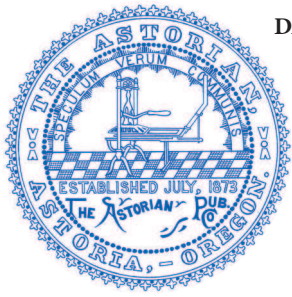


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Oil-by-rail project carries too much risk

Should Astoria city councilors add their voice to oppose a proposed oil-by-rail terminal at the Port of Vancouver that environmentalists say could threaten the health of the Columbia River estuary?

On the surface, it appears to be an easy project to oppose. But digging a little deeper, as City Councilor Bruce Jones pointed out, shows it's a bit more complex. Ultimately, though, we believe councilors should oppose it.

The Tesoro Salvage terminal, on the drawing board since 2013, would be the largest oil-by-rail project in North America. Five mile-and-a-half long trains would carry a daily output of 360,000 barrels of crude oil that would then be loaded on oil tankers that would cross the dangerous Columbia River Bar on the way to their destinations, according to the nonprofit group Columbia Riverkeeper.

There's plenty of opposition already. The cities of Vancouver, Portland, Spokane and Hood River have already spoken against it. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee will make the final decision whether to approve the project. The decision is expected later this year or early next year.

During discussion at Monday's City Council meeting, Columbia Riverkeeper's conservation director, Dan Serres, said the project would dramatically increase the danger of an oil spill in the river. The trains themselves also pose a serious danger through potential derailment, he said.

While the council expressed safety concerns and appeared in agreement, Jones, a retired U.S. Coast Guard commander, brought out a few points for all to keep in mind. He said refined petroleum products already move up and down the river safely on a near daily basis, and if those products weren't on the river, they would be transported on highways. He said it's a complex issue because in addition to being a place of beauty and natural resources, the river is a commercial highway. He also said tankers that carry petroleum or other hazardous chemicals are heavily regulated, more so than the grain carriers that we most often see on the river.

Jones said while he respects the work Columbia Riverkeeper does, he wants to see the project's environmental impact statement and the current safety regulations for tankers and also get the opinions of the bar pilots before considering a resolution on the issue, which is expected to be presented for consideration in August.

Jones is a credible, smart and knowledgeable professional. But so, too, are many Lower Columbia fishermen who actively oppose upriver oil and coal projects as representing existential threats to one of our central natural resource industries.

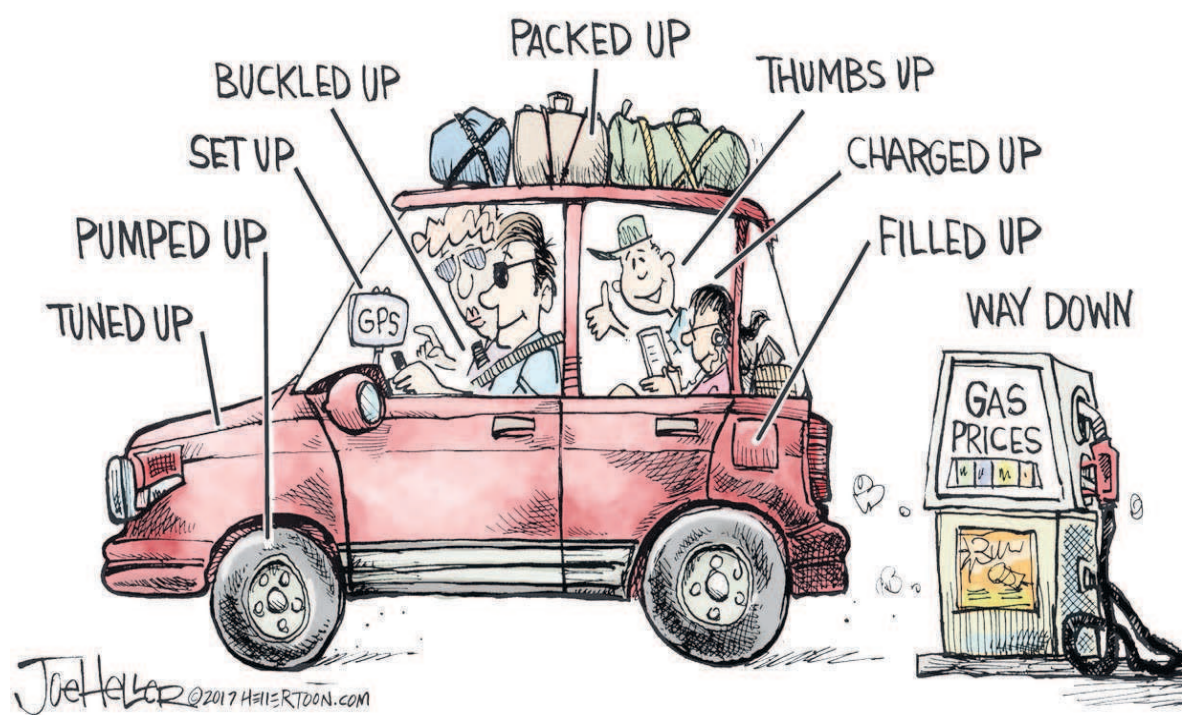
Beyond concerns about potential train wrecks, oil spills and industrial pollution at the terminal site, Washington state's objections also are rooted in broader worries about the need to continue transitioning away from fossil fuels. Governors of all three mainland West Coast states perceive an immediate need to fill the vacuum left by the current White House and U.S. Department of Energy, which are reluctant to address the problem of greenhouse-gas emissions.

In light of our continuing need for petroleum-based fuels, it would be easy to set aside distant concerns about sea-level rise. However, changes in ocean chemistry and temperature patterns already are beginning to impose direct damage, most notably to economically vital shellfish industries. We have an immediate stake in efforts to keep carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. While stopping one oil terminal won't make much substantive difference, it would be a powerful symbolic demonstration that the West Coast remains united with the rest of the world in being prepared to shift to new, less-harmful ways of producing energy.

We think the project simply carries too much risk and should be opposed. As Jan Mitchell, an Astoria planning commissioner, said at the meeting, "Anything that happens to the river upstream, happens to us."

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# The Low-Down on Vacations This Summer



# What's the matter with Republicans?



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

A child takes a picture as President Donald Trump speaks at the Fourth of July picnic for military families on the South Lawn of the White House Tuesday.

By DAVID BROOKS  
New York Times News Service

Over the past two months the Trump administration and the Republicans in Congress



have proposed a budget and two health care plans that would take benefits away from core Republican constituencies, especially working-class voters. And yet over this time Donald Trump's approval rating has remained unchanged, at 40 percent. During this period the Republicans have successfully defended a series of congressional seats.

What's going on? Why do working-class conservatives seem to vote so often against their own economic interests?

My stab at an answer would begin in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many Trump supporters live in places that once were on the edge of the American frontier. Life on that frontier was fragile, perilous, lonely and remorseless. If a single slip could produce disaster, then discipline and self-reliance were essential. The basic pattern of life was an underlying condition of peril, warded off by an ethos of self-restraint, temperance, self-control and strictness of conscience.

Frontier towns sometimes went from boomtown to Bible Belt in a single leap. They started out lawless. People needed to impose codes of respectability to survive. Frontier religions were often ascetic, banning drinking, card-playing and dancing. And yet there was always a whiff of extreme disorder — drunkenness, violence and fraud — threatening from down below.

Today these places are no longer frontier towns, but many of them still exist on the same knife's edge between traditionalist order and extreme dissolution.

For example, I have a friend who is an avid Trump admirer. He supports himself as a part-time bartender and a part-time home contractor, and by doing various odd jobs on the side. A good chunk of his income is off the books. He has built up a

decent savings account, but he has done it on his own, hustling, scrapping his way, without any long-term security. His income can vary sharply from week to week. He doesn't have much trust in the institutions around him. He has worked on government construction projects but sees himself, rightly, as a small-business man.

This isn't too different from the hard, independent life on the frontier. Many people in these places tend to see their communities the way foreign policy realists see the world: as an unvarnished struggle for resources — as a tough world, a no-illusions

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world, a world where conflict is built into the fabric of reality.

The virtues most admired in such places, then and now, are what Shirley Robin Letwin once called the vigorous virtues: "upright, self-sufficient, energetic, adventurous, independent minded, loyal to friends and robust against foes."

The sins that can cause the most trouble are not the social sins — injustice, incivility, etc. They are the personal sins — laziness, self-indulgence, drinking, sleeping around.

Then as now, chaos is always washing up against the door. Very few people actually live up to the code of self-discipline that they preach. A single night of gambling or whatever can produce life-altering bad choices. Moreover, the forces of social disruption are visible on every street: the slackers taking advantage

of the disability programs, the people popping out babies, the drug users, the spouse abusers.

Voters in these places could use some help. But these Americans, like most Americans, vote on the basis of their vision of what makes a great nation. These voters, like most voters, believe that the values of the people are the health of the nation.

In their view, government doesn't reinforce the vigorous virtues. On the contrary, it undermines them — by fostering initiative-sucking dependency, by letting people get away with their mistakes so they can make more of them and by getting in the way of moral formation.

The only way you build up self-reliant virtues, in this view, is through struggle. Yet faraway government experts want to cushion people from the hardships that are the schools of self-reliance. Compassionate government threatens to turn people into snowflakes.

In her book "Strangers in Their Own Land," sociologist Arlie Hochschild quotes a woman from Louisiana complaining about the childproof lids on medicine and the mandatory seat-belt laws. "We let them throw lawn darts, smoked alongside them," the woman says of her children. "And they survived. Now it's like your kid needs a helmet, knee pads and elbow pads to go down the kiddie slide."

Hochschild's humble and important book is a meditation on why working-class conservatives vote against more government programs for themselves. She emphasizes that they perceive government as a corrupt arm used against the little guy. She argues that these voters may vote against their economic interests, but they vote for their emotional interests, for candidates who share their emotions about problems and groups.

I'd say they believe that big government support would provide short-term assistance, but it would be a long-term poison to the values that are at the core of prosperity. You and I might disagree with that theory. But it's a plausible theory. Anybody who wants to design policies to help the working class has to make sure they go along the grain of the vigorous virtues, not against them.