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OUR VIEW

Perdue is welcome, but late to the party

Sonny Perdue has been confirmed by the Senate as secretary of agriculture.

It's long past time. President Trump has not moved quickly enough on key appointments involved in timely issues important to farmers and ranchers.

The former Georgia governor was the last cabinet officer nominated by Trump, and didn't receive a hearing before the Senate ag committee until March 23.

"I think the president saved the best for last," Perdue quipped to senators during the hearing. The affable Perdue received the appropriate chuckle from the panel and gallery, but it was already apparent that the nominee was woefully late to the party.

Not only was he last invited to the cabinet table, Perdue had not been consulted on the Trump budget proposal, released that morning, that called for a 21 percent cut in the USDA's budget. Adding insult to injury, some programs favored by Perdue — organics and the farm-to-school programs, for example — received short shrift from the White House.

This was not the administration's finest hour in the minds of many in the ag community.

Perdue has a big stack on his desk, and he won't have a lot of help right away to move things along. None of the eight sub-cabinet positions — the deputy and under secretaries who manage various agencies within the department — have been appointed, let alone vetted. Those first few staff meetings are going to be lonely.

Also vacant are state-level executive director appointees who run the Farm Service Agency and Rural Development.

During his confirmation hearings, Perdue said he would like Congress to establish a separate sub-cabinet position within the USDA to deal with trade issues. That's an idea



Pablo Martinez Monsivais/Associated Press File
Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has much to do to catch up after taking office this week.

former Secretary Tom Vilsack had kicked around during his tenure but never put forward.

Sounds like a good idea. There's no overstating how important trade is to American farmers, particularly to producers here in the Pacific Northwest.

But here again Trump's actions have given producers pause.

During the campaign both Trump and Secretary Clinton spoke out against the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The president quickly took the United States out of the pact upon taking office, favoring instead stronger two-way deals with Pacific trading partners. He has also signaled a desire to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.

It's too early to tell if any of this will be good or bad for agriculture. It's all stymied because Robert Lighthizer, Trump's nominee to be U.S. Trade Representative — our country's chief trade negotiator — has been approved by the Senate Finance Committee but has not yet been scheduled for confirmation by the full Senate.

We would like to see the president move more quickly on issues vital to U.S. agriculture. Filling the vacancies at the USDA and making more progress on trade would be good first steps.

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

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Conserving riverside space good for Pendleton

I am constantly amazed by newspaper reporters and story writers. They write so much — so fast — and yet the number of errors is amazingly small. Not an easy accomplishment.

Thank you Antonio Sierra for your well-balanced story on the possible development of land for building residences below Northwest Seventh Street (April 22). There is one error I think I should address. Somehow, I was misquoted on an important fact. I am supposed to have said, "(This is) not for humanity because we don't know humanity, but for our kids." But those are not words that I would use, and it is the exact opposite of what is true.

When my husband and I first became interested in the future of the land on the north side of the river it was for personal reasons. We wanted to protect our own property. We did not want an apartment or condo to ruin our view of riverbank.

As I prepared to address the planning commission in February 2016, and then again in January of this year, I felt some research was in order and only then began to recognize what a valuable and truly precious feature this river is. I now realize it's about so much more than protecting our view.

What was, in the beginning, only a personal issue has now, indeed, become an issue that involves "humanity." It's not about me. It's about the future of the people

of Pendleton. Since we moved here in 1972 I've grown to love this town, and I want it to be the best it can be.

The potential development of the land in question will be addressed at the advisory committee for the Pendleton Development Commission this Thursday — May 4. The 4 p.m. meeting is open to the public and will be held at the city hall (upstairs from the library). If this is something that matters to you, please come to the meeting and, by your presence, show the development commission that we would like to see them change their plan to shoehorn more residences into the narrow strip of nature we now enjoy.

Peg Willis
Pendleton

Support Hermiston bond to keep from busting at seams

I am writing in favor of the current Hermiston school bond. All three of my children attended Hermiston schools through early 2000 and graduated from Hermiston High. The district has only continued to grow by leaps and bounds since their graduation.

Two schools my children attended have been torn down and rebuilt, which was desperately needed. I remember them being sent home one day from the old West Park building because the heating system was not working. The old Armand Larive was an interesting structure also, and they all attended class in modular classrooms even

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OTHER VIEWS

Lessons from 100 days of Trump

Here are a dozen things we have learned in President Donald Trump's first 100 days.

1. Trump has had the worst beginning of any president since, oh, perhaps William Henry Harrison (who died a month after his inauguration). Trump has had no legislative triumphs, and he has by far the lowest public approval of any new president in polling history. Large majorities say he is not honest, does not keep promises and does not care about ordinary people.

2. Trump distinguishes himself in one area: incompetence. The debacle of the travel ban was followed by the collapse of the Republican health care bill, and I doubt we'll ever see passage of a tax reform package, a health bill or even a major infrastructure spending bill. Trump has made no trips abroad (at this juncture, Barack Obama had visited nine countries), and he has fewer than half as many nominees confirmed for senior positions as Obama did at this point.

3. New presidents typically grow into the job, but Trump remains a bully and a charlatan. In my career, I've never known a national politician as mendacious, ill informed, bombastic and dangerous as Trump. His tweets are as immature as ever, and *The Washington Post* calculates that he has issued 452 false or misleading claims since assuming office, churning them out at a rate of more than one every six hours around the clock (no wonder he seems so busy!).

4. The opposition to Trump has been ineffective in reaching Trump voters, and he remains deeply popular with his base. Only 2 percent of Trump voters say they regret their choice in November, and an ABC/Washington Post poll suggested that if 2016 voters filled out their ballots today, Trump would be elected by the popular vote as well as by the electoral vote. Even more people say that the Democratic Party is out of touch with ordinary voters than say the same of the Republican Party. Trump's popularity among Republicans means that the liberal aim of removing Trump by impeachment or the 25th Amendment is probably fantasy — and all this should prompt some hard reflection among progressives.

5. Trump systematically betrays his supporters. Elected in part on working-class anger at elites, he keeps proposing giant tax cuts for the rich financed by cutting health care for the needy, and his tax "plan" would in effect borrow from China to reward billionaires like himself. His "deregulation" includes letting chemical companies peddle an insecticide, chlorpyrifos, linked to brain damage in children.

6. Trump has built a colossal swamp in Washington, hiring lobbyists to craft policies governing the very companies that previously paid them. To cover up abuses, the White House issues secret waivers of its own ethics



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

rules! The denizens of this swamp are also like nothing previously seen in the White House: One counterterrorism aide, Sebastian Gorka, founded an extremist political party in Hungary and allegedly has ties (which he denies) to a Nazi-allied group there.

7. Bless the American people: Scapegoating and bigotry carry a political price. Trump has demonized some of the most vulnerable people — refugees and unauthorized immigrants — but large majorities of Americans

disapprove of his policies on immigration (57 percent to 41 percent, according a CNN poll).

8. After initially tussling with allies like Australia and Mexico, and apparently refusing

to shake Angela Merkel's hand for a photo, Trump has partially adapted to reality on foreign policy, abandoning his positions on two Chinas, on China's currency and on the Iran nuclear program. He has

replaced an awful national security adviser (Michael Flynn) with a good one (H.R. McMaster) and now has a respectable national security team.

9. Perhaps the greatest single risk of a Trump presidency is what he calls a "major, major conflict" erupting on the Korean Peninsula. I don't think this is likely, but it would be cataclysmic. The problem is that Trump's existing policy won't succeed in getting North Korea to give up its nuclear stockpile — and one can't help worrying when two inexperienced and impulsive leaders face off.

10. Democrats should be careful to avoid Trump Derangement Syndrome. A survey of Dartmouth students found that 45 percent of Democrats would be uncomfortable with a roommate of opposite political views, compared with only 12 percent of Republicans. Meanwhile, the passions to block conservative speakers at Middlebury and the University of California, Berkeley, should also give us pause: Liberalism mustn't be illiberal.

11. Let's avoid the temptation to chase the latest shiny thing. Focus on what's truly important: health, tax and housing policy, the allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin, the efforts to undermine women's health programs, and the effort to slash foreign aid just as 20 million people face possible famine.

12. The Republic stands. Checks and balances have constrained Trump, courts have blocked his travel ban, journalists have provided oversight, and the public has hounded members of Congress. Alarm that the U.S. might slip into a fascist dictatorship has diminished — but it's a long three years and nine months still ahead of us.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. *S* columnist for *The New York Times* since 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

YOUR VIEWS

back then.

Unfortunately in today's world using modular classrooms has become unsafe and puts the students and teachers in those buildings at more risk.

Currently there are 34 modular classrooms in use across our elementary campuses. At our district's rate of growth, it is anticipated that 56 modular classrooms could be needed by 2023. The district is literally busting at the seams.

When thinking how to vote on this bond, consider the future and safety of this community and our children. We want to provide enough safe space to be a good learning environment and promote giving back to the community like so many graduates have.

This community has been so supportive of growth in the schools in the past and I hope that continues with this bond. Please vote yes on the upcoming school bond.

Vicki Horneck
Irrigon

Walden's actions on health care critical to the nation

I urge Congressman Greg Walden to reject the latest extreme proposal in Congress that would eliminate protections for people with pre-existing conditions, as well as undermine the guaranteed health benefits that insurance companies should provide.

This new proposal would allow insurance

companies to discriminate against women, and charge sky-high prices for insurance, simply because a woman had a pre-existing condition. That pre-existing condition could be anything from being pregnant to being a domestic violence survivor.

Without these protections, one study showed that a woman who was previously pregnant could be charged more than \$17,000 a year for coverage. That is an outrage.

Congress is also proposing to eliminate the essential health benefits coverage standards, which means that insurance companies would no longer have to cover things like maternity care, prescription drugs and mental health. This would disproportionately affect women. For instance, approximately 13 million women could stand to lose maternity coverage and women are 40 percent more likely than men to have mental health needs.

That is not real insurance. And that is not what Walden promised.

The extreme bill also blocks patients from getting preventive care, like birth control and cancer screenings, from Planned Parenthood health centers. Planned Parenthood serves a critical role in our communities here in Oregon, and losing access would cause a healthcare disaster.

It is imperative that Walden oppose this latest proposal in Congress. It is a matter of life and death.

Constance L. George
Umatilla