

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Trump ag budget cuts just the beginning of the story

The Trump administration has proposed a 21 percent cut in discretionary spending for the Department of Agriculture, and ag interests are grumbling.

We understand the concerns, but it's too soon in the process to get too excited.

Here are the facts.

The president's plan cuts \$4.7

billion from the current budget for non-entitlement programs that are implemented by appropriation bills rather than enshrined in permanent law. Trump's plan still allocates \$17.9 billion for these types of programs. (Our colleagues at Politico framed that figure as "just" \$17.9 billion, suggesting that it's not a significant amount of money.)

The Trump budget cuts money for rural water and wastewater infrastructure loans, would reduce county ag service offices, eliminate spending on ag statistics, and end the International Food for Education program.

None of the proposed cuts would impact spending on the so-called "mandatory" programs — the crop programs and welfare expenditures that make up \$130 billion of the USDA's current budget of \$155 billion.

We would not suggest that some of these proposed cuts could cause problems for farmers and ranchers. In many cases the statistics

produced by the USDA are the only independent market information available to producers and the public at large. Their loss would be a tragedy. Similarly, not having a local Farm Service office would be a hassle.

We emphasize the tenuous nature of the administration document because the Trump plan lacks much detail.

The traditional, full-budget document is said to be coming in May.

But more importantly, the Constitution gives the president absolutely no authority over producing the budget.

While the president can offer to Congress his suggestions for the next

spending plan, and we appreciate any president's considerable weight in influencing policy, it is the Congress that actually enacts the budget.

Presidents of all stripes have proposed cuts in USDA's budget, eliminating one program or another to help pay for their own spending priorities. Then the Senate and House ag committees step in, and individual members use their influence to sway their colleagues to save or expand favored programs.

While the president's budget proposals have to be given due weight, we've seen too many of these plans wither on the vine to get too excited now over Trump's allocations.

## The Trump budget cuts money for rural water and wastewater infrastructure loans, would reduce county ag service office and eliminate spending on ag statistics.

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.

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



## OTHER VIEWS

# What happened to who?

I first noticed it during the 2016 Republican presidential debates, which were crazy-making for so many reasons that I'm not sure how I zeroed in on this one. "Who" was being exiled from its rightful habitat. It was a linguistic bonobo: endangered, possibly en route to extinction.

Instead of saying "people who," Donald Trump said "people that." Marco Rubio followed suit. Even Jeb Bush, putatively the brainy one, was "that"-ing when he should have been "who"-ing, so I was cringing when I should have been oohing.

It's always a dangerous thing when politicians get near the English language: Run for the exits and cover the children's ears. But this bit of wreckage particularly bothered me.

This was who, a pronoun that acknowledges our humanity, our personhood, separating us from the flotsam and jetsam out there. We're supposed to refer to "the trash that" we took out or "the table that" we discovered at a flea market. We're not supposed to refer to "people that call my office" (Rubio) or "people that come with a legal visa and overstay" (Bush).

Or so I always assumed, but this nicety is clearly falling by the wayside, and I can't shake the feeling that its plunge is part of a larger story, a reflection of so much else that is going wrong in this warped world of ours.

Few of our politicians aspire to old-fashioned eloquence anymore. Fewer still attain it. Most can't manage basic grammatical coherence, and they're less likely to be punished for that than to be rewarded for it by voters who see it as a badge of their authenticity.

I see it less charitably and would have no problem with a spelling test as a presidential prerequisite, though maybe that's just my way of inventing a criterion that would have weeded out a certain real estate tycoon. You know, the one whose "unpresidential" ascent gave us a leader who says he is "honored" by his office, is not "bought and payed for," was once victim of a "tapp" on his phones, and is obviously unfamiliar with the face-saving virtues of autocorrect.

But then we're all plenty sloppy these days, pulled toward staccato bluntness by the teeny-tiny keypads on our smartphones



FRANK BRUNI  
Comment

and the 140-character limit on our tweets. We communicate in uppercase abbreviations (LOL, ICYMI, TTYL) and splenetic bursts, with such an epidemic of exclamation points that each has no more drama than a comma.

The deployment of "that" in lieu of "who" doesn't actually rate very high on the messiness meter. It's defensible, because while some usage and style guides — including *The New York Times* — call for "who" and "whom"

when people are involved, others say it's elective.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary blesses "that" in relation to people. So does the American Heritage dictionary, noting, "'That' has been used in this way for centuries."

It cites examples from the King James Bible and from no less a master of the English language than Shakespeare.

But dissatisfaction with "that" and disagreement about it persist. I traded emails with Mary Norris, the so-called comma queen at *The New Yorker*

magazine, who once ruled the grammatical roost there. She told me, without equivocation: "When it's a person the correct relative pronoun is 'who.' My suspicion is that people are afraid of saying 'who' when it should be 'whom' (or vice versa, which is way worse), so they sidestep the issue by using 'that.'"

Connie Eble, the resident grammar guru at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, told me that she'll shepherd students toward "who" and "whom" even though she acknowledges the historical and technical validity of "that."

And there was unmistakable sadness in her voice when she concurred with me that "that" is getting an ever heavier workout these days, saying, "The space that 'that' is occupying is growing and growing and growing." It's not a pronoun. It's the Blob.

And my fear is that there's a metaphor here: something about the age of automation, about the disappearing line between humans and machines.

The robots are coming. Maybe we're killing off "who" to avoid the pain of having them demand — and get — it.

Frank Bruni has been an Op-Ed columnist for *The New York Times* since 2011.

## It's dangerous when politicians get near the English language.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Firefighters respond to all emergencies

Of the 3,200 calls each year handled by the Pendleton Fire and Ambulance Department, 85 percent of these are ambulance calls. Many of us have called 911, have been in an accident, or relied in many other ways upon these essential services.

Our principal fire and emergency services are housed in a 58-year-old fire station that is in a poor location and would not pass its own building and fire inspection. The station was built for a time when fire equipment was much smaller and the station did not house female fire and emergency personnel. The station is too small to handle today's much larger equipment and to appropriately house the men and women who provide 24/7 services to Pendleton and a service area of 2,000 square miles.

Voting yes on the city bond measure will build a new fire and ambulance facility on a portion of the former Saint Anthony Hospital location. This will improve emergency response time, reduce operating expenses by \$50,000 per year, provide adequate room for personnel, equipment and training, and will pay for mandatory replacements of underfunded emergency equipment. The cost? A net increase of 14 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value in property tax, which is \$1.80/month based on the median home value in Pendleton.

Please vote yes for our public safety. Vote yes on Measure 30-124 on May 16.

Chuck Wood, Pendleton

### Congress should defend power to declare war

Unilaterally attacking a sovereign nation that did not first attack the U.S. is plainly unconstitutional and profoundly unwise. Congress must rescue the power to declare war from the office of the president and help the American people and world avoid increased bloodshed and other atrocities of war.

In 2013, the previous president declared his willingness to act against Syria. But Congress asserted its constitutionally given authority to declare war and instructed the president to first seek Congress's permission. It did this with a letter to the president signed by more than 140 members of Congress from both parties. In 2011, Obama had acted unilaterally in Libya to the dismay of Congress and many Americans.

Also in 2013, Trump tweeted that attacking Syria unilaterally was not only unconstitutional, but foolish. He did this repeatedly, and his words were right — then and now.

Obama never asked to intervene in Syria, because he knew Congress would not give him the authorization.

The American people were and still are tired of Middle East interventionism, and for good reasons: Iraq war — 4,491 U.S. lives lost, \$2 trillion total taxpayer cost. However, Obama complied with the constitutional Congressional demand and did not attack Syria.

Just last week, the current president did exactly what he

warned against not that long ago. He ordered a 59-missile strike on an military airbase inside of Syria, costing taxpayers over \$90 million, for obvious humanitarian reasons. He did not request permission, likely because he knew debate would be a quagmire in itself and would end in a rejection of his request.

Over the past 50 years, presidents have been increasingly willing to act unilaterally when it comes to military interventions. Constitutional experts, including legislators, executive lawyers, and judges, have identified a few ways in which unilateral action may be justified, even retroactively.

But attacking Syria when they did not first attack us and in the context of congressional demand that the president first seek their permission is plainly unconstitutional.

Trends aside, the Constitution places the power to declare war solely with Congress. If the American people are going to be expected to sacrifice lives and spend huge sums, then the representatives of the American people should be required to approve the action.

Rep. Walden, Sen. Wyden, and Sen. Merkley must re-assert Congress's constitutional authority and demand that the president abide by constitutional limitations on his office and not wage war without first asking Congress and receiving approval. Whether a congressman or president, refusal to carry out job duties justifies removal from office.

Will Perkinson  
Pendleton

### Rocky Heights a safer place if bond passes

Education is one of the most powerful investments you can make and I am urging you to make that investment here in Hermiston. Research shows that education paves the way for better health and employment, benefiting individuals and communities.

Once of my largest concerns is that some of our local school facilities are not the most conducive to learning.

Imagine trying to work in an office that is by turns blazing hot or freezing cold. I know from experience that adults will not tolerate this in the office environment, yet we expect our children to stay on task and learn in these conditions. I have had the opportunity to be in overheated classrooms at Rocky Heights on several occasions. Due to the outdated system at Rocky, there is no way to control for this. Each time I was relieved to leave after a short stay; the students and teachers are not so lucky.

Let's talk a little more about the Rocky Heights facility. I have observed garbage cans placed at strategic locations in various classrooms to catch water dripping from the ceiling.

The "quads" at Rocky feature partial walls and are configured in a way that makes it necessary for students, staff and visitors to traipse through one classroom to get to another.

Most of the other classrooms at Rocky have outside entrances such that visitors, while they are requested to do so, do not have to

actually pass through a main area before accessing classrooms. This compromises student safety as does the fact that students are left exposed as they travel from their classrooms to the cafeteria/gym, library or office.

Classroom doors remain locked during the day, and students and visitors much knock to enter. This is meant to increase safety, but the reality is that for most of the classrooms, it is hard to see who is knocking until you open the door.

Because the cafeteria and gym are one and the same at Rocky Heights, indoor physical activity opportunities are limited when recess is canceled due to inclement weather. The large student population also necessitates that one physical education class per day take place in a small, carpeted classroom. The importance of physical activity in the school setting should not be overlooked. Evidence shows that physical activity facilitates academic performance through enhanced student concentration and improved classroom behavior.

Today's students are our community leaders and decision makers of the future. I am willing to make an investment in our schools so that students have the opportunity to learn in environments that full academic potential while keeping them healthy and safe.

Please join me in voting yes for our students on May 16.

Angie Treadwell  
Hermiston