not represent who he is as a person or a jurist.

But when you have the razor-thin margins that Republicans are dealing with in the Senate — and a Democratic bloc that has remained steadfast in opposition to many of Trump's nominees — even the smallest issue can grind the whole process to a halt.

"After talking with the nominee last night and meeting with him today, I had unanswered questions that led to me being unable to support him," said Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina — one of the Republicans Wyden had been working on earlier in the day. McConnell arranged that hasty face-to-face meeting between Scott and Bounds, but it did not sway the senator's vote.

And thus the gears were ground.

It's unfortunate to see Ryan Bounds' nomination crash and burn because of a few opinion pieces he wrote more than 20 years ago. We argued previously that while the columns were boneheaded and dumb, most all of us have done boneheaded things when we're 21 years old, and we don't think anyone should be judged for all eternity on immature mistakes.

But we also realize the power — and the responsibility — of the blue slip. As we go through this political movement of anarchic upheaval, we must hold onto our time-honored norms and protect them at all costs. The ability of home-state senators to have outsized sway is an important one, and should be respected by everyone who supports local control in federal decisions. Sure, the process can be twisted to be partisan and petty — and that may be the case here. But the principle is crucial.

When a bird has flown or a ship has sailed, it's important to take stock of what we still have. In this case, the Senate can still rally behind the blue slip principle that no one should get a seat on a federal court unless at least one senator from their home state gives their approval. That's good. Still, we remain of the opinion that Bounds should have received that home-state approval.



Your views

Trost: Hammond pardon 'a win for justice'

To the Editor:

I support Greg Walden for his efforts and success in which he lobbied the White House for the pardon of Dwight and Steven Hammond. Thank you also to the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke who also supported the Hammonds.

It seems that the Obama administration was overzealous in going after the Hammonds. The Hammonds are not terrorists — they're ranchers. They know how to take care of the land because it's their livelihood. That administration obviously did not understand ranching or even the West, for that matter. The Trump administration knows and

appreciates ranching communities and what they can provide.

I also agree with what Walden said about President Trump's decision for the pardon. He said the decision was "a win for justice, and an acknowledgment of our unique way of life in the high desert, rural West."

PattyTrost Unity

Jones: Pardoning the Hammonds was the right decision

To the Editor:

The Hammond pardon was secured by a great many people. It was like a huge jigsaw puzzle with many different pieces that all had to go together at the right time to make it happen. Everyone was working to correct and make right a grave injustice.

Congressman Walden was a big piece of the puzzle to help secure the presidential pardon for Dwight and Stephen Hammond of Harney County. Walden did the right thing. Those of us in CD2, who can actually vote for Walden and really know the issues, are grateful for his help.

Those who are familiar with the case and issues are fully aware the pardon was justified. The Hammond family is a ranching family in Eastern Oregon who help feed the world. They are not domestic terrorists.

Now, in comparison,
President Obama pardoned
more than 600 individuals. Most were hardened
criminals dealing in hard
drugs, theft and other
crimes that are a threat to
society. He let these types
out on society. Where was
the hue and the cry about

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these pardons?

Thank you, Congressman Walden, for doing the right thing.

> Suzan Ellis Jones Bridgeport

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