

# OPINION

KARI BROGEN, publisher & revenue director



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KARI BROGEN  
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## OUR VIEW

# A sneaky tax plan

In the wee hours of Saturday morning, Dec. 2, U.S. Senate Republicans passed what could be one of the most important bills in recent history.

If it becomes law, it will revamp the national tax code, disrupt the national health care system, add trillions of dollars to the national debt and impact every pocketbook in America. So why did it pass just before 2 a.m., in the dark of night and with nary a public hearing?

Everybody knows that most 2 a.m. decisions are boneheaded, and something we regret in the morning light. So why are we passing important legislation at that hour?

It didn't have to happen like this.

There is plenty to like about the tax bill. Reducing the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent, a number in line with other first-world countries, is long overdue and will help American companies compete in a global marketplace. Most lawyer-heavy corporations were finding ways around the paying the 35 percent rate anyway — many by parking billions of dollars in offshore tax shelters — so perhaps the lower rate will actually increase tax receipts.

Yet there is plenty wrong with the bill, too. The tax code was crying out for simplification, modernization and real reform — things the GOP bluffed at tackling. They came up short.

The final Senate bill (and the House bill, for that matter) is deeply unpopular with voters. That is the most obvious reason why it was squeezed through in the dead of night.

The Trump tax cuts had a 48 percent disapproval rate and just 32 percent approval through much of November, making it the least popular tax cut in recent history, according to FiveThirtyEight. Yet those numbers are remarkably similar to Trump's approval and disapproval ratings — and are probably more tied to the president himself than his tax bill because, again, nobody knew the details of the bill until the final hour.

Much of the disapproval rests on the fact that rich Republican donors and lobbyists seemed to get direct access to writing the bill, while middle-class voters (and elected Democrats) were left out.

The tax bill includes a tax break for people who own private airplanes. There is also a tax break for parents whose children attend private school.

While those clearly help upper-income Americans, they also hurt poor and middle-class homes. Cuts to state and local tax deductions will reduce funding to public schools, where most middle-class and poor Americans are educated, while private school parents now save a few extra dollars.

There is no economic rationale for this



AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

The Poor People's Campaign prayed in an act of civil disobedience in protest of the GOP tax overhaul.

kind of thing. Rich Americans donated to the Republican Party, and the Republican Party is giving them what they want. It's that simple.

We promised to keep you informed about the bill as it moved — at that we failed. How could we not? Not even the senators who voted on the 479-page bill, which included hand-written notes in the margins, knew what was in it more than a few hours before it was approved.

That's problematic for democracy. But it's also problematic for the law itself.

In the rush to pass the bill, the Senate GOP accidentally nullified many corporate deductions, among those most important to their corporate donors.

The Wall Street Journal reported that a research credit was forgotten, which could

cost corporations up to \$10.3 billion in tax write-offs.

That may get taken care of through reconciliation by the House and Senate, or by the hundreds of lobbyists who will sneak their wishes into the bill before it arrives at the president's desk for a signature.

The American tax system is far from being broken, and far from being fixed. Tax policy swings back and forth with the pendulum of partisan control, and Republicans had their chance to create a more fair, open taxation system that lowered rates for many Americans.

On that, the Grand Old Party fell short. And once they no longer hold the power in both houses of Congress and the White House, expect much of this tax plan to be rescinded.

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# Voices from the Great Coastal Gale of 2007

What became known as the Great Coastal Gale hit the region in December 2007, knocking down thousands of trees, stranding residents and leaving thousands without power, many for more than a week.



R.J. MARX

Among those who weathered the storm, a notable group stepped forward to work to ensure the safety and well-being of Seaside's residents. Mary Blake, the former director of Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, helped set up a shelter at the Bob Chisholm Community Center. Lt. Chris Dugan was among the firefighters who cleared debris, battled blazes as they broke out and helped those in need. Seaside School District Superintendent Doug Dougherty addressed concerns of students and their families. Keith Chandler, general manager of Seaside Aquarium, helped keep fish and aquatic life alive.

Here are their stories:

### Mary Blake

The storm came in, and as always, the community center was the heart and soul for a lot of people.

Not just for the safety elements, but it was the support of people who were rightfully fearful from the scary aspects of a big event.

We turned the community center into a 24-hour area where for three days we served breakfast, lunch and dinner. We had a little ukulele group do songs. We set up our park and recreation programs for kids to have a play area. Everybody was welcome.

The city was able to get a portable generator and we set it up outside. That gave us life.

It was Christmastime, so we had Christmas lights on the outside as well as the inside of the facility. Between Dec. 3 and Dec. 8, it operated for 122 continuous hours.

We also had a check-in so people would sign in. So if somebody was worried about somebody at home or a loved one or they were out of the area, they could check in with us. We had over 2,000 signatures of people using the facility, and we served over 6,000 meals.

All the restaurants and all the people with their freezers knew they didn't have enough electricity, before food became contaminated. We served up things like steaks, crab — some of the finest food you would ever find.

I slept in the shelter. We blew up a couple beds, and we set up our sleeping



Tom Horning

Trees down in front of a Seaside home in the wake of the Great Coastal Gale of 2007.

arrangements behind the counter. We sectioned off the card room, taped it off, so people had an assigned area they could set up their own little housekeeping.

If they needed to shower, they showered at the swimming pool.

We had a bus coordinated with the Providence Seaside Hospital if people needed any kind of emergency services. We coordinated people and volunteers and it was a sight to behold.

It gave us an insight into any kind of big event, whether it was a man-made emergency or natural causes. You become as resourceful as you possibly can. You are really operating from the heart so you have a lot of compassion for what is going on. You fall back into what you practice for safety and survival.

People depended on the leadership that they had always counted on, whether or not it was going to the pool and having a good lifeguard to make sure they are safe in the water or driving in the streets of Seaside.

Our mayor, Don Larson, would always check in, which reassured people. Then we started to get the higher-level elected officials come in just to check out the damage. The people of the community really sprung into action.

In the end, the storm had so many positive things to really reinforce the people how strong we are together.

It was an incident that probably was one of my proudest moments.

### Lt. Chris Dugan

The first day, it was really starting to get a little nasty out, but no more than that. I remember going down to dispatch and it was probably within 10 minutes all heck broke loose. It seemed the wind blew, it rained, it just didn't stop. It was just ongoing.

One thing I remember is the phones

being off and the power being off. We really expected one or both of them to come back very soon — and they never did.

We couldn't get calls to dispatch. We had trapped communities, trapped areas, where trees were down with no access to them. So we spent time getting trees out of the way.

(Firefighter) Doug Barker and I made an inventory of all the power lines down, all the trees down. We made a map of the city of where the issues were so we could hand it out to power company and public works.

I actually lived at the station for that week. There was a room available upstairs, so I slept up there. I basically went on all the calls possible.

The community center got a generator from Camp Rilea. I remember helping them get that set up at the back of their building so we could get heat and lights in there.

As a whole I really think it brought us altogether. We worked together and we made it through that. The power's on and we're talking on the phone.

That's where our resilience is going to be really tested.

### Doug Dougherty

I can't believe it has been 10 years since the storm. I remember we had a few days to prepare for strong winds. The storm was to hit the coast on Sunday. Most school districts canceled school for Monday and prepared their buildings. I remember that the sky was clear and calm for a very long time that Sunday. When the storm finally hit, the heavy winds sounded like a train that went on for hours. Trees and cell towers toppled and the power was out for many days.

On Monday morning, the winds were still raging but I went out to check in at the emergency operations center at the Seaside

Police Department to determine the overall damage. I then checked on the schools. Downed trees blocked streets. Trees were blown down at each school.

I was very impressed and thankful that a number of community members checked in on their neighbors, bringing chainsaws and needed supplies. After several days, food in freezers began to thaw. I know of at least one good Samaritan who had a portable generator and would provide an hour or so of additional power to refreeze refrigerators. Personally, natural gas allowed us to use our fireplace, stove, and hot water heater — so we were better off than many.

After experiencing the lack of communication during the aftermath, I had all administrators and supervisors take ham radio classes and bought them portable ham radios for emergencies. One other thing we have noticed is there are a large number of fifth-grade students who will be turning 10 about the same time this year.

### Keith Chandler

We have a gas-powered pump for the fish at the aquarium. When the power went out, we had to man that pump for five days, for 24 hours a day. Every two hours and 15 minutes it had to be refueled. The more challenging part was getting gas to run the pumps, because there wasn't power to any of the gas stations either. Fortunately, a former employee who had a landscaping company, Tom Thies, had several gas cans at his house and he brought them over for us to use. He wasn't mowing lawns that week. He knew our situation with our power out, and he brought us all his gas.

We used that, then we siphoned the gas out of our trucks.

After the second day, Fred Meyer got power, so we could go to Fred Meyer and get gas.

As long as the pump was working, the circulation worked for all the fish. The seals, they were fine. We have a system set up where we actually use city water to fill the seal tank. But after five days of not being able to pump water from the ocean, we were getting low on the reserve. That was a concern, too.

We were always watching the outside of the building. Our biggest concern was the big sign that hangs out on the Prom. There was one point where the bolts started to come loose. We had to hang out of the windows upstairs and bolt those back in. I had someone else hanging onto my feet so I would not be blown away.

I called out here for a day and a half before my co-worker came in to relieve me.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.