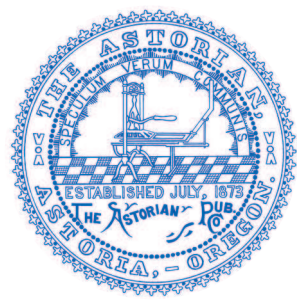


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Legislators need to take message on taxes to heart

Oregon voters place a top priority on K-12 public schools but don't really trust the state to tax and spend wisely on education, new opinion polling indicates.

Our Capital Bureau reported earlier this week on a poll commissioned by the Oregon School Boards Association. All polls, especially those sponsored by entities with a vested interest in their findings, must be viewed with intelligent skepticism. But the new poll results ring true.

According to the poll, 60 percent of the public believes any new tax money should be earmarked for state education and should be combined with spending cuts elsewhere. Ironically, this mirrors what the business community itself has indicated it would support. Legislators need to take this to heart.

Oregonians are big believers in public schools. You don't need a poll to know this. Time spent in any Oregon community or neighborhood is a revealing lesson in how schools are fundamentally bound up in our lives and our sense of who we are as a people. We're united around the idea that schools impart essential knowledge and social skills, partnering with families in preparing children for lives every parent hopes will be financially rewarding, intellectually gratifying and emotionally fulfilling.

### Anxiety

As our nation and world become more complex and demanding, any sense that schools aren't fulfilling their vital mission is certain to provoke anxiety. While more money is rarely, if ever, a complete solution to any problem, Oregonians are strongly inclined to bolster school funding. Ninety-three percent of voters say it's important to fund K-12 education. Nearly two-thirds would support boosting taxes on corporations if the proceeds were certain to go to schools.

But the state just overwhelmingly rejected new corporate taxes in the form of ballot Measure 97. This was despite the objective fact that companies contribute less to state coffers than voters commonly believe — less than 6 percent of general fund revenue, by the Oregon School Boards Association's reckoning, while citizens believe the number is around 36 percent.

In rejecting Measure 97, voters didn't trust that new revenue would be well spent and feared the taxes would be passed on to us in the form of higher prices. And as a matter of fact, Oregon firms already pay a lot of taxes — an effective rate of 7.6 percent, third highest in the far West.

### Budget gap

Faced this year with a \$1.6 billion gap between revenue and expenses, legislators are struggling to find enough money for all the state's priorities, including more for schools. A majority of the public may say they support targeted cuts coupled with some tax fix, but the devil is very much in the details.

The Tax Foundation on Monday released its latest analysis of fiscal burdens in the 50 states and Washington, D.C. It found Oregon ranks 10th in state and local tax burden as a percentage of state income. It has the sixth-highest individual income tax collections per person in the country, \$1,814 compared to the U.S. average of \$967. On the other hand, it is smack in the middle in terms of state and local property taxes — 25th, with average collections of \$1,350, less than the national average of \$1,462. It's worth adding that the Tax Foundation gives Oregon good marks for its current business tax climate, rating it 10th best in the country.

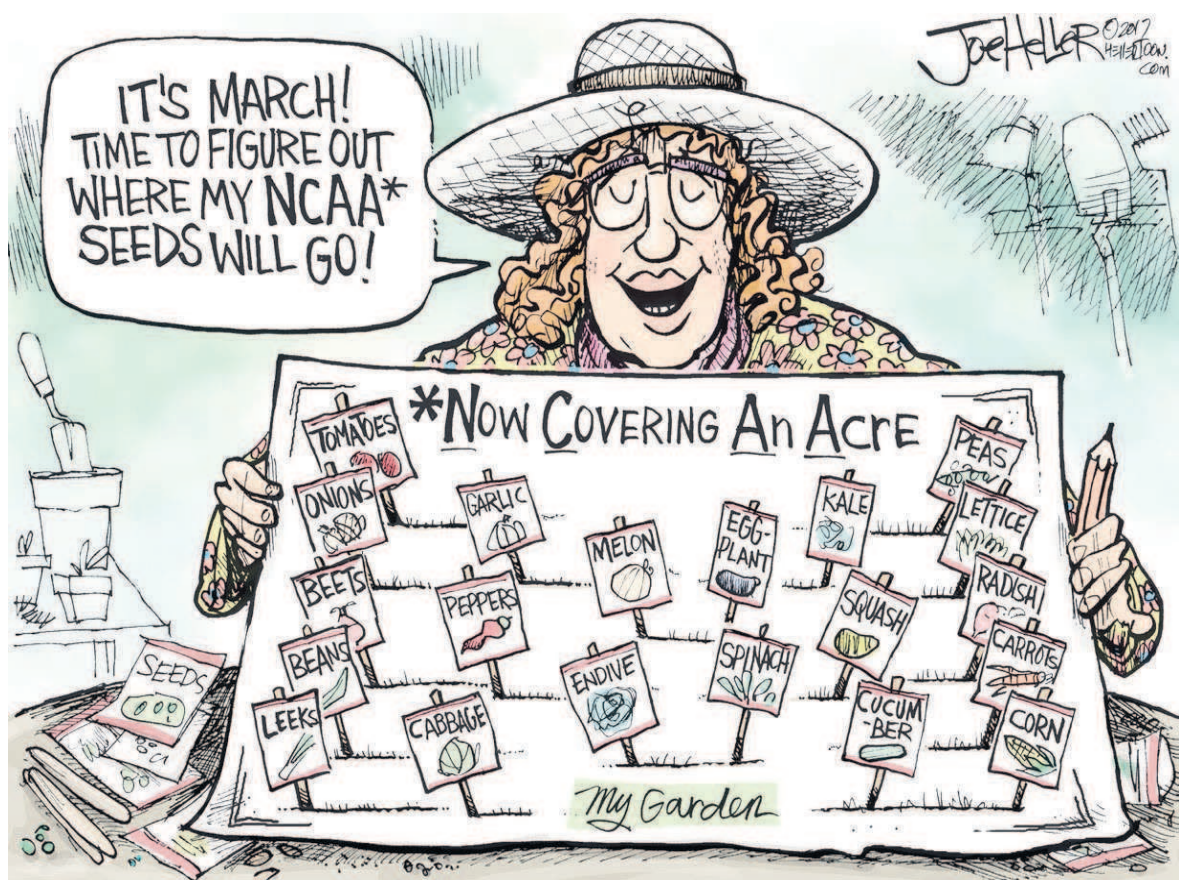
So it's fair to say Oregonians aren't undertaxed, an understanding reflected in the continuing strong rejection of a general sales tax, even if it went to education, according to the poll. But it's also fair to observe that a state's citizens get what they pay for. Some of lowest-tax states on the Tax Foundation's 2017 index — Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama — aren't models of civic success.

### Difficult choices

So what should we do in Oregon? Clearly, some very difficult choices will need to be made. Most Oregonians want to protect and enhance public education, but will have to recognize that doing so will force undesirable cuts elsewhere. Elected leaders and state agencies have to embrace the same conclusion, that it is time to zealously root out wasteful spending, while circling the wagons around schools and a few other paramount priorities.

On the tax front, the new polling suggests considerable support for dedicating 2 percent of income tax kicker funds to K-12 education — particularly a rainy day fund to see schools past budget crises like the one they currently face. Beyond this, a business tax hike with strict links to education might just stand a chance.

Voters feel they have been burned too many times. State leaders must commit to governing in accordance with the wise words of that favorite primary school role model, Dr. Seuss' Horton: "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful one hundred percent." Promise only what you can reasonably achieve, tax only enough to achieve it, and then rigorously keep your promises.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Street parking

Enough about politics, for now. On my frequent walks around my neighborhood, I have noticed that on various streets in the area there are cars parked on both sides of the roadway.

These avenues were laid out in the 1940s, for the most part, and are barely wide enough for today's automobiles to negotiate them when vehicles line both sides. School buses and other support vehicles such as garbage trucks are, in some cases, unable to travel down these streets, yet only one of the five or six residential avenues in the area in which I live are posted to indicate parking on only one side of the street.

I was under the impression (obviously wrongly) that a builder was required to establish off-street parking as part of the requirement to build a house in the city. In many cases, homeowners have turned their garages into studies or libraries as I have, however, the driveways still exist, and yet some residents refuse to use that off-street space to park, choosing instead to park their vehicles on the street, thus impeding traffic flow.

Perhaps it is high time for the city of Astoria to take a hard look at these streets, and designate many more of them "parking one side only," if for no other reason, for possible accessibility of emergency vehicles, such as ambulances and fire trucks.

That is what I think; I could be wrong.

DAVID GRAVES  
Astoria

### Leash your dogs

Regarding dogs and leashes in Astoria: Too many times when we walk our dogs on the Riverwalk or at other locations in Astoria — which is always done with them on a leash — we see others letting their dogs run free.

First off, that behavior violates the City Code (Chapter 5 — Dog Control) and is punishable by a fine of \$25 to \$500. But much more importantly, this behavior of not using a leash is dangerous and foolhardy.

No matter how "nice" or well-behaved you think your dog is, you are putting people (including children), other dogs and your own pet at risk for injury or death. This also puts you at risk of legal liabilities if your dog hurts someone else.

This rule is not meant to inconvenience you, but rather to protect all of us, either human or canine.

RICHARD WOLF  
Astoria

### Warrior pride

I joined the Air Force shortly after graduating from Warrenton High School in 1988, and have spent the last 29 years proudly serving my country in various assignments around the world. I was lucky enough to rise through the ranks, and will retire as a chief master sergeant, or "chief," as we are known. I'm proud to have an Indian chief bust on my desk, and chiefs around the Air Force have many symbols of Indian chiefs as a symbol of pride and heritage of the rank and their legacy as proud leaders.

I'm retiring this summer, and was back in Oregon for a job interview this past January, and staying with family in Warrenton, and just so happened to drive by as they were mounting the Warrenton Warrior mascot on West Main Avenue, and pulled over and snapped a couple of pictures.

I had heard rumors that the mascot was being taken down, and was saddened that someone could consider something created by students to show their school pride and heritage think that it was somehow racist. If anything, it shows our pride in those who came before us, and honors their leadership and wisdom. I am saddened that civic and school leaders in Warrenton were forced to bow to political correctness, and had our school mascot removed because of the narrow-mindedness of a few people.

I'm glad local business owners took the initiative to retain the Warrenton Warrior mascot, and I only hope that it remains there for generations to come. There are those of us who take pride in our past, and understand that it is not racist to honor the American Indian. To me it reflects the pride we have as Americans who came together from all over the world to create a free country. I have the utmost respect for those who were here before us, and hope that we can remain united in a common goal to keep America as a beacon of hope, freedom and peace.

TOM KEYSER  
APO, Armed Forces Europe

### Affordable housing?

I read with interest the recent article about Blue Heron Pointe ("Affordable housing project may be tripped up by sidewalks," The Daily Astorian, March 3). Max Ritchie calls his development "affordable workforce housing," and hopes the city of Seaside won't make him put in sidewalks just now.

And I really wonder — in what universe are \$300,000 homes "affordable workforce housing"? Maybe, if you share the house with five other people. The workforce housing we need in this area needs to come with a much smaller price tag to the consumer. This isn't it.

TERRIE POWERS  
Astoria

### Going to pot

I was told many years ago don't believe everything you read in a book or newspaper, and what you hear on the news or from another person — it's only as good as the person who wrote or reported it.

On March 2, Page 5A, in The Daily Astorian, "Pot is producing jobs, revenue in states where it's legal," is a prime example, written by the Associated Press on Gov. Kate Brown defending pot in Oregon: "There is no better type of laboratory than the initiative process, and voters in Oregon and Washington and California and Alaska and Nevada, and there's a few other states, have voted to legalize marijuana. On the West coast alone, that's 49 million people."

What? Wait a minute, that's the entire population of all the states mentioned combined. You mean everyone voted, including children under 18? So I did the research, and combined the voting results for all states mentioned: No, 8,701,210; and yes, 11,258,722.

Puzzles are worthless if you don't have all the pieces, so is reported news or stories told by people.

BOB BINGHAM  
Astoria

### Conflated

After reading the letter to the editor "Sportfishers respond" (The Daily Astorian, March 3), I felt compelled to comment. Columbia River fisheries reform

(the Kitzhaber Plan) is a very complex issue and, unless you are involved with its inner workings on a regular basis, keeping all the moving parts and interest groups involved straight can become extremely confusing.

The editor of The Daily Astorian does an excellent job of writing factual editorials on our natural resource issues, but as the sportfisher points out, he did make a mistake in claiming the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association owes its existence to Texas oilmen. That distinction would be attributable to the CCA (Coastal Conservation Association) a Houston, Texas, based recreational fishing advocacy group that hides behind a thin conservation flag. Read "Wetland Riders" for their true agenda.

It is easy to understand how the editor got the two groups confused, because their agendas are the same. They both worked to get Measure 81 on the Oregon ballot in 2012 that would have eliminated gillnetting on the Columbia River, and cost our local fishermen and processors hundreds of valuable jobs.

Today they both promote policy that would create a 100 percent recreational priority for Columbia River nontribal fisheries. That would eliminate crucial rural jobs and rob the taxpaying and electrical rate paying consumers of the ability to purchase Columbia River salmon they paid to raise. Many other anti-commercial pursuits make the two groups exceedingly similar.

The author's claim that the statement Columbia River reforms "are aimed at coddling politically correct urban dwellers" is inaccurate rings hollow to us rural people, when his West Linn address puts him in one of the most affluent urban locations in the state.

In closing, the 600,000-plus sport fishermen the author claims to represent seems to be a bit inflated, as that would be 15 percent of the total population of Oregon. If you tell untruths (or "alternative facts") long enough, some people start to believe them — but thankfully, not everybody.

JIM WELLS  
Gillnetter  
Knappa

### Tweak it

Republicans repeatedly announce they want to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare.

Were you aware that Sen. Marco Rubio and other Republicans passed legislation that limited how so-called "risk corridors" compensated insurance companies during the 2015 budget process? The risk corridors were intended to help insurance companies if they ended up with too many sick people in their plans.

So here I am, defending my family and my fellow Oregonians for the so-called "replacement" we are about to receive. Also, defending the conservative Heritage Foundation Health Plan, which the ACA is based on.

The Republican Party has sabotaged the current ACA, with no comparable replacement in sight. Here are a few ideas: a public option; Medicare for all; a single-payer plan; and restoring the risk corridors Republicans recently removed that would lead to lower premiums, and encourage more insurance companies in the market place.

In short, don't "repeal it and replace it," instead, "keep it and tweak it."

JOHN D. SAMP  
Astoria