

OUR VIEW

State goes for money grab

The state of Oregon's revenue picture is nothing short of stunning. It could be bulging with \$1.8 billion more in its two-year budget than it had expected in February. Income taxes surged.

The state budget picture was already looking a rosy shade of rosy before the most recent budget projection. The \$2.6 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act was going to fill what had been anticipated to be a \$1.3 billion budget gap.

Then earlier this week, in the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue, a proposed amendment was dropped that was no less remarkable. It aimed to grab more revenue. From businesses. When Congress did not intend the money to be taxed.

Which legislator or legislators proposed is not disclosed on the amendment. That is not surprising. It's an all too common practice of legislative secrecy, preventing voters from being able to hold legislators accountable.

The amendment proposes to tax forgiven Paycheck Protection Act loans. The amendment would exempt the first \$100,000 in loan forgiveness. Full disclosure: The Observer and EO Media Group benefitted from a PPP loan.

Remember, Congress passed the PPP to help businesses in desperate pandemic times. It helped prevent the country from dipping into a horrible recession. And despite that help, many businesses still went under. Many employees were let go. Now the state of Oregon plans to go after those dollars even when the state budget is bulging with billions?

Congress did not intend that the PPP loans would be taxed as income when they were used as intended. The money is not needed by the state. Do legislators need more reason than that to let the amendment die?

OUR VIEW

Election Day deadline is not complicated

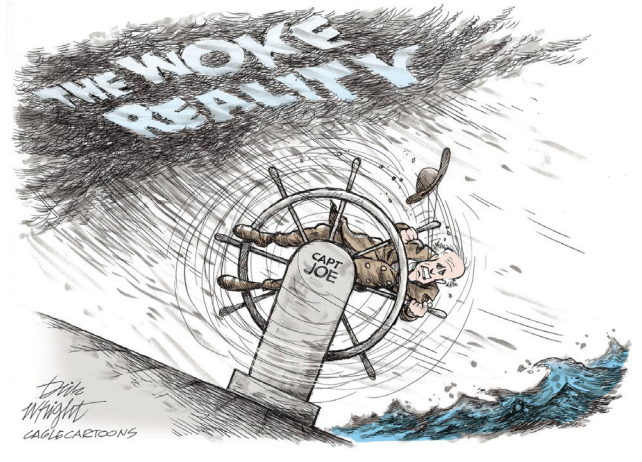
Close to the date of an election it can be a gamble to mail in your ballot. A week ahead is probably safe to ensure it is delivered on time to be counted. Beyond that, it's a guessing game. Safer to drop it off in person.

House Bill 3291 would provide more certainty for voters. If your ballot is postmarked by Election Day and arrives no later than seven days after Election Day, it gets counted.

The bill has passed the Oregon House largely along party lines. The bill now moves to the Senate.

Some voted against the bill in the House, concerned it might cause complications. Some mailed ballots are not postmarked and at least some county clerks would have to get a scanner to check barcodes.

They're right. That will create some issues. But we believe county clerks can sort it out, ensure more ballots are properly counted and voters will have a bit more clarity.



Stepping back into a familiar role



ANDREW CUTLER
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This week, I stepped back into a familiar role at *The Observer* to fill in as the interim editor.

I cannot say that I am disappointed. In fact, the opportunity to return to a place where I spent five years — first as editor and then publisher — was one I relished.

As many readers may already know, I am the publisher/editor of the *East Oregonian* and the regional editorial director of the *EO Media Group's* east-side publications. At first glance that is a lot of hats, but I really enjoy all the different ways I get to contribute as part of a great organization.

The Observer has undergone several changes since I first

sat in the editor's chair back in November 2012. Then, I was eager to take on what I saw as a fantastic but solemn responsibility — continue to provide a solid news source for *The Observer* readers.

Since joining *EO Media Group* in 2019, I have filled a few roles in the company, but my focus on the reader has remained.

I am pleased that I can help in a short-term basis at *The Observer*. The former editor, Phil Wright, left a solid foundation. Wright stepped into the news editor position at the *East Oregonian*, and I am glad he is on board. His experience and news values are second to none, and I know he will make a real difference for the company in his new position.

Returning to *The Observer* is nice in several ways. For one, I get to return to a publication

that holds a very special place in my heart. My tenure as editor was one where I learned a great deal and I have been able to use those skills as the publisher of the *East Oregonian*.

Some of my best professional memories revolve around my time at *The Observer*.

In a sense, I am not really "coming back" to *The Observer*. I've kept my finger on the pulse of *The Observer* since I left at the end of 2017. And as part of *EO Media Group*, I have worked closely with *The Observer* since it was purchased out of bankruptcy in 2019. So, while it is a "return" in one sense, I am also fortunate that I know the terrain, so to speak, and want to help out as much as possible until we can find someone to fill Wright's slot on a full-time basis.

The Observer has a lot to offer readers, and I am excited to be able to help keep that going.

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