

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW



Submitted Photo

Gov. Tom McCall in front of Surfsand Motel at Cannon Beach in 1967.

Beach Bill a reminder for stewardship

Saturday marked a momentous day in state history. It was on that day 50 years ago in 1967 — in a publicity stunt — that then-Gov. Tom McCall landed in a helicopter in Cannon Beach to declare simply that Oregon needed to keep its beaches open.

McCall's stunt led to passage of the Beach Bill, the landmark legislation that established public ownership of the Oregon Coast.

We should all be glad he did, and for the foresight of those who passed it. We should remember that in many other coastal states, portions of beautiful beaches are privately owned with "No Trespassing" signs and no public access.

McCall's actions fueled public support for the bill, which closed a loophole in well-intentioned 1913 legislation that declared Oregon beaches were public highways and guaranteed public access to nearly all of the state's 363 miles of coastline. The 1913 law, though, only protected the "wet sands"

between high and low tides of the beach as being publicly owned.

Controversy arose in 1966 when Bill Hay, the owner of the Surfside Motel in Cannon Beach, roped off a section of the beach on dry sand exclusively for motel guests. Since the 1913 legislation only protected wet sands, the Beach Bill was introduced to guarantee dry-sand areas would always be publicly accessible as well.

The Beach Bill nearly died in legislative committee, but passed in June 1967. McCall signed it into law a month later, ensuring "free and uninterrupted use of the beaches" between the low-water mark and the vegetation line.

Our beaches, forests, plains and mountains are what makes Oregon unique. The state has a history of putting a high priority on protecting them for public use, and as summer arrives we're glad to have so much unfettered access to the natural beauty.

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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.

YOUR VIEWS

Future looks bright

The county commissioners' office forecasts a bright future for Umatilla County. Four new data centers at an estimated \$500 million apiece add significant growth potential to the Hermiston area while the driving force for economic development in Pendleton appears to be tied to the restoration of the Rivoli Theater.

With the closing of JC Penney, the city of Pendleton spearheaded by the Pendleton Development Commission and the Pendleton Downtown Association, now flush with city cash, have the golden opportunity to revise their food hub plan. Rather than use valuable shovel-ready industrial property, establishing a new professional soup kitchen on downtown Main Street would attract some much-needed diversity in the overall customer base that the city is desperately seeking.

Meanwhile the contractor for Pendleton Heights continues to pressure the city council into a questionable deal to permit the transfer of money from his left pocket to his right so he

can get a loan to refill that left pocket. He mentioned something about the city living up to its half of the partnership. Is he really part owner of City Hall now? It sounds to me like he just needs bigger pants with more pockets.

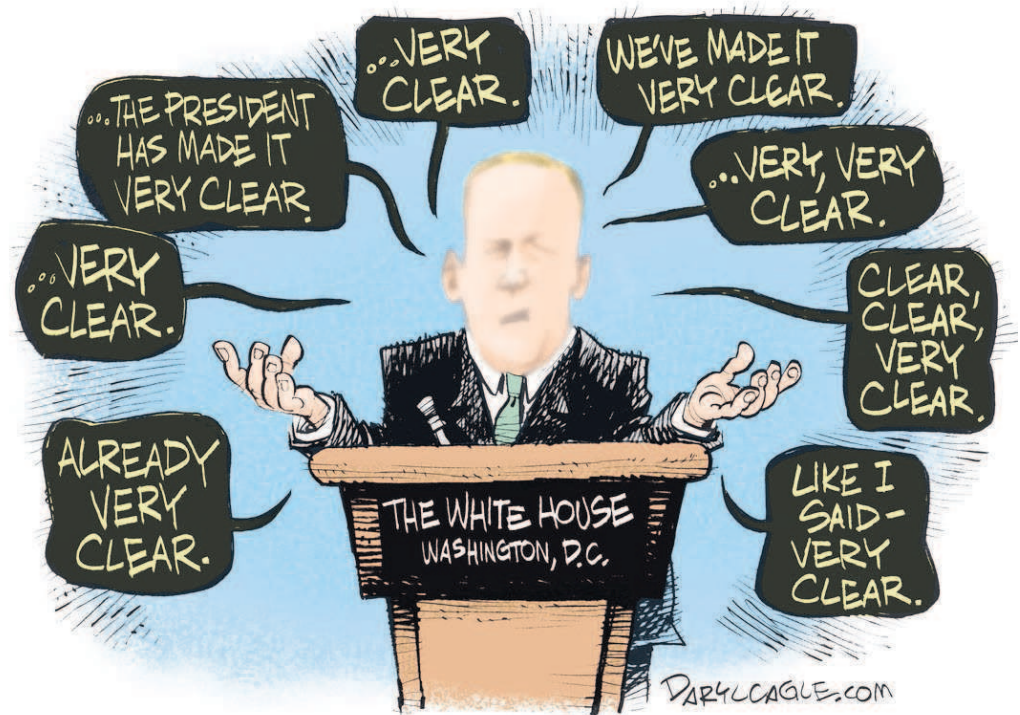
It's budget time again at City Hall and a quick read, if that's even possible, revealed an interesting fact. Though PP&L pays the city \$1.1 million, yes that's million, a year for the privilege of providing our electrical and street light service and maintenance, the city is budgeting \$190,000 to pay the electric bill to operate those street lights. Rather than use the franchise fee money, the bill is paid from the street repair fund. Didn't Public Works just ask for an additional \$100,000 or so because of the poor condition of the streets because of the rough winter? It's no wonder our streets are in such sad shape.

Just a bit of free advice, if you ever get a chance to take a ride on a B-25, it's well worth it. Well, that's the latest news in a nutshell, happy trails.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

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.



OTHER VIEWS

Is Trump obstructing justice?

When George Washington was preparing to take office, everybody wondered what to call him. Senators proposed lofty titles like "Illustrious Highness" and "Sacred Majesty."

But Washington expressed irritation at such fawning, so today we are led by a modest "Mr. President." Later, Washington surrendered office after two terms, underscoring that institutions prevail over personalities and that, in the words of biographer Ron Chernow, "the president was merely the servant of the people."

That primacy of our country's institutions over even the greatest of leaders has been a decisive thread in American history, and it's one reason President Donald Trump is so unnerving. His firing of James Comey can be seen as simply one element of a systematic campaign to undermine the rule of law and democratic norms.

The paradox is that Trump purports to be (like Richard Nixon) a law-and-order president. His administration has ordered a harsh crackdown on drug offenders, when we should be scaling up addiction treatment instead. Trump is focusing on chimerical fraud by noncitizen voters, even as he impinges on an investigation into what could be a monumental electoral fraud by Vladimir Putin. He favors tough law and order for the little guy.

Comey took the investigation into possible collusion between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign seriously enough that for his last three weeks leading the FBI he was getting daily updates, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. The new acting director of the FBI confirms that the inquiry is "highly significant."

For months, as I've reported on the multiple investigations into Trump-Russia connections, I've heard that the FBI investigation is by far the most important one, incomparably ahead of the congressional inquiries. I then usually asked: So will Trump fire Comey? And the response would be: Hard to imagine. The uproar would be staggering. Even Republicans would never stand for that.

Alas, my contacts underestimated the myopic partisanship of too many Republicans. Sen. Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican, spoke for many of his colleagues when he scoffed at the furor by saying, "Suck it up and move on."

This goes way beyond Comey. When judges block presidential orders, Trump denounces the courts. When the opposition criticizes him, Trump savages individual Democrats. When journalists embarrass him, Trump threatens to tighten libel laws and describes the press as "the enemy of the people."

Trump has also challenged and evaded the ethics rules that traditionally constrain administration officials. He has breached the four-decade norm that presidential candidates release their taxes. And — how else to put this? — he has waged war on truth. These days, any relationship between White House statements and accuracy seems coincidental.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

Patterns emerge. Trump also ousted Preet Bharara, a U.S. attorney who infuriated Moscow and investigated Tom Price, Trump's secretary of health and human services. Likewise, Trump fired Sally Yates, the acting attorney general, after she warned the White House that Michael Flynn could be blackmailed over his lies about Russian contacts.

In short, Trump challenges the legitimacy of checks on his governance, bullies critics and obfuscates everything. Trump reminds me less of past American presidents than of the "big men" rulers I covered in Asia and Africa, who saw laws simply as instruments with which to punish rivals.

It's reported that Trump sought a pledge of loyalty from Comey. That is what kings seek; the failure to provide one got Thomas More beheaded. But in a nation of laws, we must be loyal to laws, norms and institutions, not to a passing autocrat.

Trump acknowledges that he was frustrated by the Russia investigation and that it was a factor in firing Comey.

This may not meet the legal test for obstruction of justice, but step back and you see that Trump's entire pattern of behavior is obstruction of the rule of law and democratic norms.

Earlier this year I quoted a presidential historian as saying that "there's a smell of treason in the air," and it's essential that we have a thorough investigation to find out what happened. With Senate Republicans blocking an independent commission, that means that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein must choose an independent special counsel to probe Russian interference in our election.

George Washington warned that we need checks on leaders because of the "love of power and the proneness to abuse it." This prophecy was tested during Watergate, and as a teenager then I watched Republicans like Howard Baker, Lowell Weicker, Elliot Richardson and William Ruckelshaus heroically stand up for their country rather than for a corrupt president of their own party. Partly because of them, our institutions triumphed.

The passion for truth over politics was then periodically expressed in a Latin phrase: fiat justitia, ruat caelum. Let justice be done, though the heavens fall.

Now that principle is tested again, and so are we, all of us — politicians, journalists, judges and citizens.

In particular, this is the moment of truth for GOP moderates like Sens. Susan Collins, Jeff Flake and Bob Corker, who may hold decisive power. Will they align with George Washington's vision of presidents as servants of the people or with Trump's specter of His Sacred Majesty, the Big Man of America? Will they stand for justice, or for obstruction of it?

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

OTHER VIEWS

Too much at stake to pass drug bill

The Bend Bulletin, May 13

It's easy to bash drug companies. When the consumer list price of something like Mylan's EpiPen rises to \$609 from \$94 in just seven years, bashing comes easily.

But one solution proposed to the Oregon House of Representatives seems almost guaranteed to make the problem worse, the sponsors' good intentions notwithstanding. While having government decide what's a reasonable price for a drug might sound like a good idea, it's one more likely to go wrong than not.

Prescription drugs make up about 9.8 percent of what the nation spent on drugs as of 2014, just as they did in 1960, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control.

If House Bill 2387 is approved, the state will set up something called the Oregon Premium Protection Program, which would require manufacturers of expensive drugs or those with rapidly rising prices to justify their prices. Then, the state would demand rebates based on what prices were paid in a

select group of other countries. Rebates would go to the insurers, and the bill would bar the benefits boards of public employee unions from collecting any out-of-pocket costs from workers for drugs deemed to be too expensive.

Oregon makes up only about 1.2 percent of the U.S. population, making it easy for a manufacturer to refuse to sell here. The group of nations against which Oregon prices would be measured do pay less for drugs than we do. But each one bargains for the country as a whole, and no one in the U.S., much less Oregon, does that. Locally, there's this: Central Oregon has a growing bioscience sector that could be hurt by the punitive nature of the measure.

Testimony at a public hearing on the bill made all those points, and while unions and insurance companies favored it, family doctors, ordinary citizens, AIDS activists and representatives of an ovarian cancer foundation, among others, all said the bill would do more harm than good. There's too much at stake not to take opponents' fears seriously. HB 2387 should be defeated.