

# EAST OREGONIAN

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**KATHRYN B. BROWN**  
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## OUR VIEW

# Turn the page on occupation

In a way, Oregon finally gets to turn the page on the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, little more than a year after a 41-day standoff came to a close.

Feds re-seized the public property in February 2016, an event that gained international attention. To some who watched, it was a clear story of government overreach. To others, it was no doubt domestic terrorism. To a Portland jury, it was somewhere in between.

That jury on Friday returned guilty verdicts on two defendants and not guilty verdicts to two others who had been charged with conspiracy. Duane Ehmer, who lived in Irrigon when the occupation began, was one of the men who was set free.

Remember that back in October, Ammon Bundy and six others were acquitted on the same conspiracy and weapons charges after a five week trial — results that shocked legal experts but confirmed the feelings of many Bundy supporters.

Whether legal or illegal, it was clear Ammon and his brother Ryan were ringleaders in the occupation.

It's disappointing that some minor players were found or pleaded guilty for their crimes, while those

in control and who devised the plan remain unconvicted. That may not last long, however, as Ammon, Ryan and their father, Cliven, face even more serious charges in a Nevada court of law.

Perhaps it is truly the occupation that will never end.

Yet, for Eastern Oregonians, we should consider the book of justice closed for all intents and purposes.

We should take a new book off the shelf and start a new chapter, one where ranchers and residents can speak without fear about the land they love and listen to others. The rabble-rousing outsiders didn't start that conversation, and they sure aren't going to have the last word.

Leadership from federal officials is likely to be nil in the next few years, but perhaps that offers an opportunity to rebuild from the community up. We should reject outside agitators and instead focus on the local economy and the local environment. When thinking about public lands, we should not be hyperbolic about problems, pessimistic about solutions, nostalgic about the past or nihilistic about the future.

Let's put the occupation behind us and step forward as a region.

More than a year after the standoff, the book of justice in Oregon comes to a close.

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

# Oregon tuition hikes again

The (Albany) Democrat-Herald

As state support has waned over the years for Oregon's public universities, students have filled the gap by paying more and more and more in tuition.

And it looks as if that's going to happen yet again, as lawmakers grapple with a \$1.6 billion shortfall that could leave the state's public universities and colleges millions short of what officials believe those institutions will need.

Just last week, the University of Oregon's board of trustees authorized a plan to increase in-state undergraduate tuition by 10.6 percent. It's the largest tuition increase at that university since 2010. Portland State University officials are considering a similar increase.

Oregon State University officials are mulling a 4 to 8 percent tuition increase, in addition to possible cutbacks in programs: President Ed Ray has said the university could be looking at a \$20 million annual shortfall. OSU officials are mulling curtailing salary increases, going slow on new hires and leaving some open positions vacant. The University of Oregon is considering cutbacks, with reports surfacing that it will cut \$9 million from its budget.

It was just two years ago that sunnier budget times allowed Oregon lawmakers to approve a budget that included a 22 percent increase in spending on the state's public universities.

That was enough of a boost to pull Oregon out of the cellar in terms of the amount of support it provides to higher education: *The Oregonian* reported last week that Oregon now ranks 37th in the nation in that category, which isn't great, but is better than the bottom-five ranking the state usually earns.

However, it might be that we're getting ready to resume that familiar slide to the bottom: The first-draft budget from Gov.

Kate Brown called for flat-lining spending for the state's seven universities at \$667 million. University officials were hoping for an additional \$100 million in funding. A later draft budget from legislative budget leaders added a bit to that number, but didn't come close to filling the hole. The legislative budget also assumed that lawmakers would not be able to identify additional sources of revenue.

The problem with a flat budget is that it doesn't take into account some of the very factors that are driving the state's \$1.6 billion shortfall: Increased obligations for public pensions and rising costs for medical insurance, not to mention inflation and salary increases.

Ray has said that 70 percent of OSU's budget goes to personnel, so that limits the university's options in trimming costs. One budgetary option that universities do have, however, is raising tuition. The problem there, of course, is that if you raise tuition too much, the costs eventually drive students away (something like that might be happening at the University of Oregon). And as the economy continues to improve, potential students might well elect against assuming mountains of debt in order to earn a degree.

There are some ways to manage that, though: OSU, for example, is working on ways to keep students on track in school so that they can graduate in four or five years instead of six or seven, with obvious savings. But those sorts of strategies can only go so far.

It's still early in the legislative session, so there's plenty of time for changes to the state budget. Nevertheless, you would think that everyone understands the long-term risks of asking students, again and again and again, to cover the funding gaps in our state universities. Will it require a full-fledged meltdown at one or more of our schools to hammer the point home? Let's hope not.



## OTHER VIEWS

# The Republican health care crackup

The Republican health care bill could represent the moment when the old order of American politics completely cracks up, the end of a certain era in American politics.

That era began around 1974, when Ted Kennedy introduced a bill to supplement America's employer-based insurance system with a government program. The Democratic dream of universal coverage continued through Hillary Clinton's time as first lady and reached a partial culmination with the passage of Obamacare.

Combating government health care was a central Republican preoccupation through all that time, and the passage of Obamacare provoked the Tea Party reaction and final arrival of Goldwaterite populist conservatism.

By 2010, however, both the Obama administration and the Tea Party opposition were out of step with the times. They both still thought the big political issues in American life were universal health care and the size of government.

In fact, another set of problems had magnified and come to overshadow the old set. This new set included:

First, the crisis of opportunity. People with fewer skills were seeing their wages stagnate, the labor markets evaporate.

Second, the crisis of solidarity. The social fabric, especially for those without a college degree, was disintegrating — marriage rates plummeting, opiate abuse rates rising.

Third, the crisis of authority. Distrust in major institutions crossed some sort of threshold. People had so lost trust in government, the media, the leadership class in general, that they were willing to abandon truth and decorum and embrace authoritarian thuggery to blow it all up.

If President Barack Obama had made these crises the center of his administration, instead of the ACA, Democrats wouldn't have lost Congress and the White House. If the Tea Party had understood the first two of these crises, there would have been no opening for Donald Trump.

Trump came along and exploited these crises. But if his administration's health care approach teaches us anything, it is that he has no positive agenda for addressing them. He can tap into working class anxiety negatively, by harnessing hostility toward immigrants, foreigners and the poor. But he can't come up with a positive agenda to make working class life more secure.

So we have a group of Freedom Caucus Republicans who still think the major problems in the country today can be cured with tax and spending cuts. We have a Trump administration that has populist impulses but no actual populist safety net policies. And we've got a Republican leadership in Congress mired in Reagan-era thinking and



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

trying to pay lip service to every obsolete prejudice in the various wings of the party.

You end up with this hodgepodge legislation that pleases nobody and takes the big crises afflicting our country and makes them all worse.

The Republican health plan would make America's economic chasm worse. It would cut health subsidies that go to the poor while eliminating the net investment income tax, which benefits only the top 1 percent.

The Republican plan would further destabilize the social fabric for those at the bottom. Throwing perhaps 10 million people off the insurance rolls will increase fear, isolation, social tension, chronic illness, suicide and bankruptcy.

The Republican plan will fuel cynicism. It's being pushed through in an elitist, anti-democratic, middle of the night rush. It seems purposely designed to fail. The penalties for those who don't purchase insurance are so low they seem sure to guarantee Republican-caused death spirals in the weaker markets.

This thing probably won't pass, but even if it passes it will probably lead to immense pain and disruption. That will discredit market-based social reform, cost the Republicans their congressional majorities and end what's left of the Reagan-era party.

It will also point the way to a new era.

The central debate in the old era was big government versus small government, the market versus the state. But now you've got millions of people growing up in social and cultural chaos and not getting the skills they need to thrive in a technological society. This is not a problem you can solve with tax cuts.

And if you don't solve this problem, voters around the world have demonstrated that they're quite willing to destroy market mechanisms to get the security they crave. They will trash free trade, cut legal skilled immigration, attack modern finance and choose state-run corporatism over dynamic free market capitalism.

The core of the new era is this: If you want to preserve the market, you have to have a strong state that enables people to thrive in it. If you are pro-market, you have to be pro-state. You can come up with innovative ways to deliver state services, like affordable health care, but you can't just leave people on their own. The social fabric, the safety net and the human capital sources just aren't strong enough.

New social crises transform party philosophies. We're in the middle of a transformation. But to get there we've got to live through this final health care debacle first.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in 2003. He is currently a commentator on PBS.

## YOUR VIEWS

# Americans must focus on fixing country, not leaving it

Andrea Zendejas's recent letter is disturbing both in content and in spirit, and her suggestion that dissenters "go back where you came from" is ridiculous on its face.

Many of us are deeply concerned that actions coming from the current administration appear to be frivolous at best, unconstitutional at worst, and mean-spirited across the board.

That doesn't mean we don't love our country. We do, and we want it to remain a place where every human being can be not only allowed but encouraged to achieve the best that he or she is capable of. We must remain a country where freedom of expression is encouraged, not repressed; where our public officials must maintain high standards of behavior and be held accountable when those standards are violated; and where the institutions responsible for disseminating information about government actions must in every case present that information in a clear, unbiased, and trustworthy fashion.

Obviously, not all those ideals are being upheld at the present time. This does not mean that those of us protesting inappropriate

actions or statements wish our country ill. On the contrary, we want it to heal and to remain a beacon of hope and freedom and strength that the world can admire and emulate.

Ms. Zendejas, I can't "go back where I came from," because my family's roots are deep in this soil. The family joke is that some of my mother's ancestors came here in 1635 on the ship "Increase" ... and some of my father's ancestors were here to greet them. But it doesn't matter when we arrived. We're here now. We love our country. We want it to thrive.

If you live in a house you love and the roof begins to leak, you don't move out. You fix the leak. And in the process, you look around for related damages or other potential problems. That, my friend, is what we are doing. We feel that the person we have hired to repair the roof is actually up there ripping off shingles and sawing through trusses. We want him down off the roof and replaced by someone who knows what he or she is doing and can be trusted to do it properly and openly. To simply stand aside and wring our hands while this is going on is irresponsible and ultimately self-destructive.

Lynda Carragher  
Umatilla

## LETTERS POLICY

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