

Our View

Draft a wish list for your Oregon legislators

We'd like you to draft a multimillion-dollar wish list and send it off to your Oregon state senator and state representative.

Each of Oregon's 30 senators can spend \$4 million in federal funding — almost as they please. And each of the 60 members of the House has command of \$2 million.

Who knows better than you where it should be spent? Or at least, they should listen to your suggestions and thank you for them.

The total \$240 million comes courtesy of the federal American Rescue Plan Act. This deal for spreading around the money was struck to keep Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature focused on passing legislation, not fighting. Lawmakers have until May 10 to come up with lists. All the lists submitted may well be rounded up into what they call a Christmas tree bill, so everybody's goodies are rolled into one. That way the bill surely will pass.

Now you could be a penny pincher and tell your Oregon legislators not to spend a penny. You have to know, though, other legislators won't let the money sit around. They will spend it. Might as well take local control of the money. The overall state budget is in good shape. The early session pandemic financial fretting melted away with the spring, because the total Oregon is expected to get from the federal rescue plan is some \$2.6 billion.

One-time spending of \$4 million or \$2 million can't fix wildfire risk in national forests. It won't build much for roads anywhere. Some targeted dollars, though, can change lives.

Union County's aging jail is in need of major upgrades, possibly even a better facility entirely. A big chunk of money could help provide services to combat homelessness in the county. Of course, state Rep. Bobby Levy and Sen. Bill Hansell, our voices in the Legislature, have districts covering multiple counties so they will have plenty of folks asking for the dollars they can allocate.

It perhaps makes sense not to spend it on hiring people for new jobs or to start up new programs. How do you pay for them next year? That said, it might make sense to spend it on a pilot program if there's a good idea that needs testing out. Eastern Oregon University probably has some of those that could benefit from a financial boost.

There's such a big need for so many things it's not going to be easy to divvy up a few million. Are some needs more acute right now? Would it help to spend some more to encourage more people to get vaccinated? Is there a program in the schools that could make a real difference for students who lost learning because of the pandemic? Could something be done to help keep businesses operating? Is there anything needed for public safety training? Affordable housing, fighting child abuse, homelessness and so many more ideas that we have not mentioning also are deserving.

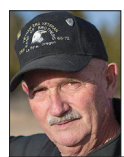
It's not going to be so easy for legislators to pick. You may have a good idea that your legislator never thought of. You may have a good idea that your legislator is on the fence about. Let them know.

If you are not sure who your legislator is, you can enter your address at oregonlegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator/leg-districts.html and it will tell you. Click on their name and their email address should pop up. Then plan your wish list.



Other Views

Why joining Idaho is the right choice



MIKE McCARTER
GREATER IDAHO PROPONENT

This May, voters in five counties of Eastern Oregon will be deciding whether to entrust the future of their children and their communities to the governance of an enlarged Idaho or to the unhinged politicians of Salem.

The Idaho Legislature is controlled by representatives from rural districts, who govern according to the concerns and priorities of rural counties.

The ruling party in the Oregon House doesn't have a single representative from Eastern Oregon or any rural district. Since the ruling party doesn't consult the other party, Eastern Oregon is completely ignored.

Long after Gov. Kate Brown is out of office, her replacements will continue to act on the priorities and values of Northwest Oregon because that area has 79% of Oregon's voters. This is why Oregon hasn't elected a Republican governor in 38 years, and Democrats have a super-majority in both houses of the

Oregon Legislature.

You might be a Democrat, but most Eastern Oregon Democrats don't want Eastern Oregon to be ruled by the kind of Portland politicians who won't or can't stand up to the relentless advancement of radical leftist proposals. They don't understand how we make a living. Their decisions damage industries like timber, mining, trucking and farming.

"The ruling party in Salem has a vision of the future that does not include people like me or the rural culture of my community, friends, and family," said former Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives Mark Simmons of Union County. "It is time to part ways with them by every legal means available to us."

Voting patterns prove that Eastern, Central and Southern Oregon do not belong in Oregon. It's bigger than politics — it's our culture. These areas gave two votes to Trump for every Hillary or Biden vote, just like Idaho.

Our counties would be better off as part of Idaho. Oregon schools rank 37th in the nation. Idaho's schools rank 23rd, according to U.S. News. Idaho is the state with the eighth smallest tax burden, and Oregon ranks 33rd, according to taxfoundation.

Editor's Note

Do you have a point you'd like to make or an issue you feel strongly about? Submit a letter to the editor or a guest column.

org. Idaho has a much lower cost of living. In March, the U.S. government ranking of 50 states on unemployment rate showed Idaho ranked fifth and Oregon 31st.

Idaho is not a sanctuary state, nor does it give driver's licenses to illegal aliens. Taxpayers there aren't forced to pay for abortions.

Rural Oregon is in an abusive relationship with the Willamette Valley. Their leaders refuse to protect citizens from rioters, arsonists, criminals and illegal aliens, but they infringe on your right to defend your family with firearms. The public school curriculum teaches the next generation to hate Americans and Americanism.

It's time to end this abusive relationship.

Mike McCarter of La Pine is a veteran and a former president of the Oregon Agribusiness Council and Oregon Association of Nurserymen.

Letter to the editor

Trust the science — get vaccinated

There is only one way to end the COVID-19 pandemic: herd immunity. On April 19, Oregon took a major step forward toward that goal when COVID-19 vaccination was opened to the general population. I want to strongly encourage everyone to get their vaccine as soon as possible.

Generating an immune response through vaccination is the single-most important step you can take to get back to life as normal. Getting to herd immunity means that we will be able to ditch masks, ditch cumbersome quarantine requirements, and ditch social distancing.

While growing up, my family would have a "Good Riddance" party at New Year's, where we would throw into the fireplace crumpled up pieces of paper upon which we wrote things that we were excited to leave behind in the previous year. This shot, particularly this early in the year, gives us an excellent chance to say "Good Riddance" to COVID-19 as we consider 2022.

Many people have chosen not to

get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccination research seeks to understand why people choose not to vaccinate. Current research suggests that many people prefer to hear the recommendation from their doctor, instead of from figureheads in government. Please take this letter from myself, a doctor you know and trust, recommending that you get vaccinated. And of course, if there are further questions, your primary care provider can explain the reasons why we have full confidence in this vaccine.

Although we are looking forward to the things we can ditch, I am most looking forward to the things we can embrace. Imagine spending time with family and friends with the unencumbered ease of a post-COVID-19 Friday night. Union County is a new home for me. So far, I have only been able to embrace it at a socially distanced 6 feet, with my mask on. I eagerly await the day when the things that keep us semi-strangers are a memory.

Trust the science. Take the shot.

Dr. Zach Spoehr-Labutta
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