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OUR VIEW



Pallbearers carry the casket of Air Force Major Phyllis Pelky as they leave the Air Force Academy's Cadet Protestant Chapel, Oct. 26 in Colorado Springs, Colo. Pelky was one of five people killed in the Oct. 11 crash of a British helicopter in Kabul, Afghanistan.

America soldiers on in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is the longest war in American history.

Earlier this month, President Barack Obama made clear it wouldn't be ending under his watch.

Obama — who originally campaigned to end George W. Bush's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — has only been able end one of them. He may have chosen the wrong one, too, as the Middle East devolves into chaos and civil war and ISIS grabs territory, beheads civilians and destroys antiquities. A stronger American presence may have helped, but would have come at a grave cost.

Back in 2013, Obama confidently declared the end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan. The president said we would draw down to 1,000 troops on the ground in Afghanistan by the dawn of 2016. Yet he has had to backtrack on that plan, and now says the U.S. plans to leave about 10,000 troops in the country for at least another year.

The decision was obviously not an easy one. But it does illuminate the fact that the situation in Afghanistan

has devolved — not improved — in the last five years. Obama's reasoning is that more troops in the country help dissuade Islamic terrorists, including the vicious and expanding Islamic State, from filling a political and security vacuum. In some of Afghanistan's more rural provinces, rule of law is nearly nonexistent and government oversight is nil.

However, nothing changes with Obama's recent revelation that troops will stay longer. The status quo will remain for another year. Billions of American taxpayer dollars will continue to leech away into foreign soil and American lives will be lost.

While Americans have been occupied elsewhere — the never-ending swamp of Washington, presidential elections, Super Bowls and Kardashians — Americans have been fighting and dying in Afghanistan. We owe them, as well as American taxpayers and Afghan citizens, a clear plan for returning the country to sovereignty and leaving it safer and more secure than we found it. The obstacles remain immense.

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

Is Oregon's economy losing momentum?

The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times

Is it a monthly blip — or a sign that Oregon's economic recovery is starting to lose whatever momentum it's built up over the past years?

Last week's statewide employment report was troubling, but let's hope it's just a temporary aberration.

Here was the key takeaway from the report by the Oregon Employment Department: Oregon's payroll employment dropped by 5,300 jobs in September, following a gain of 3,500 jobs in August.

This marked the first decline in three years: To find the last time the state's economy shed any jobs, you have to go all the way back to September 2012.

Now, let's keep this in perspective: Over the last 12 months, Oregon's economy has added about 49,500 jobs. And the state's unemployment rate stayed relatively flat in September, at 6.2 percent as opposed to 6.1 percent in August.

But the size of the job loss in September was enough to catch the eye of state economists, who noted that losing more than 5,000 jobs in a single month has been a rare occurrence over the last six years.

If you dig a little deeper in the report, other troubling signs emerge: The economic sectors that absorbed the biggest job losses included construction, which lost 1,800 jobs.

Construction was one of the economic sectors that was hardest-hit during the recession, and one of the bright spots of the state's recovery has been watching the rebound there.

Other sectors that suffered job losses in September included retail trade, which shed some 1,600 jobs; leisure and hospitality, which lost another 1,600 jobs;

and professional and business services, which lost 1,300 jobs.

Sectors with job gains included government (including public education), which added 1,300 jobs. Health care and social assistance, a sector which has enjoyed steady growth, added roughly 800 jobs.

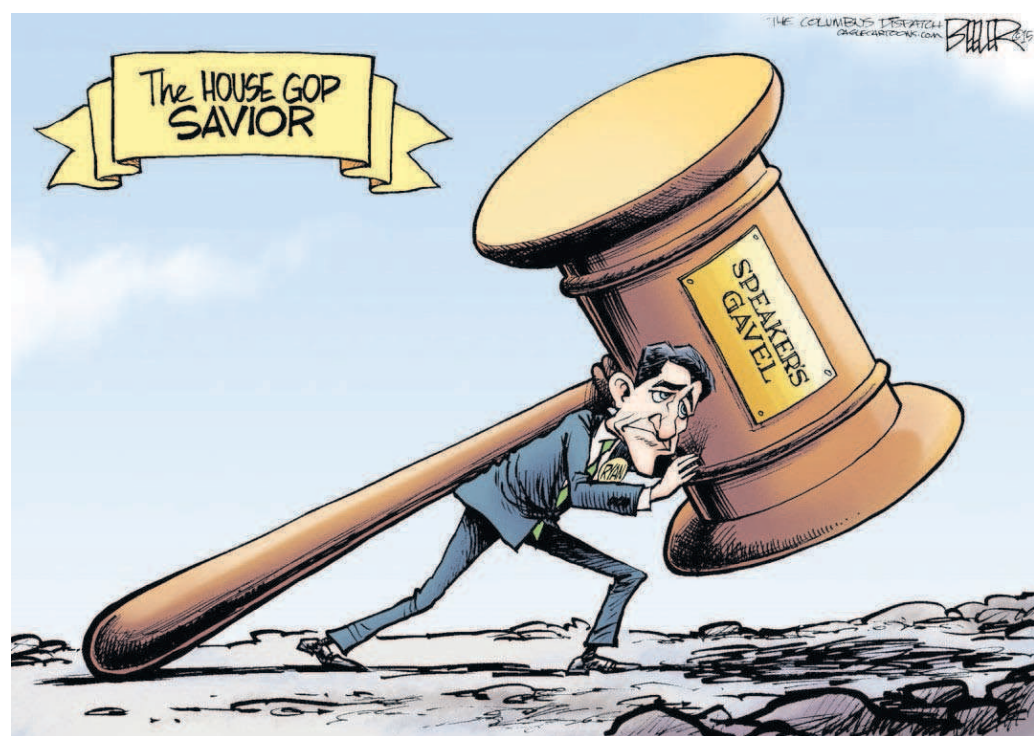
It's troubling to see such broad-based job losses in the private sector, especially since growth there was one of the hallmarks of the state's economic recovery. (And it still seems as if the recovery took its sweet time to generate new jobs.)

The drop was so unexpected that it's not out of the question that it represents nothing more than a blip, a brief detour. In fact, a senior state economist told *The Oregonian* that despite the job numbers, another economic measure — tax collections from paychecks — continues to increase, a sign of stability in the job market. And it's not at all unusual for these monthly job numbers to be revised as additional data flows in.

(One sign to watch in next month's report will be the number of jobs in the retail sector, which should start to increase as merchants begin hiring to make sure they have adequate staffing for the holiday shopping season.)

But, overall, September's report should serve as yet another sobering reminder that the state's economic recovery — which never really has felt robust — could be slowing down. We hope that's not the case.

But legislators and other state officials charged with building and maintaining the state's budget need to remember that hope is not sufficient to balance the books — and that they need to move with care when taking any action that could throw another hurdle into the path of economic recovery.



OTHER VIEWS

Marijuana can help Pendleton

Last week's article titled "Plute's path out of the pot-hole" brings out the debate between council members of whether to opt in or out of marijuana sales in the city of Pendleton.

Marijuana is legal in the state of Oregon. The percentage of people in Oregon who have smoked pot is approximately 60 percent. I think it's fair to say there are a lot of people who know something about it and that's probably why the law passed. The election settled that.

The debate now is whether to receive income from the sales and growth of marijuana in Pendleton. Marijuana sales take place in this town every day whether the mayor and council likes it or not.

There is money to be made on the sales if our city opts in. Councilor Chuck Wood gave the council his best estimate of income from sales, based on information supplied to the League of Oregon Cities. It is my opinion that the league was very conservative in their estimates.

My projections are also an opinion, but based on Colorado's figures and the first week's sales in Oregon of \$11 million touted in the *East Oregonian*. Oregon first week sales had not taken place when Councilor Wood gave his estimate. Somewhere in between may be the answer.

If Pendleton opts in, our city will have almost 100 percent product market share in Eastern Oregon. How many businesses in this town would like to have that business?



AL PLUTE
Comment

Marijuana sales take place in this town every day whether the mayor and council likes it or not.

Our city planners have severely limited the number of dispensaries that can be located within city limits. The county has banned sales within their purview. Pendleton will have the ability to capitalize on this and bring a considerable amount of revenue into the city coffers if the citizens enact a 3 percent tax on its sale.

This 3 percent tax can be on the gross sales within the city for sale and growth. I'm using figures for sales only. I believe there will be at least

\$1.5 million in sales for the first year. How did I arrive at that? If there are 625 one ounce sales per month at a price of \$200 per ounce, that would equal the yearly sales figure. That will equate to \$45,000 per year revenue for the city not counting the state contribution. Do you believe there will be 21 sales per day? I do and more. There will be people from town and out of town. The people who come in from other towns will purchase food to eat, gas up their cars and shop in town

while they are here. So we're talking ancillary revenue for businesses.

The amount of tax revenue likely will not come even close to the amount collected on the fuel tax. So I would encourage you not to depend on this strictly for the streets or anything else for that matter.

This is not a substitute for the fuel tax. It is an extra source of revenue to help the city take care of what we have.

Al Plute is a Pendleton city councilor.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton streets need work, nickels will help

The streets in Pendleton are a mess. I drive on them daily and cringe at the bumps and crunches. Since I do not live in the city limits I am unable to vote in the election but I want to support the nickles project to fix the streets. My family and I will continue to buy all our gas in Pendleton and put our nickels in the "fix the streets" account.

Arlene Malcom
Pendleton

Punishing Pendleton council won't fix the city's streets

Do you want to feel really good about doing something? OK. Let's get rid of all the officialdom at city hall! Council members, bureaucrats, etc., and all the others who cause us such troubles. Will that make you feel good? Great! But it won't fix your street, patch the holes or pave the surface.

Until each of us decides to pay for fixing our streets it ain't going to happen. Every time we buy a gallon of gas we vote to contribute a nickel — 5 cents — to the "fix the street" fund. If we don't want to fix the streets, they won't get fixed. Whether the council is around or not. Whether the bureaucrats or the bean counters or anyone else we can possibly blame are around.

It won't work. We are the only ones who can fix the streets. Got it? Get the nickels out. Let's do something big for a change. 'Nufftalk. Fix the damn streets. Vote yes. Have a nice day!

Larry O'Rourke
Pendleton

Emergency services don't need gas tax to function

I have to write one more letter before the election. There were two letters to the editor last week from pro-tax advocates.

Mr. Gavette said he hoped I would never need an ambulance. Mr. Gavette was referring to my statement that fire, police, and streets should be funded first. He forgot that in Pendleton the ambulance service is part of the fire department. If I do need help and call

9-1-1 our great fire fighters and EMTs will respond.

Larry O'Rourke, who I respect for his many years of community activities, is wrong. He was worried that out-of-town business owners might influence your vote. A lot of our business owners live out of town and they certainly have a right to try to protect their livelihood.

This is the United States of America; free speech is protected. How many employees does Mr. O'Rourke want the eight service stations to lay off?

Both of these residents need to attend a few council meetings, maybe they would learn something.

I have to add, since another police officer was killed in New York City, we do appreciate what our own police and firefighters do. Thanks from the bottom of my heart.

Res J. Morehouse
Pendleton

Councilor Hill clarifies quote about downtown shopping

Montana Peaks is a tremendous asset to our community. My family has purchased custom hats from Laura and Richard and we refer friends and professional colleagues to them. Montana Peaks is not just a store — it's a working museum.

During a recent PDC meeting, I mentioned Montana Peaks while making the case that we need to continually encourage people to shop locally.

The *East Oregonian* reported on October 8 that I said stores like Montana Peaks were perfect for Round-Up week but might not appeal to shoppers during the other 51 weeks of the year. I did not say that. I do not believe that. Montana Peaks does 8 percent of its annual business during the Round-Up season. Locals account for 4 percent of annual sales. Montana Peaks is a thriving year round business.

If you read something in the news and say to yourself, "I can't believe she said that" you might be right. I offer the *East Oregonian* a tip of the hat for running a correction about my comments at the meeting.

Jane Hill
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. 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. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

Deadline reminder: No letters to the editor regarding the November election will run in print after Saturday. Please submit immediately to ensure publication.