

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Where there's a ways, there's a means

Last week Hermiston hosted the powerful Joint Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for crafting budget policy for the state of Oregon.

These are the kinds of meetings that happen throughout the legislative session, in corridors all throughout the capitol.

That every two years such a committee ventures forth into the wilds of Eastern Oregon is news in and of itself. That more than 200 citizens took time out of their Friday night to speak in front of the committee makes it front page worthy.

The people who testified in front of the committee weren't the stereotypes that might come to mind when Eastern Oregonians imagine someone begging, asking and demanding of government. These were not your purple-haired, genderless and jobless protesters asking government for handouts.

These were law enforcement officials. 4-H members. Nurses. Farmers. Students. Teachers. Parents of disabled children. Each of them rely on a state program that will likely be under legislative cross-hairs this session, as the body tries to deal with a \$1.8 billion budget deficit.

Each spoke in support of a state government program that matters to them, including the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton, the Oregon Health Plan, Eastern Oregon Developmental Disabilities Resources, Oregon Consortium of

Family Networks, the local drug task force, Oregon Cultural Trust, K-12 and higher education, noxious weed control, mental health and addiction services, and numerous community-specific projects.

Some of those are programs we report on all the time, others fly under the radar and affect few Oregonians.

But that does not diminish the effect Eastern Oregon Developmental Disabilities Resources has on citizens who have a loved one who is disabled.

Sometimes we can feel removed from the state government, the halls of power and the pockets that receive the most dollars. But the opposite is true, too. We can be removed from the effects government has in our lives. We can be removed from our friends and neighbors who rely on those programs. We can vilify and dismiss dollars in a spreadsheet and forget about the real-world value it has.

That doesn't mean we should lose our suspicion over a new government program or regulation, or forget to do our due diligence about how our tax dollars are being spent. But it does mean that when we look at a gargantuan budget — such as the state of Oregon's — and wonder where in the world billions of dollars are going, we must understand that some of it is making the lives of our friends and neighbors easier. And yes, improving our own lives, too.

We should remain suspicious of new government programs or regulations, but work to understand the benefits.

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

Sound the alarm about higher education funding

The (Yamhill Valley) News-Register

Oregon's dominant Democrats have been sounding the alarm about the future of K-12 school funding since Nov. 8.

On that day, their widely ballyhooed revenue plan died at the hands of voters, who saw it for what it was — an attempt to pick consumer pockets by slapping a thinly disguised sales tax on Oregon's largest and most successful enterprises. They had no Plan B, and the rebuff left them with a nearly \$2 billion deficit to fill.

But what of K-12's elder stepchild, Oregon's chronically underfunded state college system? Hardly a whimper, even from ground zero in Portland, Eugene and Corvallis.

It's not hard to discern the reason. The union representing K-12 teachers provides the money and manpower that propels Democrats into office, but it has no counterpart at the collegiate level.

Unfortunately, it's not hard to discern the result either.

The University of Oregon responded earlier this week by announcing a 10.6 percent tuition hike, serving to add \$965 to the annual tab, and other state schools have little choice but to follow suit. What's more, incoming freshmen face the prospect of having to absorb similar hikes every year of a four- or five-year tenure, on top of soaring costs for room, board, books, transportation and other necessities.

We are thus serving to saddle an entire generation with almost insurmountable student loan burdens. An infusion of new state funding is desperately needed, but so far this century, we have been heading inexorably the other direction.

Adjusted for inflation, the decline now exceeds 50 percent. And taking up the slack falls largely to tuition, which has risen a compensating 43 percent.

Tuition now accounts for 66.9 percent of state system support, compared to 21.4 percent for legislative funding and 11.7 for gifts, grants and other sources. If the disparity grows much larger, we'll have erased the only meaningful distinction between private and public institutions.

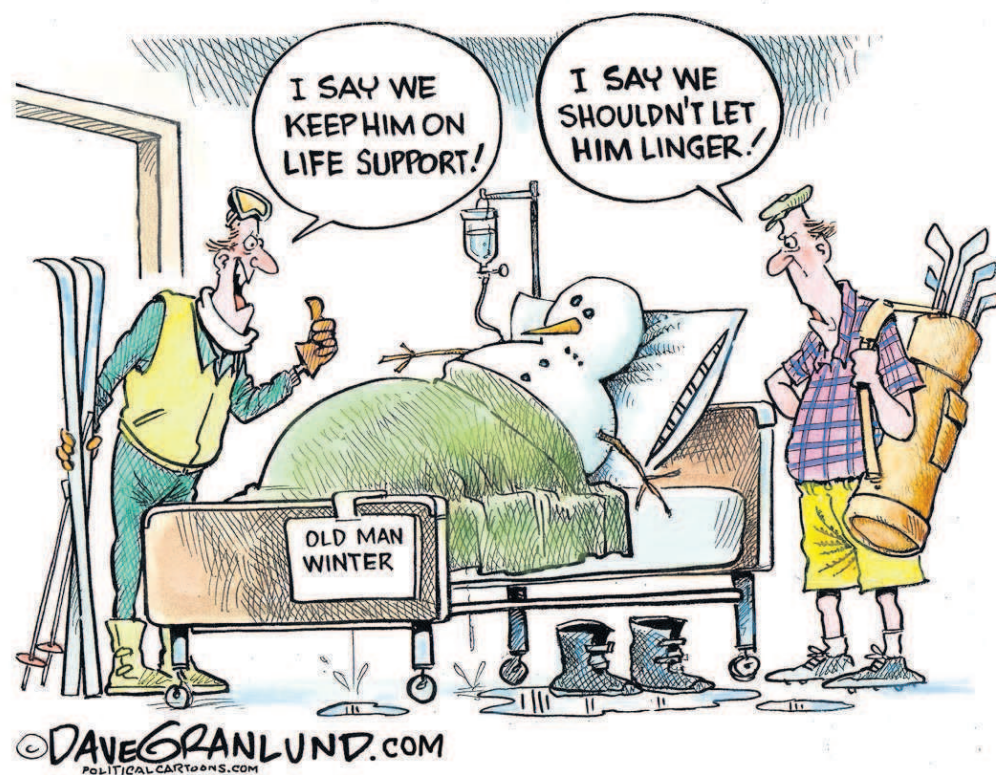
State bond support for campus construction has also become increasingly restrictive, to the point it is severely hampering development of a branch campus to serve fast-growing Central Oregon. We have not been able to provide the K-12 system with everything we would like, but it's gotten Cadillac treatment compared to its college counterpart, which is equally vital to preparing the next generation for successful entry into an increasingly demanding workforce.

The seven campuses are seeking a \$100 million boost in the backsliding allocation recommended by Gov. Kate Brown, and that seems eminently reasonable from here.

We are saddling an entire generation with insurmountable student loan burdens.

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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

NATO to U.S.: Yes sir, Mr. Trump

Candidate Donald Trump set off a furious controversy when he said NATO countries should pay their "fair share" of mutual defense costs and, later, that the treaty organization was "obsolete" because not enough of its efforts were directed against radical Islamic terrorism.

On Monday, Vice President Mike Pence took the Trump message to NATO headquarters in Brussels. And after all the controversy and complaining, NATO's response could be boiled down to a single sentence: Yes sir, Mr. Trump.

News reports from Pence's news conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg focused on Pence's effort to "reassure" nervous NATO officials that the U.S. will stand behind its treaty commitments. "It is my privilege here at the NATO headquarters to express the strong support of President Trump and the United States of America for NATO and our transatlantic alliance," Pence said. "I can say with confidence, America will do our part."

But at least as newsworthy was what happened next.

Pence dropped the hammer of Trump's demands, and NATO quickly went along. "Europe's defense requires Europe's commitment as much as ours," Pence said. He reminded the group that in 2014 all 28 members of NATO promised to try to spend two percent of their GDP on defense by 2024. Only four countries, in addition to the U.S., are now meeting that standard. As a candidate, Trump repeatedly called for NATO to pay more, Pence noted.

And now Trump is president. "So let me say again what I said this last weekend in Munich," Pence said. "The president of the United States and the American people expect



BYRON YORK
Comment

our allies to keep their word and to do more in our common defense, and the president expects real progress by the end of 2017. ... It is time for actions, not words."

Just in case anyone missed the message, Pence encouraged the NATO countries that don't spend two percent on defense to accelerate their plans to get there. "And if you don't have a plan," Pence said, "get one."

To which NATO quickly acceded. "I fully support what has been underlined by President Trump and by Vice President Pence today, the importance of burden sharing," Stoltenberg said. "I expect all allies to make good on the promise that we made in 2014 to increase defense spending and to make sure to have a fairer burden of sharing."

On the issue of terrorism, Stoltenberg said yes again. First, he noted that NATO is helping train security forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and is contributing surveillance planes to the fight against the Islamic State. Then he added what Pence wanted to hear: "But we agree that the alliance can, and should do more, in the fight against terrorism."

It's hard to overstate the near-hysteria that met Trump's "fair share" and "obsolete" comments. But the fact is, burden sharing is an old idea, and a non-controversial one. Modernizing NATO's approach in the age of the Islamic State is also eminently reasonable. And now NATO, facing the reality of a Trump presidency, has little choice but to go along. The bottom line is that Donald Trump moved the NATO debate. After much fretting, and complaining, and denouncing, NATO did the simplest thing: It went along.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

YOUR VIEWS

Hard to get a bottle deposit anywhere in Pendleton

I read your story about collecting 10 cents on cans and bottles you only paid a 5-cent deposit on.

What a joke. I can't even get stores in Pendleton to take cans that I have bought at their business. I thought there was a bottle bill in Oregon.

David Kosey
Pendleton

Waste of time to protest against America's laws

A day without immigrants? What a farce. Everyone in the United States of America is here as the result of immigration except for American Indians and Eskimos.

I don't know of anyone who has a problem with legal immigration. It is illegal immigration and unsafe immigration that are cause for concern and are the reasons for legal action by our president to stop them.

The president has the full legal right to do an executive order as he did regarding travel from seven ISIS-filled countries that, by the way, the former president identified. The Washington State judge who started proceedings against the executive order on travel has no legal leg to stand on, only emotions and opinions.

Obviously President Trump has the right to direct the agencies in the executive branch to enforce the existing immigration laws, as he has done. I realize many people aren't used to the rule of law, as our prior president didn't enforce it consistently. Also, many countries don't have the rule of law. Instead they have the rule of the bullies.

I realize that many wealthy organizations and individuals have skewed our laws here and there to their advantage. However, the rule of law is as good as it gets for imperfect humanity.

The rule of law is the best chance for a level playing field and safety for all. Enforcing the

law is not being a bully. The anarchy and other protests against lawful efforts serve only to undermine everyone's wellbeing.

President Trump needs to be supported in his recent legal actions, which are for the stability and safety of our country. That's for everyone in the country, even those who so ignorantly fight against the actions.

You protesters all waste time and the nation's energy, and the East Oregonian wastes front page space, on ridiculous immigration protests. How about instead putting forth time and effort and newspaper space on improving the nation's immigrant guest worker programs?

That's what will really make a difference, especially for Eastern Oregon.

Garnet Olson
Pendleton

Time to overhaul government, justice system is now

These are very interesting times. A time of change. Now is the time to drain Oregon's swamp.

Our public employees retirement systems must be changed and all of the public employees need to join Social Security with the rest of us. Why should they be able to retire 14 years earlier than us with higher retirement amounts?

It's time to abandoned the statewide land use planning laws and return the planning to the local levels. This process has failed us miserably.

It's time to completely overhaul our justice system. Honesty must be demanded in our courts. Incarceration rates must be reduced. The Bar must become a balanced board with private citizens listening to the complaints. Attorneys must be required to disclose whom they truly represent and prove their employment agreements. Our court system an embarrassment to civilization. Talk to or write your legislators now.

Kalvin B. Garton
Pendleton