

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the long brewing brouhaha — now bubbled over — as the Pendleton Farmers Market moves off Main Street.

The fallout has everyone upset. And when the source of tension is as minor as a few parking spaces, that is generally a sign of poor communication and negotiation.

Pendleton city manager Robb Corbett — passing along the complaints of a few Main Street business owners — warned the farmers market their permit could be revoked if the problem of trucks parking too near the event was not remedied.

Perhaps he went to the nuclear option too early? The Farmers Market bolted, and now dust is in everyone's eyes.

The Farmers Market is not a perfect event and improvements can be made. Everything has pros and cons, and much of life is how you look at it. Some businesses, and some people, accept a challenge and work to make the best out of it. Others work only to avoid the challenge.

But anyway you slice it, Pendleton is worse off by this latest dust up.

The Farmers Market can find a home anywhere — its fans are many and they are passionate about the weekly summer celebration of our region's agricultural bounty. But there is no place where the Farmers Market does more good for the community than on a block of its beautiful Main Street.



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

Consider the statewide impact of minimum wage hike

The Oregonian

Taking a stand for financial stewardship, Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, asked her fellow legislators last month to delay a vote on a bill so that it could be reviewed first by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

The bill, which would create two short-term positions to develop public-records processes consistent across state agencies, posed a minimal cost. But Smith Warner noted that because House Bill 4135 carried a fiscal impact, it should be properly vetted by Ways and Means, the legislative appropriations committee that determines budget priorities. After several minutes of discussion that underscored the routine nature of sending such bills to the committee, legislators approved the referral.

If only that moment of fiscal responsibility could have lasted. No such luck. Just one week later, the same Democratic legislators who supported HB 4135's trip to Ways and Means opposed a similar route for Senate Bill 1532, which would phase in the highest statewide minimum wage in the country. It marks at least the third time in the short legislative session that Republicans' call to consider the financial consequences of this bill fell on deaf ears.

Now that the bill has become law, however, the public is listening as universities are warning of the "tough choices" ahead, as *The Oregonian/OregonLive's* Andrew Theen reported. Public universities are expected to pay millions more in the coming years to cover the higher wages of minimum-wage workers - primarily students. That could translate into fewer student employees, fewer hours for students or higher tuition and fees, Theen reported.

The higher expenses and potential downsides shouldn't be a surprise to legislators, considering the figures were among the few calculations provided by a barebones fiscal impact statement drafted for the bill. The analysis also noted that the direct cost of the increase for state employees is less than \$100,000 for the 2015-2017 biennium. And the statement warned that the bill potentially poses an unfunded mandate for local governments, whose expected costs were "indeterminate."

With universities alone facing more than \$11.5 million in extra costs in the current and 2017-2019 budget cycles,

Rep. Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, asked House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, to refer the bill to the Ways and Means Committee. "To consider this bill without the appropriate level of budget scrutiny would be a disservice to the people we are elected to represent and would represent a failure of our fiduciary duty as guardians of the state budget," McLane wrote in a Feb. 12 letter to Kotek.

Kotek disagreed. The fiscal impact statement, she noted, forecast an "insignificant" cost to the state for the current budget. She added that she did not believe referring the bill to Ways and Means would change the "indeterminate" estimate of the bill's potential costs. A referral, she wrote in her Feb. 16 response, "would only result in delayed action on the bill and would not change the predicted fiscal impact on the budget." And when you need to ram through major policy in a short, one-month-long legislative session, expeditiousness takes precedence over transparency.

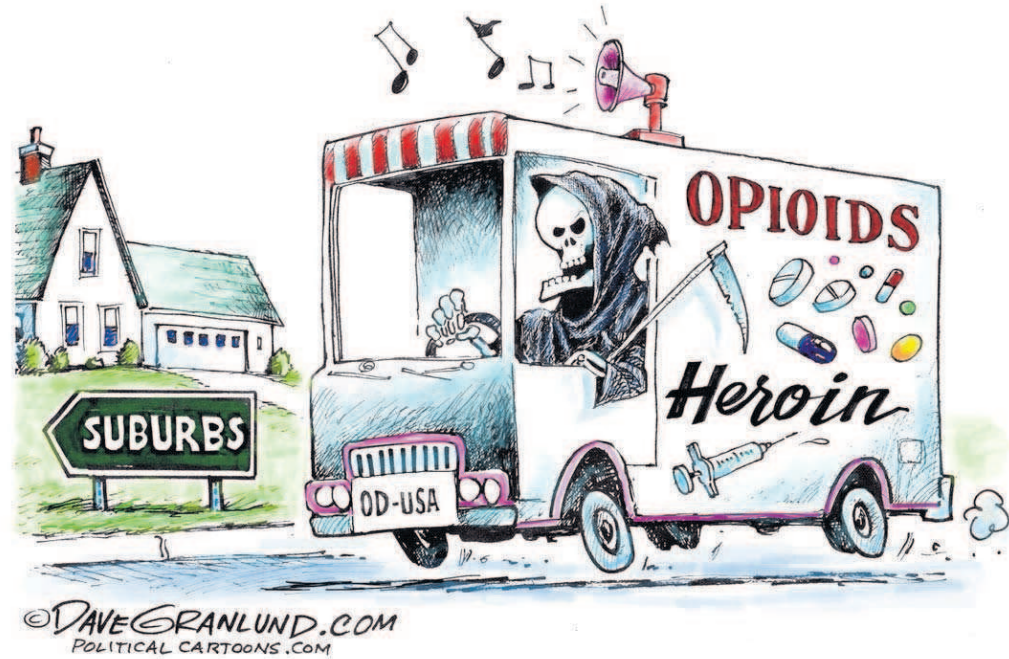
The argument raises another concern. Legislators repeatedly pointed to the fiscal impact statement's assertion that the wage hike's costs are "indeterminate" to dismiss calls for more scrutiny. It's as if they believe that the inability to precisely calculate a future liability is a legitimate excuse to ignore it.

Kotek certainly wasn't alone in refusing to route the bill to Ways and Means. Sen. Peter Courtney also could have, and did not, refer the bill to the joint committee as it made its way through the Senate. Democrats in the Senate rejected Republicans' motion to refer the bill there. And before voting for the bill, Ways and Means Committee Co-Chairman Rep. Peter Buckley, D-Ashland, defended the non-referral. Despite the budget implications, the bill does not require additional general fund dollars in the current budget, he said, ignoring the fact that some of the universities and other public employers facing higher costs could very well seek more money as the hike goes in effect.

Legislators can try to parse the decision to skip Ways and Means review any way they like. But their excuses don't obscure the inescapable truth that leaders sought to limit public discussion over the financial hit that this wage hike will have on the entities that public funds. Unfortunately, it will once again be the public that pays.

Now that the bill has become law, the public universities are warning of the "tough choices" ahead — layoffs of minimum wage workers, primarily students.

What replaced the neighborhood ice cream truck...



OTHER VIEWS

Goodbye, Bushism

Even in the last limping years of his deeply unpopular administration, George W. Bush was still popular with Republican voters. After Barack Obama took office, Bush's image popped up in anti-Obama iconography, with a cheeky "miss me yet?" attached. And as his presidency receded, Bush's favorable ratings floated upward, rising above Obama's and Hillary Clinton's as the 2016 campaign got underway.



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

These numbers were no doubt present in Jeb Bush's consciousness when he made his fateful and destructive decision to run for president. But they were also clearly part of Marco Rubio's read on the Republican Party, which ultimately led him to last night's campaign-ending defeat: Even more than George W. Bush's own brother, Rubio tried to make himself an heir to Bushism, and to build a bridge between the last Republican administration and the one that he aspired to lead. Rubio's defeat, like most in politics, had many causes: a weak ground game, a media strategy that was overwhelmed by Donald Trump's cable-TV dominance, a persona and positioning that made him a second choice all over the map but a winner hardly anywhere, a youthful mien in a "hard man for hard times" election, and of course that one dreadful New Hampshire debate.

But in purely ideological terms, what primary voters were rejecting when they rejected him was the political synthesis of George W. Bush.

In domestic politics, that synthesis had four pillars: a sincere social conservatism rooted in a personal narrative of faith; a center-hugging "compassionate conservatism" on issues related to poverty and education; the pursuit of comprehensive immigration reform as a means to win Latinos for the GOP; and large across-the-board tax cuts to placate the party's donors and supply-side wing.

In foreign policy, Bushism began with the promise of restraint but ultimately came to mean hawkishness shot through with Wilsonian idealism, a vision of a crusading America whose interests and values were perfectly aligned.

From his arrival in Washington, Rubio seemed intent on imitating this combination of ideas. He associated himself with neoconservative foreign policy proposals and personnel. He became the face of comprehensive immigration reform, take three. He wooed a rising generation of evangelical and Catholic activists. He filled out a domestic policy portfolio with "reform conservative" ideas on welfare reform, health care, higher education and family-friendly tax policy. And then to make sure nobody accused him of being some sort of redistributionist squish, he attached those ideas to a sweeping capital gains and corporate tax cut.

Politically it was by no means a crazy strategy. For all his blunders, George W. Bush is still the only Republican candidate for president to win the popular vote in the last 25 years, and the only figure to successfully unite and lead a fractious party. Parts of Bushism look more optimistic, inclusive and economically relevant than either the angrier Tea Party message that Rubio piggybacked on in his 2010 Senate campaign or the generic "Mr. Republican" messages that John McCain and Mitt Romney lost with in 2008 and 2012.

And with the Middle East in flames,

Russia increasingly aggressive and the Islamic State camped out in Iraq and Syria, you can see why many conservative elites imagined that Americans — and Republican primary voters, especially — might want a more hawkish, even Bushian successor to Barack Obama.

But alas for Rubio, it turned out that Republicans didn't want any of this.

They didn't want comprehensive immigration reform, which shouldn't have been surprising because they hadn't wanted it when Bush was president, either; it was an idea that had hung around and hung around without ever finding a conservative constituency outside Washington.

They didn't want an optimistic, next-generation version of social conservatism, preferring either Ted Cruz's old-time religion or Donald Trump as the church's heathen bodyguard in a post-Christian landscape.

They didn't care about the size of Rubio's tax cut, because all the candidates were promising a big tax cut, they were all equally implausible, and voters — even conservative voters — just aren't as tax-obsessed as they were in the Reaganite glory days.

They did want, perhaps, a different domestic policy than the uncreative platform Romney had offered, one that promised less to the wealthy and more to the working class. But Rubio's halfhearted reform conservatism was outbid and overwhelmed by Trump's brassy promises to renegotiate trade deals, slap on tariffs, leave entitlements untouched and bring back the jobs of 1965.

And they did want a kind of hawkishness — but not a Wilsonian hawkishness, in service to an ambitious grand strategy to stabilize or remake the Middle East. No, they wanted a Jacksonian hawkishness, one that promised to rain destruction on our enemies without the mess of nation building.

These desires don't add up to a new Republican synthesis, and the candidates who have catered to them more successfully haven't devised one. Trump's populist, illiberal Jacksonianism can't unite the party the way Bush once did, and Cruz's hard-edge social and economic conservatism probably can't win the median voter the way Bushism did twice (well, once plus a close second).

But they do add up to the desire for a new synthesis, and an understanding that whatever the Republican Party needs now, it can't just be what worked for Bush and Karl Rove until Iraq went sour and Wall Street melted down.

At times, Rubio's biography, his youth and his eloquence seemed to make him the natural candidate for a party in search of What Comes Next. And in certain ways he was victimized by a conservative electorate that fears the future, that wants any "new" synthesis to simply recreate the glories of a vanished American past.

But he was also a victim of his own fateful look backward, his assumption that what worked for the last Republican president could be made to work again. It didn't, it couldn't, and it probably won't be tried again: Whoever wins the nomination in 2016, George W. Bush has gone down to defeat.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at the *Atlantic* and a blogger for *theatlantic.com*.



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 city of residence and daytime phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.