

Quick takes

Wolf bill heads to governor

Any bets on how long it will take them to become extinct in Oregon?

— Bill Froman

Finally the state made a reasonable decision based on science, not Disney.

— Donovan Haak

Closer and closer to wolf season!

— Shane D. Bond

Pendleton hires first female firefighter

Oh she is better than just being one of the guys. She's a woman who can do the work of one of the guys and yet has a woman's unique perspective!

— Diawatha Putina Lunsford

Congrats Jaelyn. Hermiston is going to miss you.

— Flora Estrada-Urias

Umatilla debates homeless

So now we will build ghettos for people? That is what it will be and is in a sense? Have you seen pictures or been to counties that have these shanty towns on the outside of cities? It will be a vile place.

— Dan Armstrong

Don't let it take hold! Oregon already has a "designated homeless camp." It's called Portland.

— Dennis Larsen

I think I would rather be around homeless than hateful.

— Shirley Westfall

This would be so awesome, in my opinion. I have almost been homeless and it's the scariest feeling in the world. So I couldn't imagine actually living on the river. I wish I had money, because if I did, homeless people would be the first people that I would help!

— Kellie Lynn Barnett

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Eugene senator stands with Eastern Oregon

By SEN. BILL HANSELL
Oregon District 29

The Oregon Legislature has adjourned for the 2016 short session, and the night before we bid Salem goodbye, we passed House Bill 4040A otherwise referred to as the wolf bill. Representative Greg Barreto and I were the chief sponsors, and the intent of the bill was to affirm the November decision of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, to remove the gray wolf from Oregon's endangered species list. Several environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the decision which, from my observation, has been a common practice of these groups.

HB 4040A, under the leadership of Rep. Barreto, moved through the Oregon House of Representatives with bipartisan support and passed on to the Senate. Thanks to Sen. Chris Edwards, the chair of the Senate Environment and Natural Resource committee, it made it to the floor of the Senate. Sen. Edwards, in what I believe to be a very courageous political speech, spoke to the aspects of the bill. I asked him if I could share his speech with readers from my part of the state, and he gave me his permission. Senator Ted Ferrioli the Senate Republican leader told me he believed this bill was the most important piece of legislation for rural Oregon to come out of this session. I am deeply indebted to Sen. Edwards for his leadership and support for HB 4040A.

What follows are excerpts from his Senate floor speech:

HB 4040A affirms that the decision made by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (a commission that is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate) met the requirements set out in Oregon law with respect to their decision to "delist" the gray wolf in Oregon.

Months before this legislative session, I began investigating the issues surrounding the Commission's then pending decision to remove wolves from the State's Endangered Species List.

After multiple conversations with the governor's natural resource policy advisors, (one of whom helped negotiate the wolf conservation and management plan on

the side of wolf conservation advocates in 2005) and ODFW staff, it became clear to me that while wolf recovery advocates have claimed their concerns are about science, the real purpose of filing a lawsuit challenging the commission's delisting decision is to gain leverage in the process of wolf plan review and revision. In fact, this intent has been clearly expressed in emails to at least one of the governor's natural resource policy advisors.

I have already explained what HB 4040A will do. Here is what it will not do.

The bill does not change the wolf conservation and management plan in the state of Oregon; a plan that we should be celebrating, as it has been a huge success, leading to faster recovery of wolf populations than ever anticipated.

The bill does not endanger wolf recovery in any portion of their territory.

The bill does not prevent the commission from re-listing or taking any number of other measures to assist wolf re-establishment should wolf numbers unexpectedly decline.

The effect of the bill could be to somewhat (though not entirely) moot certain claims about the commission's decision that are likely to be litigated. The science is pretty clear, and the scientific basis of the Commission's decision (as recommended by Oregon's wolf biologists and peer reviewed by internationally renowned wolf biologists), is on very firm ground. Even the Wildlife Society, a professional and scientific society of wildlife biologists, during their testimony against the bill for procedural reasons acknowledged that ODFW biologists got the science right.

Wolf re-establishment in Oregon has been a highly contentious issue, and in my opinion a conference room, not a courtroom, is the best place to settle disagreements over the contents of the wolf plan.

This issue has taken on greater significance as it comes during a time when Eastern Oregon folks are feeling

particularly ignored as Western Oregon constituencies push policies that they feel are out of touch with the realities of their lives on the far side of the state. I

mostly (though not entirely) disagree with that sentiment. Nonetheless, some healing is needed.

Environmental lawsuits are sure to deepen the divide and mistrust and will make future wolf plan revisions more difficult and more contentious. At some point, we have to stop this cycle.

Those of us who support wolf recovery should accept that we have won and wolves are in strong recovery.

Should that recovery ever falter and trend in the other direction, we need to be

ready to act if the commission does not. But that doesn't appear to be a risk any time in the near future.

What is at risk are working relationships established between wolf recovery advocates — for whom the wolf plan isn't protective enough — and ranchers — who never wanted wolf recovery in the first place.

Ranchers have come to accept that the reality of living with wolves on the landscape is here, and as such, have become supportive of management efforts of the recovery. And given the continued success of wolf recovery efforts, conservationists should accept this win, and continue to work through the public process with all interested parties at the table to negotiate changes to the Wolf Plan that they would like to see, without resorting to the leverage of lawsuits.

HB 4040A seeks to maintain balance and fairness as the Commission begins the difficult work of review and revision of the Wolf Plan, a plan of which we should be proud, as it has been successful in reestablishing wolves in the state of Oregon.

Sen. Bill Hansell is a Republican from Athena and is concluding his first term in the Oregon Senate, representing District 29.

Senator Chris Edwards is a Democrat from Eugene and is currently serving his second term, representing District 7.

"This bill does not endanger wolf recovery in any portion of their territory."

— Chris Edwards, State Sen., D-Eugene

Five big questions after a vulgar Republican debate

Does the size of Donald Trump's penis matter?

I'm not being cheeky. I'm not being shocking. I'm noting something that we cannot lose track of, should not shrug our shoulders about and must not gloss over: Trump has succeeded at nothing as fully as he has at infusing the presidential race with a vulgarity that's absolutely breathtaking.

He has done so well at dragging his rivals so far down into the sewer with him that portions of what we watched Thursday night were a fetid farce. We actually witnessed an interchange — in the first 10 minutes, no less — about how well endowed (or not) he is.

It's worth stopping for a second, letting that sink in and wondering what it says about our country and political process right now.

Here's how it happened: One of the moderators upbraided Marco Rubio (rightly) for abandoning inessential pledges of a positive campaign, answering Trump's schoolyard taunts with adolescent jokes and jabs of his own, and even going so far as to claim that Trump had wet his pants under the pressure at the prior debate.

Trump butted in to take special issue with one of Rubio's digs.

"He hit my hands," Trump said, alluding to Rubio's assertion that they were

small and correctly noting that Rubio had insinuated that "if they're small, something else must be small."

Trump puffed up his chest.

"I guarantee you there's no problem," he said. "I guarantee."

There is absolutely a problem, and I'm going to be careful here not to characterize it as big or small or use any adjective related to size. The problem is that Trump, Rubio, Ted Cruz and John Kasich were on the stage in Detroit to debate their qualifications for the most powerful job in the world, at the helm of its most important democracy, and Trump and Rubio weren't just hitting, but also dwelling, below the belt.

Surreal. Sickening.

So, yes, the size of Trump's penis matters — or, rather, what matters is that it was an actual subject of discussion; that it reflected and set the tone of the encounter; and that this tone favors Trump, because it's where he lives, it's his kingdom, and



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

if rivals join him there, they merely become his subjects.

Can Fox News be the host of every GOP debate from now on?

Remember the first debate of this election cycle, when there were more than double this number of candidates and the night opened with Fox's moderators confronting all of them, one by one, with what were seen as their greatest vulnerabilities and flaws?

The moderators were similarly merciless Thursday night, at least when it came to Trump, and Trump was the rightful focus — the whole show. They hounded him about his inconsistencies, his lies, his lack of specificity — all of it.

If substance can pull Trump's voters away from him, the moderators set that up to happen. If substance can prevent undecided voters from lining up behind Trump, the moderators gave them a firm nudge in the opposite direction.

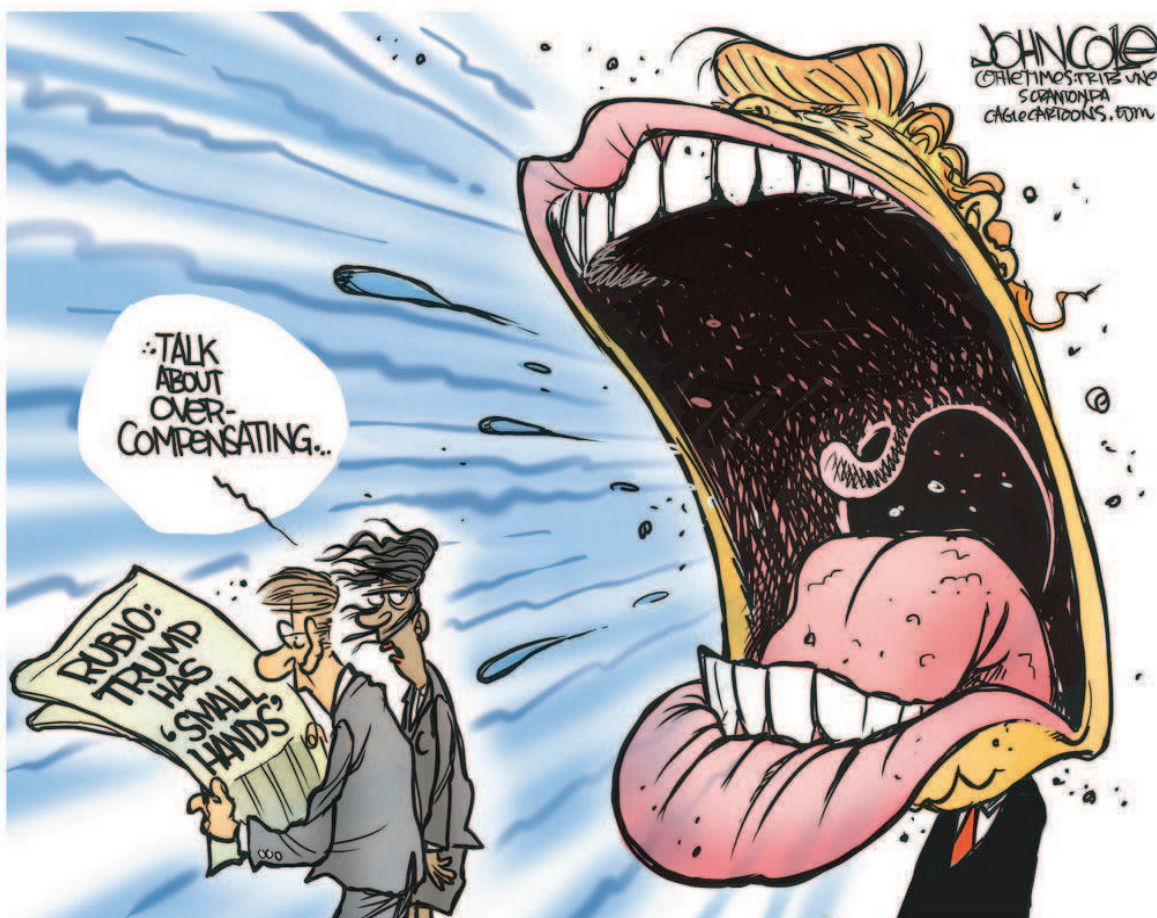
And nothing about Trump's overly defensive, excessively pouty and sometimes outright mendacious performance beckoned those voters to his side. Although there were moments when his ability to maintain his composure was heroic, there were as many or more when he grew flustered, reddened, sputtered and resorted to insult, looking tinier than I thought that a man who stands well over 6 feet tall could.

Fittingly, he reached his nadir under interrogation from Megyn Kelly, his nemesis from that first debate. The subject was fraud charges against Trump University, and every time he tried to portray them as baseless and the school and its students as the happiest place this side of Disneyland, Kelly pushed back. Confronted him with contrary evidence. Corrected his selective, self-serving version.

Her victory was clear when Trump pivoted from defending himself to pummeling Rubio, saying that if fraud was the topic, Rubio's poor record of attendance in the Senate should be examined.

"He scammed the people of Florida," Trump said. "He defrauded the people of Florida."

Of no small relevance: Florida, which votes on March 15, is a winner-take-all primary. Rubio has staked his campaign — his reputation — on winning it. But in polls there, Trump remains in the lead.



Do Trump's voters really care how closely he hews to Republican and conservative orthodoxy?

Cruz and Rubio keep making this assumption. They made it anew Thursday night.

Once again and at great length, Cruz recited the list of liberal Democrats to whom Trump had contributed over the years, dwelling in particular on how many checks he'd written to Hillary Clinton and asking an excellent question: How would Trump be able to campaign effectively against someone whom he'd supported and demonstrated such excitement about in the past?

Rubio denounced Trump as someone "whose positions are not conservative." He mentioned Trump's defense of Planned Parenthood. He disparaged Trump's commitment to national defense.

And in the days leading up to the debate, a rapidly growing, increasingly prominent chorus of Republican standard bearers made that same he's-no-Republican argument, detailing the ways in which Trump betrays conservative principles. This was a component of Mitt Romney's message when he delivered his extraordinary speech Thursday, telling Republicans that this was a time of reckoning and that if they don't say no to Trump, they're saying yes to the demise of the Republican Party and, possibly, the country.

But here's the problem: Trump's voters aren't with him because he's the purest conservative. Trump is

their protest vote, and part of what they're protesting is preoccupations of the Republican Party that haven't improved or been immediately relevant to their lives. They're protesting foreign wars, free trade and the coddling of corporations, and some of Trump's apostasies are precisely what draw them to him.

Republican leaders' failure to take down Trump isn't simply a function of hesitancy — it's not just about waiting too long. It's about their own lack of credibility and authority with the part of the electorate that's defying them.

Is it now officially three against one?

One of the most fascinating dynamics of the debate was the degree to which Cruz, Rubio and Kasich declined to go after one another, no longer angling to emerge as the single Trump alternative but working harder instead to erode Trump's support, no matter where that support went.

In debates past, Cruz and Rubio were at each other's throats. Thursday night, they were practically arm in arm, tag-teaming Trump.

This supported the notion that none of Trump's rivals maintains much hope anymore of exceeding his delegate count; what they're banking on is the ability to gather enough delegates between them, and to hold Trump's tally in check, so that he finishes with a plurality but not a majority and the nominee is decided at the convention.

Could some good yet come of

Trump's place in the race?

I'm going to play Pollyanna, minus the long blond hair and the bow, and remark on a refreshing development over the last few weeks and especially days. More emphatically and unequivocally than at any recent juncture that I can recall, Republican leaders and standard bearers are saying that their party has no tolerance for any racism, no room for any sexism, no forgiveness for bigotry.

There have always been Republicans, many of them, who felt this way passionately, but they often spoke in muffled voices or chose to keep silent. There were racist, sexist, bigoted voters whom they were all too happy to have. A party needs to reach the 50-percent mark to win elections, and it makes ugly deals and unseemly compromises to cross that threshold.

But disgust with Trump and a recognition of the damage that he could do have prompted many of the Republican Party's stewards to make unwavering statements and articulate principles that they'll be judged by — and maybe even have to live up to — down the line.

Trump has reconnected them with their soul or rather, if you want to be a cynic, forced them to find one.

Maybe the detour down his pants will amount to something more and better, in the end, than phallic braggadocio.

Frank Bruni, The New York Times.