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OUR VIEW

Advice to legislators as session kicks off

Our trio of local legislators — Greg Barreto, Bill Hansell and Greg Smith — are heading to Salem for the 2015 legislative session that begins Monday.

While we're sure they've already been barraged by all sorts of advisors, we figured that we might as well throw in our two cents, too.

So on their drive down the Gorge, we'd like our three representatives to consider a few things and keep them top of mind throughout the session:

Greg Barreto

Get off on the right foot.

First-time representative Greg Barreto has had to endure far too much of our advice already, so we'll keep it brief this time around.

We hope only that Barreto goes to Salem with an open mind, a willingness to listen and learn, and applies the work ethic that has grown his business over the last three decades and got him elected in 2014. If he applies that to fight exhaustively for his constituents, regardless of their political leanings, it will be a successful freshman campaign.

We have so few Eastern Oregon voices in Salem we can't afford a voice that only speaks for some of us.

Bill Hansell

Show us the water.

Increasing the flow of Columbia River water into the Umatilla Basin has been a priority for area legislators for a long while. But while past efforts have been consumed with the laborious task of laying groundwork, Hansell and the rest of the local contingent seem to have the water issue square in their sights for completion this session.

Local organizations have united behind a common front, the governor is supportive and a

Democrat-dominated state Senate and House seem on board. Hansell said securing the water would bring "mind-boggling" benefits to the area. And anything with that kind of impact on the mind is worth putting at the top of the priority list.

Hansell looks to be on the far-right watch list, but hopefully he doesn't let that pressure change his viewpoint. He did a fine job last session, learned some lessons, and we don't have any reason to believe he won't be ready for Round 2.

But sending more water into the basin would be a feather in the cap that no shadowy political action committee could touch.

Greg Smith

Quit working with your private development company to bring a coal export facility to Boardman.

We've uncomfortably acquiesced to Smith's economic development business in the past, because it does seem that he takes every opportunity to squash any semblance of impropriety.

But the controversial nature of the coal transport facility at Boardman — and the power that politicians hold on its future — make it too delicate a situation for the man who represents the area to be taking such a strong stand and accepting a paycheck while he's standing there.

It's enough. And while the controversy will probably be caught up in the court for years and years, it should go on without Rep. Smith being gainfully employed by one side of the debate.

Smith has proven himself as a key member of the legislature and a valuable voice on the Ways & Means Committee. We've come to expect solid returns from his trips to Salem and expect nothing less this time around.

Keep constituents concerns in mind throughout the term.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

The days of wine and droning

The case of the intoxicated government worker who flew a drone onto the White House lawn launched a million jokes. Although none was actually better than the straight-faced headline in *The New York Times*: "White House Drone Crash Described as a U.S. Worker's Drunken Lark."

"My first question is whether the guy's going to get a DUI for droning under the influence," said Ben Trapnell, an aviation professor at the University of North Dakota. I had a great phone conversation with Trapnell about drones, aka unmanned aerial vehicles. It led me to conclude that, like so many other things in American society, this is a matter about which people differ depending on whether they live in a crowded place or an empty place.

Empty, like North Dakota, and you think of a flying camera doing crop inspections. Maybe an Amazon drone arriving at your house on the prairie with the espresso maker you just ordered.

Crowded, and you imagine a mini-helicopter crashing through your apartment window. Or hitting a light pole and falling down on a baby in a stroller. Or running into a plane, which has nearly happened on several occasions.

Even the much-heralded promise of drone-delivered pizza sounds awful if you envision hundreds of pies smashing into one another over Brooklyn every Friday night.

But about the drunk droner. This saga starred an off-duty employee of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency who had been drinking at an apartment not far from the White House when he decided, in the middle of the night, to try out a friend's drone. He then quickly lost control of the little fellow, which crash-landed in what is at least theoretically the most heavily protected lawn in the United States.

The public conversation instantly turned to terrorism and whether a maniac could use a recreational drone to drop a bomb, or start a chemical attack. This is a terrible worry. But at least we have multitudes of dedicated, vigilant public servants, virtually all of them totally sober, working night and day to make sure this kind of thing doesn't happen.

However, we're not giving enough attention to the threat of normal American idiots. The kind of people who think it's fun to sit in the backyard and point laser lights at the cockpits of incoming planes, or participate in a YouTube challenge that involves trying to snort a condom up one's nose. The folks for whose benefit countless utility companies have written tips that include "don't look for a gas leak with a candle or lighted match."

Drones are supereasy to buy in stores or



GAIL COLLINS
Comment

online. Regulating their behavior is the responsibility of the Federal Aviation Administration, which is taking its sweet time. "In 2011, Congress asked the FAA to come up with rules. Finally this fall they came out with rules," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., who's been complaining about the delays.

But wait, there's more! "We don't even know what they say," Schumer continued. The FAA isn't sharing until more of the bureaucracy gets a crack at its handiwork: "They won't make them public until the Office of Management and Budget reviews them. OMB then sends them to other federal agencies."

While we're waiting around, confusion abounds. Commercial drone uses are theoretically prohibited, but there's a widespread feeling that in the absence of rules, anything goes.

Take Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-N.Y., whose wedding photographer had a drone taking pictures during the happy occasion. When critics accused him of violating FAA rules, Maloney said he "wasn't up-to-date on the lack of regulations around the emerging technology." The same thing was true, the congressman argued, of "most people who are about to get married." Excellent point! Although most people who are about to get married are not serving on the House transportation subcommittee on aviation.

One of the very few drone regulations that does exist prohibits flying near airports. But clearly some do it anyway. And if you catch one, there's no ID number to tell you who owns it. "The ones being reported in near collisions are (flown by) hobbyists, and they can go up to 55 pounds," said a spokesman for the Air Line Pilots Association, which is deeply unenthusiastic about the whole drone idea. "These aren't like geese. The ones that can be purchased on the Internet can go as high as 7-8,000 feet."

And then you've got privacy issues. "They better beware, because I've got a shotgun," said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., when asked about drones after the White House incident. This was during an interview, in which CNN was trying to demonstrate that it is possible to communicate with a prominent politician via Snapchat. (It is possible, but probably not a good idea.)

Trapnell in North Dakota wasn't impressed by the privacy argument. "I'd be more worried about somebody sticking a cellphone on a pole and holding it over the fence," he argued.

Like I said, it's crowded versus empty.

Gail Collins joined *The New York Times* in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the *Times's* editorial page.

Much-heralded promise of drone-delivered pizza sounds awful when you envision hundreds of pies smashing into one another over Brooklyn.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Editorial didn't refute Hansell's voting record

I saw your editorial personally attacking me and questioning the tactics of Capitol Watch PAC.

What you never refuted was the central point our ad: Senator Hansell's voting record. Senator Hansell voted for and even co-sponsored the attempt to give illegals special Oregon drivers licenses. Eighty-two percent of the voters in his district disagreed.

Senator Hansell did vote for Oregon's ObamaCare (HB3458, HB2859). Senator Hansell did vote for the boondoggle light rail bridge in Portland that would have diverted transportation dollars from his district. And Senator Hansell did vote to provide a pathway for early release of sexual criminals (HB3194A).

Attempting to kill the messenger doesn't change Hansell's voting record.

Jeff Kropf
Sublimity

Hansell voting with his constituents in mind

When I read the full page ad in the January 17 *East Oregonian* I couldn't believe my eyes. Four red X marks negatively accuse Senator Bill Hansell of his voting record in his first legislative session.

I don't always agree with Senator Hansell. When he voted to give special driver's licenses to illegals, he probably had in mind those involved in agriculture, for certainly agriculture has relied on immigrant labor in Eastern Oregon.

I think Senator Hansell's ability to "cross the aisle" to get things done for Oregon is commendable and I have been trying to figure out why his support of a light rail bridge in Portland wouldn't help Oregon.

The senator has a lot of issues coming up in the 2015 Legislature, including important matters for business and farming. There is a plan to cut taxes for small business in Oregon and a plan to lower taxes on Eastern

Oregon farmers who export wheat (HB 2616). The senator is working to pass a law to control wolves that attack livestock (HB 3452) and protect farmers growing wheat crops (SB 663).

I didn't know about the rodeo issue but apparently there is a Senate bill (SB 835) protecting the right of the people of Oregon to hold rodeos and another bill (SB 833) prohibiting treating rodeos less favorably than other organized events. Certainly, these bills are important to the Round-Up City.

There are other issues to come before the Legislature, including matters on water, domestic and spousal abuse, forests, environment, global warming, health and education. I expect he will even have to deal with the Bureau of Land Management about grazing rights of ranchers vs. wild horses in Central Oregon.

Get behind Senator Hansell. He needs your support to help make Eastern Oregon a better place for all Oregonians.

Dorys C. Grover, Pendleton

Informal poll against Requa bronze at Brownfield

I totally agree with Mike Forrester and Fritz Hill on the Requa bronze not being placed at Brownfield Park.

I conducted a simple straw poll that had a net result of 96 percent against the bronze at Brownfield and that it should be near the school.

I realized the same straw poll could save the city council about \$75,000 on the firehouse analysis and apply the funds to the speed bumps generated on Perkins Street.

John Borgerson
Pendleton

Be heard!
Comment on these letters and more at eastoregonian.com

