

GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE ALBANY-DEMOCRAT HERALD
State voters helped dig budget hole

It's easy to say that the Legislature has a spending problem — in fact, we've said it ourselves, in a number of editorials over the years.

Last week's release of a surprisingly sober budget from the three chairs of the Legislature's powerful Ways and Means Committee helped to put some of that problem in perspective.

You already know the general outlines of the issue: The proposed budget for the 2019-21 budget cycle features a record amount of revenue, some \$23.2 billion. It's a 10 percent increase over the 2017-19 budget, fueled in part by the state's economic recovery (a recovery that's showing signs of slowing).

But even that big bump in available revenue isn't enough to cover the anticipated increase in costs, and two areas in particular are playing a major role in driving those: the increasing premiums associated with the state's underfunded public pension system and spending associated with the Oregon Health Plan, the state's Medicaid program. (The proposed budget makes no cuts in eligibility or benefits for the Oregon Health Plan.)

In both of those cases, we're still trying to figure out how to pay for decisions state officials and legislators made years ago — a cautionary note today's lawmakers should keep in mind. We knew back then that eventually the state would need to pick up more of the load for Medicaid. We also knew, or should have known, how decisions about pension benefits would play out decades down the road.

But state officials and legislators aren't alone in helping to dig this state budget hole. Voters have picked up a shovel from time to time.

A popular way to do that is through the initiative process, and a good example of that is Measure 98, the initiative mandating that school districts spend additional dough on career and technical education classes.

We have no objection whatsoever to these classes, and evidence continues to show that participants in those classes graduate from high school at a higher rate than students who haven't taken those offerings. (In addition, these career and technical classes often can lead to well-paying jobs that don't necessarily require a four-year college degree.) Our objection was that the measure came with no funding source. Nevertheless, voters easily approved the measure, and that budget hole got a little bit bigger.

The proposed legislative budget allocates about \$170 million for Measure 98 programs, less than the \$300 million that would be spent if the programs were funded at the level called for in the initiative. Measure 98 advocates were steamed and vowed to lobby for the full amount.

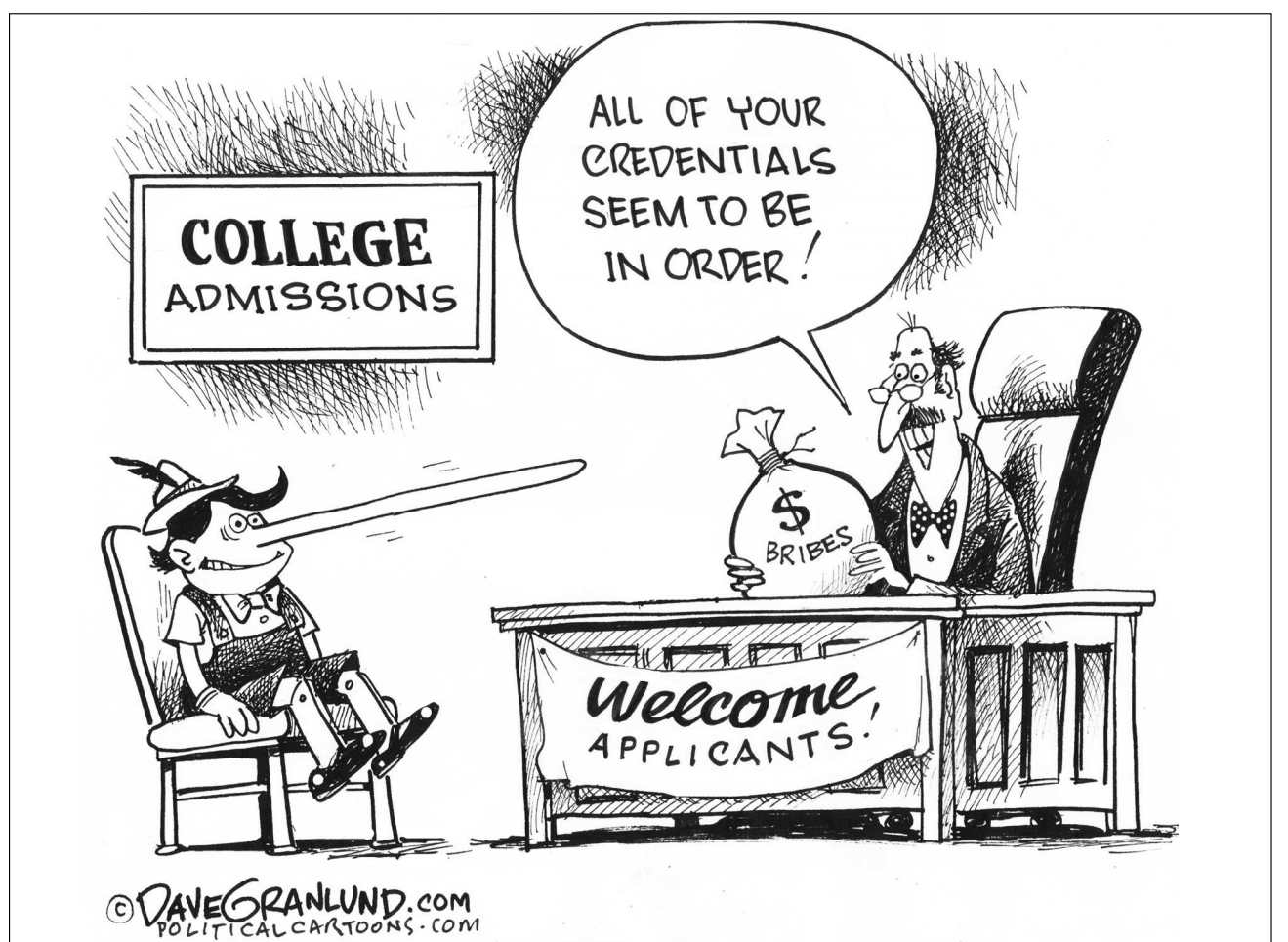
But in a budget that generally calls for a 5 percent reduction in state services, the question has to be asked: Where will that money come from?

That's a question that voters as well should keep in mind the next time they're asked to vote on an initiative. It's time to talk time.

Can you name one issue where Oregon Gov. Kate Brown agrees with President Donald Trump?

Now you can: Both came out this week against our twice-annual time change as we toggle, meaninglessly, between standard time and daylight saving time. We made the most recent switch at 2 a.m. Sunday, springing forward and losing an hour of sleep.

Momentum is growing to do away with the time switch; as we noted last week, a bill to keep Oregon on daylight saving time year-round has been introduced in the Legislature, although Oregon voters would first need to approve the move (and Congress gets a say as well).



Your views

Hopkins: Mayor Dan was my measuring stick

To the Editor:
 A beautiful tribute to Mayor Dan Pokorney by Dick Mason. He captured the essence of the man. I never have known a kinder good man with such deep faith. I used Mayor Dan as my measuring stick, but I could never match his intellect and good humor. I have always thought that only in America could a blue-collar mill worker become the mayor of a university city.

Dan and I often chided each other on who was going to finish his book first. Dan beat me, and the last time I saw him at Joe Beans he asked, "Written your book?" No, I haven't, but I'm working on it, Dan. I'm working on it.

Our community was so blessed to have this man amongst us.

Doran Hopkins
 Summerville

Journet: The cost of inaction is too high: We need HB 2020

To the Editor:
 Arguments by opponents of HB 2020 focus on claims that it would cost their family or their business substantially. It is clear that these result from a campaign developed by corporate interests to frighten Oregonians for the sole purpose of protecting their short-term profits. Opponents seem to assume that the only costs are a result of taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. What they never seem to ask is: What is the cost of inaction?

If we fail to address greenhouse gas emissions, and simply allow current trends to continue, we will face the daunting prospect of climate disruption caused by temperatures 8 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than today. The result of this would likely be the elimination of many critical tree species from the state, destroying our forests, and

challenges to agricultural production across the state that our farmers and ranchers almost certainly could not tolerate.

A 2016 study of the ongoing economic impact of global warming allowed a conservative estimate of the cost of climate change by mid-century to each and every Oregonian as probably exceeding \$3,000 annually.

Surely, we should do everything possible to avoid this disastrous outcome. HB 2020 is an essential first step on that road.

Alan Journet
 Co-facilitator, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
 Jacksonville

Alexis: We are fortunate to have GRH

To the Editor:
 My wife and I have lived in La Grande for 12 years. From the very beginning, I have had to go to Grande Ronde Hospital's emergency room quite often. I am on a first name basis now. Northeast Oregon is very

Write to us

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only). Email your letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, 97850.

fortunate to have such an up-to-date facility. The doctors and other personnel are well-trained in each of their specialties. I believe you would be hard-pressed to find another facility like this in our part of the state.

Fred Alexis
 La Grande

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

State Sen. William S. Hansell (29th District/Pendleton): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., S-423, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1729. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/hansell. Email: sen.billhansell@oregonlegislature.gov.
State Rep. Greg Barreto (58th District/Cove): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-384, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1458. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto. Email: rep.gregbarreto@oregonlegislature.gov.
State Rep. Greg Smith (57th District): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-482, Salem, OR, 97301; 503-986-1457. Heppner office: P.O. Box 219, Heppner, OR 97836; 541-676-5154; Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithg. Email: rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.
Oregon Legislature: Legislative

documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.
City of La Grande: Mayor Steve Clements, City Manager Robert Strope; P.O. Box 670, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-1309; fax 541-963-3333.
Union County Commissioners: Donna Beverage, Matt Scarfo and Paul Anderes; 1106 K Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-963-1001; fax 541-963-1079.
Wallowa County Commissioners: John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts; 101 S. River St., Room 202, Enterprise, OR 97828; 541-426-4543, ext. 11; fax 541-426-0582.
Elgin City Councilors: Mayor Allan Duffy, 501 N 11th St., 541-437-1016, mayor@cityofelginor.org; Mary West, 260 N 5th Ave., 541-805-0443, councilor3@cityofelginor.org; Kathy Warren, PO Box 697, 541-786-9611, councilor6@

cityofelginor.org; Risa Halgarth, PO Box 525, 541-437-9462, councilor2@cityofelginor.org; Rocky Burgess, 800 N 14th St., P.O. Box 854, 541-786-2417, councilor1@cityofelginor.org; David Reed, 1011 Detroit St., PO Box 368; 541-975-3306, councilor4@cityofelginor.org; Ryan Martin, councilor5@cityofelginor.org
Enterprise City Councilors: Mayor Stacey Karvoski, mayorofenterprise@gmail.com; Jenni Word; Dave Elliott; Ashley Sullivan; Micah Agnew; Larry Christman; Chris Pritchard; 541-426-4196; mail to City of Enterprise, 108 N.E. 1st Street, Enterprise, OR 97828
Imbler City Councilors: Mayor Mike McLean, Corrine Wilfong, Herman Ortmann, Mark Howell, Rick Vicek, Joan Harding, Jason Berglund; 180 Ruckman Ave.; P.O. Box 40, Imbler OR 97841; 541-534-6095

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE
 NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50
 You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.
 Call **541-963-3161** to subscribe.

Stopped account balances less than \$5 will be refunded upon request.

Subscription rates per month:
 By carrier.....\$11.80
 By mail, all other U.S.\$15



A division of
 Western Communications Inc.

THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896
 (USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by Western Communications Inc., 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

COPYRIGHT © 2019 THE OBSERVER
 The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone: **541-963-3161**
 Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-422-3110
 Fax: 541-963-7804
 Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com
 Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com
 Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER
 Send address changes to:
 The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850
 Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850

STAFF	
Regional publisher.....	Karrine Brogotti
Regional audience development director.....	Kelli Craft
Editor.....	Cherise Kaechele
News clerk.....	Lisa Lester Kelly
Sports editor.....	Ronald Bond
Reporter.....	Dick Mason
Reporter.....	Francisca Benitez
Reporter.....	Amanda Weisbrod
Classifieds.....	Devi Mathson
Customer service rep.....	Sharon Magnuson
Home delivery advisor.....	Amanda Fredrick
Customer service rep.....	Mollie Lynch
Advertising representative.....	Karen Fye
Advertising representative.....	Juli Bloodgood
Advertising representative.....	Amy Horn
Graphic design supervisor.....	Dorothy Kautz
Graphic design.....	Cheryl Christian