

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# The big one or a little one

There is a gambler's chance that in the next half century the Pacific Northwest will suffer the largest-scale natural disaster in North American history.

Scientists put the odds between 20-30 percent that the "big one" will shake sometime in the next 50 years — about the same odds Donald Trump was given to win the presidency and the Cubs were given to win the World Series in 2016. In other words, within the realm of possibility.

The Cascadia subduction zone shifts violently deep inside the earth approximately every 500 years, but that's a very rough timeline. Scientists have based their odds-making on the fact that it has been 317 years since the last time the fault line shuddered.

Whenever it strikes, the earthquake will be the real deal — somewhere between 8.0 and 9.0 on the Richter scale, extending from northern California to British Columbia and shaking the ground for five minutes straight. It will also unleash a tsunami with no warning that will devastate the coast.

The disaster cannot be averted, but it can be addressed. A summit held last week in Pendleton was the first local effort to bring leaders together to talk about the potential earthquake and what we can do to prepare. Firefighters, police, pastors, educators, health care providers, business owners and others gathered to hear emergency planners from the state and federal government talk about the efforts being made now to expand an emergency playbook for such an occasion.

But while the government prepares for the worst on the west side of the state, we have an obligation to be ready out east, too. Things will be difficult here — supplies of food, fuel and electricity cut off for weeks to months — but everything to the west of Interstate 5 could well be "toast," according to FEMA regional director Kenneth Murphy in a well-circulated piece in *The New Yorker*. In these

scenarios, Eastern Oregon will be an afterthought.

The good news: We're kind of used to it. We're also well-versed in the art of survival and should take this opportunity to get even better. There are things we take for granted like clean water, cellphone connections and fuel in our gas tanks. But we should be mindful that these are not guarantees.

Another takeaway from the summit is that each person can play their part. From the household to the neighborhood to the small town, we will all be asked to contribute to a solution. It's something we have perhaps lost in an era of convenience, but if you think about the people you see every day who struggle to put food on the table in the best of circumstances, you'll understand the risk once the power goes out and resources are scrambling to deal with devastation elsewhere.

The city of Weston, one of the smallest in Umatilla County, is developing an emergency management plan. The Hermiston Safety Center is creating a store of food for not just employees but for their families as well. Local ham radio operators are reaching out to a younger generation to make sure the skills aren't lost.

There is better chance than not the earthquake will not hit in most of our lifetimes. But that does not let us off the hook.

Preparation, and passing those lessons on to our children, is as important as ever. Whether in the extreme case of Cascadia or in a lesser emergency, keeping calm and being able to assist others is imperative.

*If you're interested in learning more about the Cascadia subduction zone earthquake, how local agencies are preparing and what we could expect after the event, the East Oregonian published a series of articles in February and will turn it into an e-book available for download in the coming weeks.*

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

### Can Oregon legislators find compromise on transportation bill?

*The (Medford) Mail Tribune*

Lawmakers hashing out the details of a massive transportation package are divided over how large it should be, and whether voters would accept the tax increases necessary to pay for it. Taxes are never an easy sell, but if shippers, business interests and motorists can be brought on board and legislators agree to campaign for it, we believe Oregonians will go along.

Oregon lawmakers haven't passed a major transportation package since 2009, and nearly everyone agrees the state is overdue for another one. Bridges are crumbling, public transit districts need help, and freeway congestion in the Portland area costs shippers across the state time and money. But time is running out in this session, and bipartisan support is needed to enact the tax portions without referral to the voters.

Lawmakers had a deal in the 2015 session, but Republicans pulled their support over a clean fuels bill they said would increase gas prices on top of the gas-tax hike in the transportation bill. A last-minute, closed-door negotiation by the so-called "gang of eight" failed to craft a compromise. Democrats should be prepared to give ground on the fuel standards issue if they want this package to pass.

After the 2015 failure, lawmakers responded with a joint, bipartisan committee that has worked for more than a year, traveling the state to hear from voters and interest groups and holding hearings. The result, which has yet to be drafted into bill form, calls for

\$8.2 billion in projects over 20 years, paid for over 10.

Major elements of the plan include three big projects in the Portland area, fixing bottlenecks on Interstate 5, Interstate 205 and Oregon 217, paid for in part by tolls. Portland-area residents would pay more in taxes than other Oregonians.

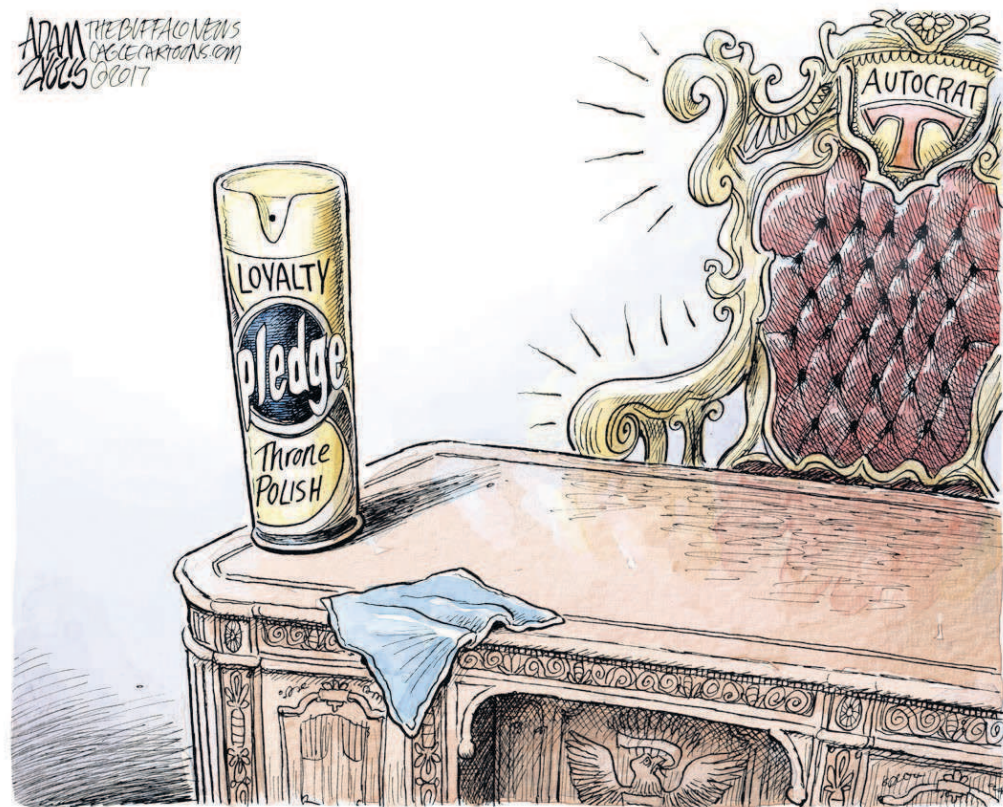
As currently envisioned, the package would be paid for with increases in the gas tax, phased in over 10 years. The first year would see a 6-cent increase, reaching 14 cents by the end of 10 years. The tax currently stands at 30 cents, and has increased only once in 20 years. In addition, every worker in Oregon would pay a 0.1 percent payroll tax, which would go to mass transit throughout the state. Oregonians also would see a 1 percent excise tax on new cars, a 4 percent tax on bicycles (excluding children's bikes) and higher auto registration fees.

Supporters want to pass those increases with the required 60 percent majority so the measure won't need voter approval. Of course, opponents may try to place a referendum on the ballot to overturn the new taxes — a possibility skeptical lawmakers have raised as the measure is being discussed.

Taking a piecemeal approach, as some lawmakers have suggested, might be easier to pass this year, but there is no guarantee future legislatures will stay the course. A 20-year package also allows local governments to plan their own improvements.

Oregon cannot afford to wait any longer to begin addressing its transportation needs.

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## OTHER VIEWS

### Help for the working class

The great new dividing line in American life is the four-year college degree. The line runs through virtually every part of society.

The pay gap between college graduates and everyone else has soared in recent years. The unemployment gap has, too. So have gaps in physical and social health. College graduates are living longer than they used to, getting divorced less and eating better. All of these trends are darker for non-graduates.

Then there is politics. Americans without a college degree are today's swing voters. White non-graduates shifted sharply to Donald Trump last year, relative to 2012, and black non-graduates affected the result by staying home in larger numbers. Both decisions — voting for Trump or not voting at all — stemmed in part from alienation.

In an alternate universe, Trump would devote his presidency to a conservative agenda that improved the lives of the people who elected him. Remember when he proclaimed, "I love the poorly educated"? In this universe, he sure has a funny way of showing his love. He is trying to take health insurance away from millions of Americans, while lavishing tax cuts on the affluent.

But his real-world disdain for the working class creates an opening for the Democratic Party.

Democrats have to find a way to win more working-class votes. (Yes, I'm using "working class" as a rough synonym for the two-thirds of adults without bachelor's degrees.) It's not just Trump. Republicans control the House, the Senate, 33 governor's offices and the legislature in 32 states.

Democrats need a comeback strategy, and the American working class needs an ally. The solution to both problems can be the same: a muscular agenda to lift up people without four-year college degrees.

It would have two main pillars. The first would be improving the lives of those who will never have those degrees — ensuring they can find meaningful, well-paying work and afford health care, child care and retirement. A stable middle-class life should be possible without a bachelor's degree.

The second would be helping more people earn degrees and enjoy their benefits. There is something about college — the actual learning, as well as the required discipline and initiative — that seems to prepare people for adult success. Although two-year degrees bring benefits too, four-year degrees bring much larger ones.

On Tuesday, the Center for American Progress, an influential liberal group, is taking a first step toward creating a working-class agenda. It's calling for a "Marshall Plan for



DAVID  
LEONHARDT  
Comment

America," echoing the program that rebuilt postwar Europe. "Progressives have not done enough about job conditions and the dignity of work for people who don't go to college," says Neera Tanden, the center's president, who previously worked for Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The effort is in only its conceptual stages. But it's worth attention, both because of the center's history of influence on Democrats (including on much of the Obama agenda) and because this particular idea gets a few big things right.

It avoids some elitist strains in today's liberal politics. One of those strains dismisses the white working class as irredeemably racist. In truth, many of these voters backed progressive ideas before and are open to

### A muscular agenda to lift up people without four-year college degrees is needed.

doing so again. Anyway, Democrats don't have much of a choice. "You can't construct a solid majority coalition for Democrats unless you reach more of those voters," the political scientist Ruy Teixeira says.

Even as the new effort avoids some excesses of the left, it also steers clear of the fallacy that out-of-power political parties must tack toward mushy moderation.

And I say that as a self-identifying mushy moderate on many issues. Sometimes, though, the best policy solution, not to mention the best way to win votes, is on one side of the political spectrum. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan were among the leaders who grasped this.

This new plan is unabashedly left-leaning in its call for the government to help create millions of good-paying jobs. It uses the phrase "jobs guarantee" and would meet the guarantee by taking on many problems the private sector isn't solving: Crumbling roads and public transit. Patchy digital infrastructure. A shortage of good schools, child care, home-health-care workers and EMTs. All of this would cost billions — but also far less than Trump's reverse-Robin Hood agenda.

The fact is, the electorate has shown some surprising support lately for an activist, populist government. Minimum-wage increases keep passing, in blue states and red ones, and Trump won the Republican nomination while spouting big-government promises (which he's now violating).

Americans of all races who have been left behind in today's globalized, high-technology, high-inequality economy are angry, and they have reason to be. They deserve better. They want tangible solutions. Finding those solutions is the right thing to do, and it's the path back to power for Democrats.

David Leonhardt is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*.

## YOUR VIEWS

### God chose Trump — an answer to prayers — to lead country

I am disappointed that several months after the presidential election, a number of *East Oregonian* columnists are still attacking Donald Trump and trying to discredit his presidency. This constant ranting continues to emphasize their own misunderstanding of national issues and lack of appreciation toward voters who made conservative electoral choices.

Although most of the national media seem to remain galvanized in their hostility toward the president, they might do well to consider some of the reasons for his success in spite of their fierce opposition, which may itself have contributed to the success. If this is the case, I do not think that continual reiteration of the same tiresome charges is in their favor.

But though media persecution of Trump may have helped his vote total to some extent, there were more positive reasons for his success with voters. For some time government has seemed detached from the ordinary citizen, and potential voters have felt alienated from candidates who do not share their concerns. Along came Trump with numerous issues that appealed to a large portion of the electorate — issues such as jobs, national security, immigration, and health care — and suddenly the voters felt enfranchised.

Their confidence has been rewarded with an attempt by the new administration to enact meaningful changes quickly, even though hindered by constant political opposition.

A third reason for Trump's electoral win, probably the deciding factor, was his extensive support from Christian voters. Appalled by the erosion of religious freedom, evangelical Christians especially turned out for Trump in large numbers.

The key issue was an attempt to secure conservative Supreme Court justices, seen as a vital element in preserving religious freedom as a bastion against constantly encroaching national secularization; the fact that a position was currently open added to the urgency of the situation.

Much time was given to prayer for election outcomes. I, for one, spent hours praying both Monday and Tuesday of election week for large conservative voter turnout, especially in so-called battleground states.

The Bible declares that rulers are ordained by God. This does not mean that God always approves of what they do, but he uses them in accomplishing his purpose in history. Those who oppose God's purpose do so to their own peril. Perhaps President Trump, like Queen Esther of old, came to his position "for such a time as this."

Ron Ingle  
Hermiston