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OUR VIEW

Legislators must take tax poll to heart

Oregon voters place a top priority on K-12 public schools but don't really trust the state to tax and spend wisely on education, new opinion polling indicates.

Our Capital Bureau reported earlier this week on a poll commissioned by the Oregon School Boards Association. All polls, especially those sponsored by entities with a vested interest in their findings, must be viewed with intelligent skepticism. But the new poll results ring true.

According to the poll, 60 percent of the public believes any new tax money should be earmarked for state education and should be combined with spending cuts elsewhere. Ironically, this mirrors what the business community itself has indicated it would support. Legislators need to take this to heart.

Oregonians are big believers in public schools. You don't need a poll to know this. Time spent in any Oregon community or neighborhood is a revealing lesson in how schools are fundamentally bound up in our lives and our sense of who we are as a people. We're united around the idea that schools impart essential knowledge and social skills, partnering with families in preparing children for lives every parent hopes will be financially rewarding, intellectually gratifying and emotionally fulfilling.

Anxiety: As our nation and world become more complex and demanding, any sense that schools aren't fulfilling their vital mission is certain to provoke anxiety. While more money is rarely, if ever, a complete solution to any problem, Oregonians are strongly inclined to bolster school funding. Ninety-three percent of voters say it's important to fund K-12 education. Nearly two-thirds would support boosting taxes on corporations if the proceeds were certain to go to schools.

But the state just overwhelmingly rejected new corporate taxes in the form of Ballot Measure 97. This was despite the objective fact that companies contribute less to state coffers than voters commonly believe — less than 6 percent of general fund revenue, by the Oregon School Boards Association's reckoning, while citizens believe the number is around 36 percent.

In rejecting Measure 97, voters didn't trust that new revenue would be well spent and feared the taxes would be passed on to us in the form of higher prices. And as a matter of fact, Oregon firms already pay a lot of taxes — an effective rate of 7.6

percent, third highest in the far West.

Budget gap: Faced this year with a \$1.6 billion gap between revenue and expenses, legislators are struggling to find enough money for all the state's priorities, including more for schools. A majority of the public may say they support targeted cuts coupled with some tax fix, but the devil is very much in the details.

The Tax Foundation on Monday released its latest analysis of fiscal burdens in the 50 states and Washington, D.C. It found Oregon ranks 10th in state and local tax burden as a percentage of state income. It has the sixth-highest individual income tax collections per person in the country, \$1,814 compared to the U.S. average of \$967. On the other hand, it is smack in the middle in terms of state and local property taxes — 25th, with average collections of \$1,350, less than the national average of \$1,462. It's worth adding that the Tax Foundation gives Oregon good marks for its current business tax climate, rating it 10th best in the country.

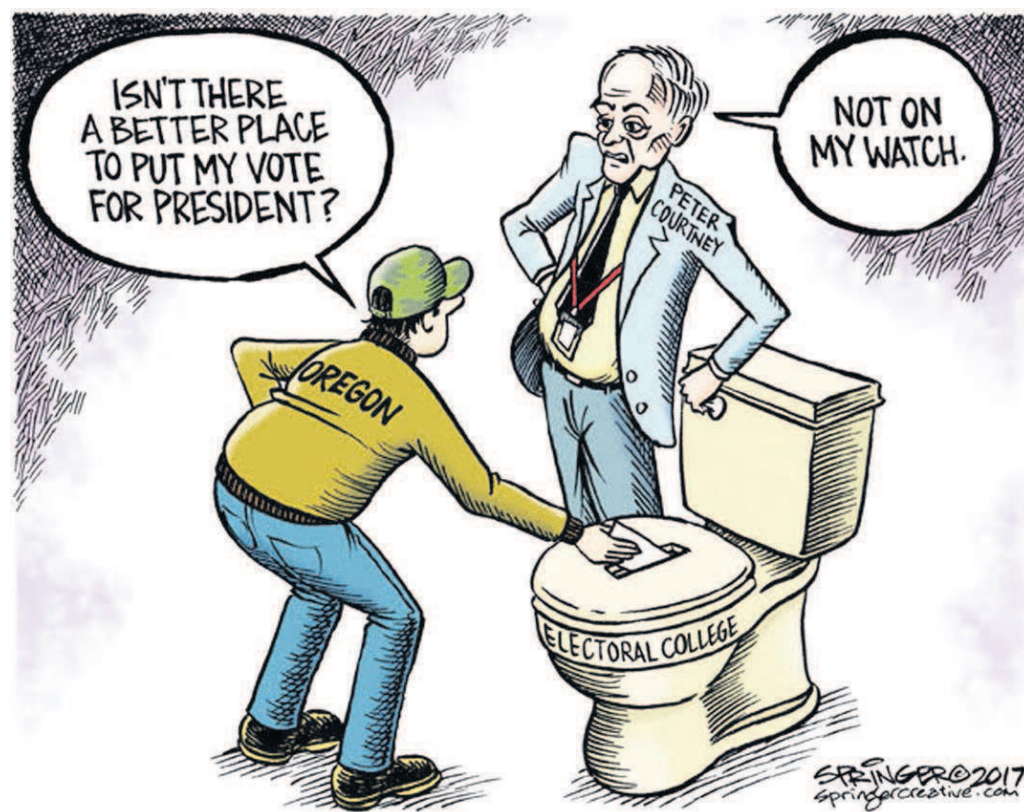
So it's fair to say Oregonians aren't undertaxed, an understanding reflected in the continuing strong rejection of a general sales tax, even if it went to education, according to the poll. But it's also fair to observe that a state's citizens get what they pay for.

Difficult choices: Most Oregonians want to protect and enhance public education, but will have to recognize that doing so will force undesirable cuts elsewhere. Elected leaders and state agencies have to embrace the same conclusion, that it is time to zealously root out wasteful spending, while circling the wagons around schools and a few other paramount priorities.

On the tax front, the new polling suggests considerable support for dedicating 2 percent of income tax kicker funds to K-12 education — particularly a rainy day fund to see schools past budget crises like the one they currently face. Beyond this, a business tax hike with strict links to education might just stand a chance.

Voters feel they have been burned too many times. State leaders must commit to governing in accordance with the wise words of that favorite primary school role model, Dr. Seuss' Horton: "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful one hundred percent." Promise only what you can reasonably achieve, tax only enough to achieve it, and then rigorously keep your promises.

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

When the Irish invaded Canada

W e let these people into our country, and what did we get but an epidemic of cholera and criminals. They filled the jails and mental hospitals, the orphanages and poor houses. More than half of those arrested in New York City, just before the Civil War, were Irish.

"Scratch a convict or a pauper, and the chances are you tickle the skin of an Irish Catholic," *The Chicago Post* wrote in the 1850s. The Irish gangs of New York — the Forty Thieves, the Roach Guards, the Plug Uglies — terrorized a big part of the city.

These immigrants even had the gall to raise their own army and invade a neighboring territory. On the first day of June 1866, a thousand armed Irishmen crossed into Canada, intending to hold key locations hostage until England loosened its iron grip on the little island nation across the Atlantic.

As of this moment, an estimated 50,000 undocumented Irish are living in the shadows of our country. Will Donald Trump's deportation police eventually get around to them?

On this St. Patrick's Day, at a time when too many Americans want to close the door to the wretched and rejected, a time when some politicians and pundits with Irish surnames suffer from Irish historical amnesia, it's worth recalling a few inconvenient facts.

As any deep dive into Irish-America, the diaspora of nearly 35 million citizens, will reveal, it wasn't all blamey and bagpipes for these exiles. My father's ancestors fled a famine that killed 1 million people and forced another 1.5 million onto disease-ridden ships to live in squalor in a strange land.

Could these clannish, strange-sounding, ragged people ever make America great? Not to some in power today. Steve King, the Iowa representative whose words are hailed by Klan sympathizers and neo-Nazis, was channeling the ghosts of the anti-Irish Know-Nothing Party when he spoke about the Americans who don't belong.

Civilization, he said, was about the right kind of demographics and culture: "We can't restore our civilization with somebody else's babies." Last year, in trying to block Harriet Tubman's visage from appearing on the \$20 bill, he said a similar thing. Putting a former slave on American currency, he said, was an attempt to "upset this society and this civilization."

But civilization is not a people. It's not a race. It's a process. A refinement from tribal hatreds and primitive fears to common bonds. Certainly, much of American civilization was built on the backs of human property. The war

fought over that original sin, and the hundred years of struggle afterward to grant full citizenship to the formerly enslaved, is the process — that upward arc that Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about.

Count me as a proud Celt, and a Europhile, a lover of everything from tiny French villages to the Gothic vastness of a thousand-year-old cathedral to the ruins of Greek theaters on Sicilian slopes. Of course, that same Europe

gave us religious wars that killed 3 million in the 16th century, and up to 8 million in the 17th. And what savagery from any other civilization can match the Holocaust, the slaughter of 6 million Jews by the blue-eyed and the blond?

The Irish were once hailed for saving civilization, after monks and scribes maintained

the rich record of Greek, Latin and Christian writers that was being destroyed elsewhere in Europe. By the time they'd clustered, poor and unwanted on American shores, a prominent writer, George C. Foster, said their New York community was "the very rotting skeleton of city civilization."

The Mexicans and refugees from Muslim countries targeted by Trump commit fewer crimes than Americans born here, and certainly fewer as a percentage than the immigrant Irish did. Imagine what Sean Hannity would say if Mexicans burned down much of New York City, as the Irish did in 1863, in what may have been the bloodiest riot in American history.

Those four days of carnage, spurred in part by the disproportionate number of Irish drafted to fight in the Civil War, was a spasm of racial hatred and mob violence at its worse. Blacks were hanged. Pro-Union Irish who tried to stop the rioters were pummeled. *The New York Times* used a Gatling gun to defend its headquarters.

This horrid episode was followed, just a few years later, by the Fenian Brotherhood raids into what was known as British North America. Their song was a call to arms:

"And we'll go and capture Canada,
For we've nothing else to do."

No ethnic group, and very few religions, are immune from violent madness. The Sunni versus Shiite savagery in so much of the world today was preceded by all the bloodshed between Protestants and Catholics in Europe.

We raise a glass on the saint's holiday for that part of civilization saved by the Irish, that part of civilization enriched by the Irish and that part of the Irish story that shows a path of redemption after no small amount of crimes.

Timothy Egan writes about the environment, the American West and politics.



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

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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.

YOUR VIEWS

Safety is top need in school bond

I write to urge you to support the current \$104 million bond proposal to include replacement of Rocky Heights and Highland Hills Elementary Schools along with expanding Hermiston High School.

The existing schools pose a unique challenge. The design and layout of the buildings make it easy access for intruders and put our children in harm's way. Each of the schools has at least 25 doors and give intruders access at multiple points, and unless there's security at each door it makes it extremely difficult to monitor and extremely dangerous for our loved ones.

How do you keep track of visitors and/or intruders? While visitors are supposed to sign in at the office, how do you keep track of those that would go directly to one of the rooms? It's next to impossible.

Our children, teachers, staff and administrators deserve to be in a safe learning environment. Endangering their lives because of

lack of financial resources is not something that we should gamble on. The security issue should not be left unanswered because we don't want to spend on the safety of our children. As a longtime community resident I am very concerned for the safety of our children.

To have new schools built where perhaps there can a place to be used for vetting all visitors before given access to proceed to enter the school would make it much safer for all students, faculty and approved visitors. While there are no absolutes or guarantees, we should try to ensure we have done all we can to significantly reduce risks.

Ultimately, the security issue exists because we haven't prioritized the safety of our loved ones. Unfortunately, schools are often overwhelmed with conflicting priorities such as lack of funds to provide the right number of teachers needed or books or curriculum, etc. However, how do we put a price on our children's lives?

Let's not be reactive in fixing this problem, let's be proactive! Let's

vote yes for the May 2017 School Bond. Vote yes for kids!

Eddie De La Cruz
Hermiston

Time to comment on get-out-the-cut plan

The Malheur National Forest has proposed the Camp Lick timber sale 10 miles northeast of John Day in the Upper Camp Creek, Lower Camp Creek and Lick Creek subwatersheds that drain into the Middle Fork John Day River.

Supervisor Steve Beverlin has announced he will amend two forest plan standards to allow more logging. Amendment 1 will eliminate 700 acres of existing, dedicated old growth. Amendment 2 will allow removal of old-growth trees greater than or equal to 21 Inches DBH (see page 44 of the Camp Lick draft EA).

Maintaining large old-growth trees is important. This is why the standards are in his forest plan to save them. Forest plans should be amended for good reason. Amending the plan to get-out-the-cut isn't

appropriate.

The comment period closes April 8. The EA is posted online and is available in hard copy by calling 541-575-3100.

Dick Artley
Grangeville, Idaho

Pendleton pot shop OK, but not there

Citizens of Pendleton, I ask for your help. I sat in the Pendleton Planning Commission meeting Thursday night that was full of concerned neighbors and watched an attorney from Portland, Oregon, make a plea for Mr. Thurman to open a marijuana shop on Tutuilla Road where I live. It broke my heart that it was approved by a few local people.

I have lived in Pendleton since 1962 and my children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren attend Pendleton schools, and I love my community. We have two new beautiful schools and now the Tutuilla area has become one of the fast growing

areas for young parents to have affordable housing. Our parks are used daily and children are everywhere. I have wonderful neighbors.

I am urging those who will make the final decision to drive out here and see the small lot where the marijuana shop would be operating. If Pendleton needs four marijuana shops then so be it; however, there are many other appropriate locations. Why should a large bus stop for small children have to move and all the middle school children that attend nearby have one more temptation at this curious tender age? We already have a huge traffic problem to add to this area. It just doesn't make sense.

I wish Mr. Thurman success in his business, however, this is not a good fit for this location. Please, Pendleton, let's come together to make our community a better place for our youth and continue our strides in developing a positive future for them. I ask for your support.

Jan Leonard
Pendleton