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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Our choice for Washington's governor: Bryant

If dollars were votes, Democrat Jay Inslee would easily win a second term as Washington's governor. He has raised more than \$8 million for his re-election campaign.

By comparison, Republican challenger Bill Bryant has raised only about \$3 million, stacking the political odds against him.

But this election isn't about money. It's about leadership, and the willingness to work for both sides of the state. And it's about pragmatism, not pie-in-the-sky schemes to save the planet on the backs of Washington farmers, businesses and consumers.

That's why we support Bryant.

Inslee is a westside politician. His supporters are there, and so is their money. A review of his state campaign contribution report shows the vast majority

of his 29,725 contributions came from the westside.

We counted a little more than two dozen contributions from people who identified themselves as either farmers or ranchers — and one of them had a Seattle address.

To put that in perspective, 1,153 of Inslee's contributions came from people identifying themselves as attorneys.

Some 7,027 of Inslee's contributions came from Seattle, which has a population of 608,660, versus 785 that came from Spokane, the second largest city in the state with a population of 208,916.

That tells us what we could



expect in a second Inslee term — more westside ideas such as the carbon cap, which he has ordered the state Department of Ecology to cook up without including the legislature, and more regulations on dairies and other facets of agriculture.

On the other hand, Bryant knows and understands farming, business and trade. He was a Seattle port commissioner and has owned a trade consultancy for two decades. He is also a familiar face on the eastside of Washington. More than 250 contributions to his campaign have come from farmers, ranchers, fruit growers and processors.

They trust Bryant to work for them and other interests around the state that count on a square deal.

A square deal is not what the Washington wheat industry got from Inslee in 2014. The governor sided with the International Longshore Workers Union in its dispute with the United Grain Co. terminal in Longview. His employees, state Department of Agriculture grain inspectors, were harassed and threatened by ILWU members. Instead of continuing to protect the grain inspectors and arresting and prosecuting the perpetrators, Inslee withdrew state patrol protection. That forced the company either to cease operations or bow to the union.

That in turn put much of the \$1 billion Washington wheat

industry at risk. Upwards of 90 percent of the wheat grown in the state is exported, and none of it can be shipped until it is inspected.

Inslee's favoritism toward the ILWU also emboldened the union later that year to embark on a five-month work slowdown at container ports that cost Washington farmers and processors \$770 million, according to a study by the Washington Council on International Trade.

Washington agriculture can't afford Inslee's brand of "leadership."

It's time for a change in Washington's Capitol. It's time for someone who knows and understands agriculture, trade and business.

That candidate is Bill Bryant.

OUR VIEW

VOTE 'NO' on Oregon Measure 97

Oregon voters in November must reject Measure 97, the gross receipts tax measure on the ballot.

The measure — pushed by public employee unions, education and health care advocates and other liberal interests — proposes Oregon's largest tax hike ever. It would impose on "C" corporations an additional 2.5 percent tax on gross sales in Oregon exceeding \$25 million.

The measure is expected to raise \$3 billion each year, or \$6 billion for the biennial budget cycle.

At first blush, Measure 97 seems like a no brainer. The state faces a \$1.5 billion shortfall in the coming biennium as it assumes more of the costs of expanded Medicare under the Affordable Care Act and struggles to cover shortfalls in the Public Employees Retirement System fund.

An extra \$6 billion would seem to solve those problems, plus put more money into schools and other programs that have been short-changed since the Great Recession.

But when you dig deeper, the measure's problems are apparent.

Supporters of Measure 97 fondly point out that 70 percent of the companies that would directly pay the tax are not domiciled in Oregon, and include big retailers, big banks, big oil, big electricity, big pharm — huge, greedy companies carrying away Beaver State boodle to Arkansas, Wall Street and Moline.

The big retailers that would be hit — Walmart, Walgreens, Safeway, Target, etc. — account for 88 percent of the retail sales in Oregon, making Measure 97 a fairly broad-based sales tax. By the Legislature's analysis of Measure

97, a full \$4.1 billion of the tax will be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices or reduced wages and opportunities.

It seems businesses don't pay taxes, but consumers do.

In addition to the big box retailers and the Fortune 500 the tax would hit a whole bunch of iconic Oregon brands such as Powell's Books and Wilco. The burgeoning software industry that has of late fueled Portland's boom would be particularly hard hit, as all of their sales originate here.

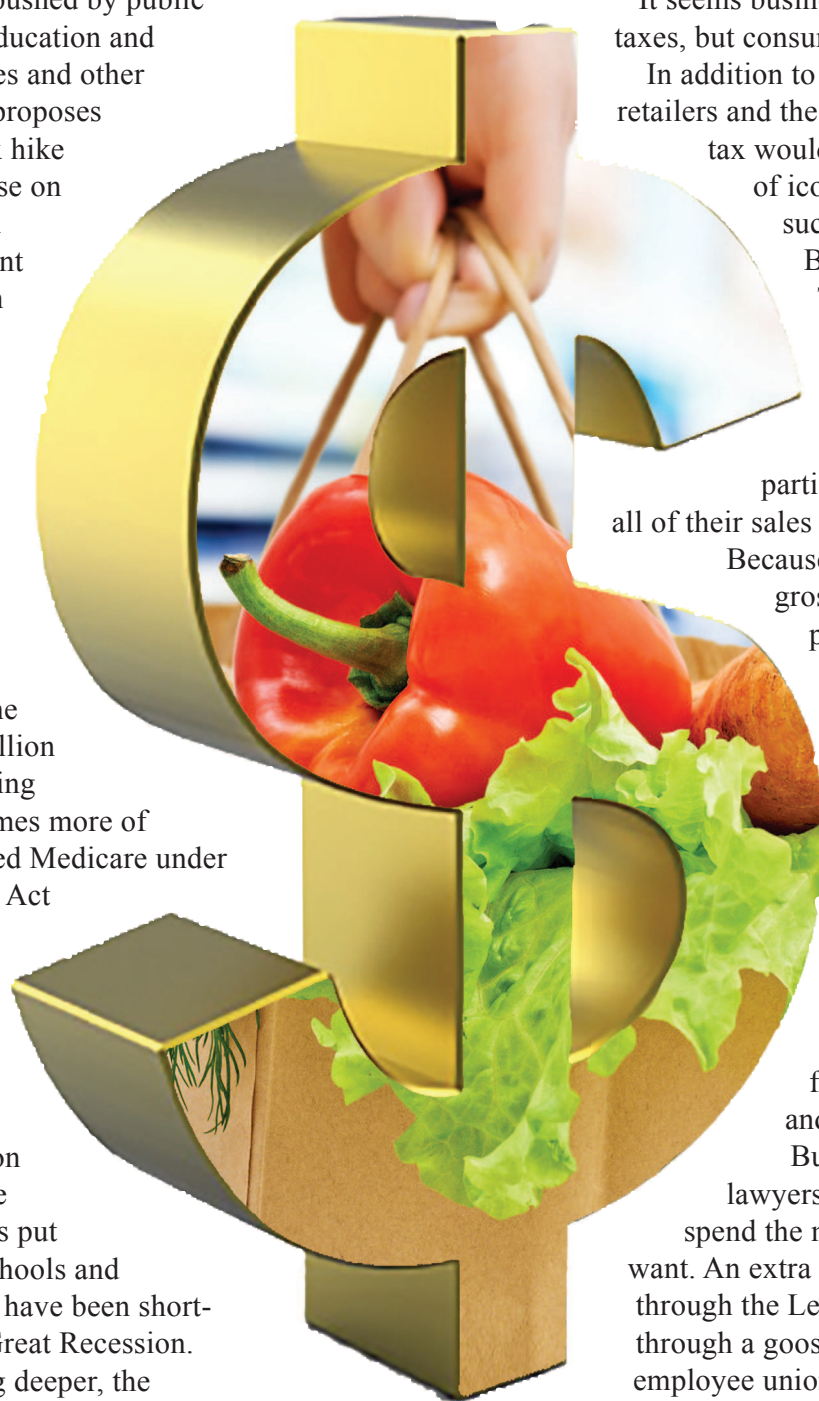
Because Measure 97 taxes gross receipts, not net profits, low-margin businesses with the requisite sales will pay whether they make money or not. In that case, the tax bill will come out of reserves.

Nonetheless, supporters argue Measure 97 is all for the kids, the old and the sick.

But the Legislature's lawyers say lawmakers can spend the money any way they want. An extra \$6 billion will go through the Legislature like guano through a goose. While the public employee unions will benefit and government will expand to sop up the money, we doubt many of the problems facing the state will be solved.

We would prefer the Legislature take stock of the state's needs and present a reasoned reform of Oregon's finances that includes specific targeted outcomes for revenue increases.

To facilitate its passage, Measure 97 supporters have picked a small segment of businesses to paint as unsympathetic targets of their tax. But if passed, Oregonians and many of the state's iconic brands will fall victim.



By the Legislature's analysis of Measure 97, a full \$4.1 billion of the tax will be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices or reduced wages and opportunities. It seems businesses don't pay taxes, but consumers do.

Hope emerges in Wash. wolf controversy

By SHELLY SHORT and JOEL KRETZ
For the Capital Press

Guest comment

Shelly Short and Joel Kretz

Wolf conflict in America is a century old tradition with the recent Ground Zero centered in northeast Washington. We represent the 7th Legislative District, currently home to 15 of the 19 confirmed wolf-packs in Washington.

In other words, one legislative district, out of 49 state-wide, houses over 75 percent of the confirmed packs in Washington.

For us, the impact isn't theoretical; it is real, intense and immediate.

Historically, the pendulum has taken radical swings, from a goal of complete eradication in the past century to currently conferring virtual sainthood status upon wolves, in some circles. We believe neither extreme is realistic, and hope that we can do better.

To be blunt, wolf recovery has not been popular in northeast Washington, and it's much deeper than simply a wolf advocate-versus-cattlemen conflict. Our communities fear that our whole culture, our largely rural, pastoral way of life is on the verge of disappearing. Until those very real fears are recognized, validated and respected there will be no resolution to the wolf conflict.

We do feel there's a grudging but growing acceptance of the notion of coexisting with wolves on a managed basis. There is willingness to explore nonlethal deterrents as long as they are practical and effective, as opposed to ineffectual, bureaucratic hoops to jump through.

But there is one non-negotiable sticking point where there has been a little lip service but no agreement in the past. When a pack of wolves does not respond to reasonable nonlethal deterrents and becomes a chronic threat, it must be removed. Period. There will be no social acceptance in rural Washington without that.

In early 2015, we got a glimmer of hope. During a meeting with several influential environmental groups, they stated that as much as they hated the idea of a single wolf dying, they realized that there were times that it was necessary, and they said as long as nonlethal deterrents were used first they would defend that publicly.

Now remember, these were the same groups that we and our predecessors had been in a running gun battle with on a wide range of issues for decades.

And as past events indicate future trends, we cynically predicted that when things got tough they would bail, or another environmental group

would sue. They replied that this was a position their boards had taken and that they were willing to stand and take the heat. I don't recall a feeling of great optimism, but it cracked open a door.

Now fast forward to August 2016 and the unfortunate situation that played out in Ferry County. We're not going to get into all the reasons or the history; it's a complex situation that begs for more than 30-second sound bites. But we think all factions will agree it was a tragic situation. Last month, the depredations on livestock met, and then exceeded, the bar laid out in the Wolf Plan to trigger lethal removal.

Having been down this road before, our local communities, ranchers, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff braced for the inevitable onslaught of death threats, vile acts of intimidation, offensive editorials and inflammatory comments.

Crickets. ...

Then came a statement from the same environmental groups noting that while they were heartbroken at the death of a wolf, they recognized that it was sometimes necessary and that they were backing WDFW and the lethal removal protocol. This was unprecedented, and we saw a glimmer of hope in the eyes of our neighbors for the first time in years. Given the history here, this isn't an easy thing to say, but we believe in giving credit where credit's due, and we deeply appreciate these groups' efforts to find common ground.

Unfortunately, within a few days, others chose to inflame a complex, difficult situation threatening thousands of hours of hard work and real progress. We believe there has been too much progress made to allow the discussion to be dominated by extremist views, from all sides.

We have hope that there is a path to stable wolf populations that also promote a vibrant ranching culture and thriving rural communities. And as long as those goals are fundamental to the discussion, we welcome a public lands grazing conversation. These issues have been dominated for years by various factions lobbying verbal grenades resulting in vilification of good people and unacceptable stalemate.

There is a tenuous path forward to balanced solutions that hinges on respect for values of others. We believe it's worth a try.

State Reps. Shelly Short and Joel Kretz represent the 7th Legislative District in northeastern Washington.