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OUR VIEW

Local legislators recap the session

It’s a low-paying, high-stress job. You can’t tell which of your colleagues are true allies and which are false friends. A portion of your constituents are going to mistrust you based solely on the color of your campaign button, and the rest can turn quickly if you don’t bring home what they’re looking for.

Welcome to the life of a legislator. We know it’s a tough one, but it is a job, so we offer end-of-session thoughts on our three representatives — Greg Smith, Greg Barreto and Bill Hansell — and include their thoughts on the Legislative session that was.

• The training wheels are off for **Sen. Hansell**, a longtime Umatilla County commissioner who joined the senate Republicans in the 2013 session. In that session he faced the same steep learning curve Rep. Barreto faced this time around, and Hansell came back with a Rolodex full of new allies from both sides of the aisle. That was crucial for bringing home the \$50 million state water funding package, which Hansell played a key part in after years of work by his predecessors. The Umatilla Basin should get a large chunk of the \$50 million.

It’s Hansell’s ability to appeal to reason that we appreciate most, as well as his optimistic approach to a legislator’s role. He knows not every day in Salem is going to be a win, but he’ll come back and play anyway.

Biggest win: Water funding was a must-have piece of legislation, and made the session a success for that part of District 29. He also helped Milton-Freewater and other cities avoid costly annexation with simple exemption legislation and increased protections for abused women. And then there’s the demolition and transfer of the Blue Mountain Recovery Center, which we hope turns into a win for the city of Pendleton.

Biggest loss: Hansell bemoaned hits taken by small business, including mandatory sick leave, and the fact that Oregon seems to forget about the ag industry when creating statewide requirements.

Takeaway: If reputation is evidence of success, Hansell is doing something right in Salem. He’s getting tabbed for the big committees (joint ways and means, emergency board) and is setting himself up to be an even bigger force next time around.

• **Rep. Greg Smith** has seen plenty of changes in the last 16 years. But the last 18 months have dramatically changed the Heppner Republican’s role in Salem. His district was redrawn to include Hermiston in 2013. His fellow northeastern representatives Bob Jenson and David Nelson retired, making him the most senior member of the contingent by a long shot. But Smith has maintained his

balance through the shifts, standing by his conservative ideals while working well with the opposition. It has paid off. Rare for a Republican in Democrat-dominated state government, Smith sits on and chairs important committees. Thanks to his seniority and ability to find consensus, he is one of only a few House Republicans who hold the purse strings.

Biggest win: Smith brought home the bacon. In addition to being a linchpin in the Umatilla Basin water package, he secured \$1.5 million for the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, \$2 million for the Condon Airport and \$1.6 million for an early learning center at the Port of Morrow. He also restarted Eastern Oregon University’s wrestling program, a big deal from the father of a wrestling family.

Biggest loss: Smith is a concentrate-on-the-positive type of guy. He was disappointed about gun regulations and other Democrat-led priorities, but much of that he often lets wash under the bridge.

Takeaway: Smith is well-positioned for one more shift. Where will it take it him?

• **Rep. Greg Barreto**, a freshman Republican from Cove and small businessman, is fresh off his first session.

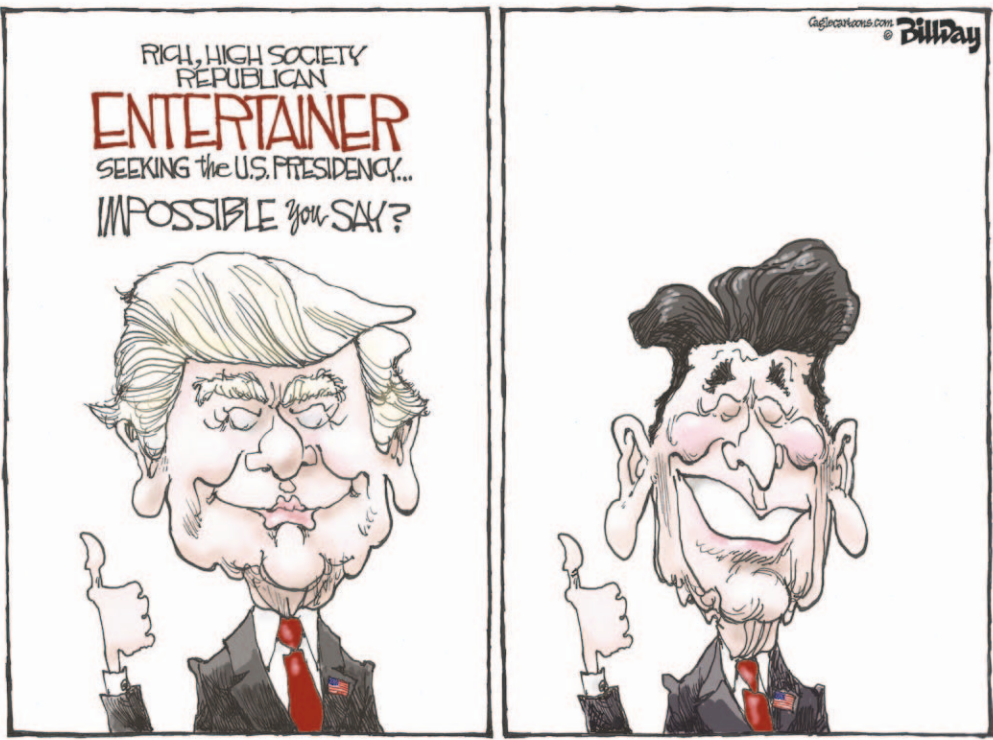
He acclimated himself to his new surroundings, working his way through the often dumbfounding world of politics. He told us of the seven-day-a-week work schedule, the quirks of the Capitol and the frustration of trying to be heard in a place where it’s as much who you know as what you know.

He pledged from the beginning to work on building relationships with people from a variety of political ideals. He admitted to his temper getting the best of him at times, and torching some of those relationships. His Facebook page remains peppered with insults of the other party, something not that uncommon in this age of partisanship, but uncommon compared with his fellow local legislators.

Biggest win: He secured funding of the \$1.25 million Elgin rural health care center (along with Hansell) and paved the way to speed limit increases in Eastern Oregon, a longstanding wish list item for many.

Biggest loss: Barreto sought increased wolf kill compensation for his ranching constituents, but after a bait-and-switch on the bargaining table it disappeared before his eyes. He chalked it up to “naiveté.” He also watched a handful of other bills die at the hands of House Democrats.

Takeaway: Barreto took some lumps during the past six months, but came out of the session with a couple bills that are exactly what his constituents wanted and a deeper understanding of the process. He didn’t spend all of his time in Salem just as a defiant “no” vote.



OTHER VIEWS

Backing up wager with Iran

From the minute Iran detected that the U.S. was unwilling to use its overwhelming military force to curtail Tehran’s nuclear program — and that dates back to the George W. Bush administration, which would neither accept Iran’s right to a nuclear fuel cycle nor structure a military or diplomatic option to stop it — no perfect deal overwhelmingly favorable to America and its allies was ever going to emerge from negotiations with Iran. The balance of power became too equal.

But there are degrees of imperfect, and the diplomatic option structured by the Obama team — if properly implemented and augmented by muscular diplomacy — serves core U.S. interests better than any options I hear coming from the deal’s critics: It prevents Iran from producing the fissile material to break out with a nuclear weapon for 15 years and creates a context that could empower the more pragmatic forces inside Iran over time — at the price of constraining, but not eliminating, Iran’s nuclear infrastructure and sanctions relief that will strengthen Tehran as a regional power.

Supporting this deal doesn’t make you Neville Chamberlin; opposing it doesn’t make you Dr. Strangelove. Both sides have legitimate arguments. But having studied them, I believe America’s interests are best served now by focusing on how to get the best out of this deal and cushion the worst, rather than scuttling it. That would be a mistake that would isolate us, not Iran, and limit our choices to going to war or tolerating an Iran much closer to nuclear breakout, without any observers or curbs on the ground, and with crumbling sanctions.

“The nuclear agreement is a deal, not a grand bargain,” argued the Wilson Center’s Robert Litwak, author of “Iran’s Nuclear Chess.” “Obama and Iran’s supreme leader, (Ayatollah Ali) Khamenei, are each making a tacit bet. Obama is defending the deal in transactional terms (that it addresses a discrete urgent challenge), but betting that it will empower Iran’s moderate faction and put the country on a more favorable societal trajectory. Khamenei is making the opposite bet — that the regime can benefit from the transactional nature of the agreement (sanctions relief) and forestall the deal’s potentially transformational implications to preserve Iran’s revolutionary deep state.”

We can, though, do things to increase the odds that the bet goes our way:

1. Don’t let this deal become the Obamacare of arms control, where all the energy goes into the negotiation but then the implementing tools — in this case the verification technologies — don’t work. President Barack Obama should appoint a respected military figure to oversee every aspect of implementing this deal.



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

2. Congress should pass a resolution authorizing this and future presidents to use force to prevent Iran from ever becoming a nuclear weapons state. Iran must know now that the U.S. president is authorized to destroy — without warning or negotiation — any attempt by Tehran to build a bomb.

3. Focus on the Iranian people. The celebrations of this deal in Iran tell us that “the Iranian people want to be South Korea, not North Korea,” notes Karim Sadjadpour, Iran expert at the Carnegie Endowment. We should reach out to them in every way — visas, exchanges and scholarships — to strengthen their voices. Visiting Iran taught me that Iranians have had enough Islamic fundamentalism to know they want less of it, and they’ve had enough

democracy to know they want more of it. (Iran’s hard-line Revolutionary Guards know this well, which is why they are still trying to persuade Iran’s supreme leader to reject this deal and its opening to the world.)

4. Avoid a black-and-white view of the Middle East. The idea that Iran is everywhere our enemy and the Sunni Arabs our allies is a mistake. Saudi Arabia’s leadership has been a steadfast U.S. ally in the Cold War; many Saudis are pro-American. But the Saudi leadership’s ruling bargain is toxic: It says to the Saudi

people that the al-Saud tribe gets to rule and in return the Saudi Wahhabi religious establishment gets billions of dollars to transform the face of Sunni Islam from an open and modernizing faith to a puritanical, anti-women, anti-Shiite, anti-pluralistic one. The Saudis have lost control of this puritanical-Salafist transformation of Islam, and it has mutated into the ideology that inspired the 9/11 hijackers — 15 of 19 of whom were Saudis — and the Islamic State.

Iran aided the U.S. in toppling the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and, at the same time, Tehran, and its cat’s paw, Hezbollah, have propped up the Syrian regime while it has perpetrated a genocide against its own people, mostly Syrian Sunnis. We need to confront Iran’s regional behavior when it contradicts our interests, but align with it when it comports with our interests. We want to balance the autocratic Sunnis and Shiites, not promote either. Neither share our values.

Finally, when it comes to the Middle East broadly, we need to contain, amplify and innovate: Contain the most aggressive forces there, amplify any leaders or people building decency there, and innovate on energy like crazy to keep prices low, reduce oil money to bad actors and reduce our exposure to a region that is going to be in turmoil for a long, long, long time.

■
Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.

YOUR VIEWS

Oregon should support stronger food labeling laws

The Oregon congressional delegation should support the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act (HR 1599). Lack of federal action in past years has spurred states to create their own mandatory labeling standards.

However, the federal government is the proper place for this regulation because consumers deserve to have accurate and reliable food labels in every state. Finally there’s a sensible solution in Congress that will apply to all the states and won’t harm Oregon agriculture.

The Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act is a voluntary system in which food producers can choose how to market their goods without increasing food prices. A study last year by Cornell University found that a mandatory state-based approach could force families to pay up to \$500 more per year for groceries.

Thousands of products labeled “USDA Certified Organic” and “Non-GMO Project” help consumers identify foods made without GMO ingredients and we should support that current method of identification. This system allows the consumer to decide if they wish to pay the higher costs associated with purchasing foods that do not contain GMO ingredients. Every major scientific body and regulatory agency in the world has reviewed the research about GMOs and declared they’re safe.

By creating a national voluntary standard for labeling, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act ensures that families and farmers in Oregon are not burdened with the consequences of state-by-state GMO labeling. I hope our delegation supports this pragmatic legislation.

Ian Tolleson, government affairs director
Northwest Food Processors Association
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LETTERS POLICY

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