

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Building literal bridges across partisan divide

There is no reason that a large-scale transportation plan cannot be a bipartisan project. Republican and Democrat, urban and rural, bikers and truckers, 1 percenters and the rest of us — we all benefit from an efficient, safe and affordable transportation system.

Yet for years now, agreement on transportation and infrastructure work has been lacking on the state level here in Oregon, and for much longer than that on the federal level. It's an example of the partisan bickering that has come to dominate our political atmosphere. Politicians are worried more about who gets the credit and who gets the blame than solving a problem we all face equally.

The Oregon Legislature is trying to rise above that, attempting now in the latter days of this year's session to come up with the expansive transportation plan that has recently eluded them.

A similar type of bill was rounding third base and headed for home in 2015 when the road was pulled out from under it and it came crashing down. The now much-derided Columbia River Crossing had plenty to do with that bill's collapse.

But this year may be different. The \$8 billion plan remains under development, but it has gone through a much more stringent, public process than its predecessors. It's also a heck of a lot bigger than the \$343 million proposed in 2015. Those on both sides of the aisle, and nonpartisans who have been involved, say lessons were learned in the last go-round and those hurdles have been hopped.

A key cog of the transportation plan is upgrades in Portland. But in order to convince a majority of legislators — who do not represent Portland — they are touting the city's huge impact on the statewide economy.

Bob Russell, vice president of the Oregon Trucking Association, told the *EO* edit board that "transit time through Portland is just not reliable," and that negatively impacts every business in the state — and the region — who need to move goods through Oregon's largest city. In our neck of the woods, that includes the farmers and food processors, the ports of Morrow and Umatilla, manufacturers and middlemen.

So while solving Portland's woes at first seems to have limited impact

on our side of the state, that's not quite the case from a business and recreation standpoint. And another way to look at it: The smoother traffic moves in Portland, the less likely those Portlanders are to pick up stakes in the big city and head our way.

But the plan is more than just multi-millions for Multnomah County. Highway 97 would become a divided, improved highway that could handle major traffic if, God forbid, the Cascadia earthquake hits and renders I-5 unusable for a long period of time. Even if that doesn't happen, Highway 97 between Bend and the Columbia Gorge is as

dangerous a stretch of road as any in the state, and improving it will benefit Bend and many Central Oregon residents.

## The bill could fund salt storage facilities along I-84.

There's plenty of work planned even farther east. The bill could fund salt storage facilities along Interstate 84, from Idaho possibly

all the way to The Dalles. The state experimented with using salt on the always dangerous stretch of highway between Pendleton and La Grande last winter, and is willing to make the changeover. It will take millions of dollars, however, to site the storage facilities and make sure the salt there does not leech into the water table, which can cause environmental degradation.

There may be other benefits to the area: funding for rural airports such as Pendleton's, increased dollars for city and county road budgets, major construction projects in Hermiston and more.

And we always have our eye on the Interstate 82 bridge across the Columbia River at Umatilla, a quickly deteriorating roadway built in 1955 that a state report showed would not survive a large earthquake.

The political sausage-making factory is operating full tilt right now. And taxpayers will have to pay for whatever compromise is reached — legislators say funding for the plan would come from a combination of hikes in the gas tax and registration and license fees, tolls and new taxes on payroll and purchases of new vehicles and bicycles.

But, if done right, this is one issue that does not just benefit one political party, or one demographic, nor pushes one group forward while another falls behind.

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

STAR TRIBUNE  
SACK



# It's time to worry about health care in the Senate

While the rest of the country has been transfixed by Trumpian chaos, members of the Senate have spent the past two weeks talking about taking health insurance from millions of Americans.

There is an alarmingly large chance that they'll decide to do so. But if they do, they will almost certainly rely on a political sleight of hand to disguise their bill's damage. Understanding that sleight of hand — and calling attention to it — offers the best hope for defeating the bill.

The effort to take health insurance from the middle class and poor and funnel the savings into tax cuts for the rich is a little like mold. It grows best in the dark.

That's why Republican leaders in the House handled their bill as they did. They did not hold a single hearing, because they knew that attention would have been devastating.

Just imagine a hearing featuring the leaders of these groups, every one of which opposes the House bill: the American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American Hospital Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, American Lung Association, March of Dimes and AARP.

The House also passed its final bill without waiting for the Congressional Budget Office to estimate how many Americans would lose insurance. The CBO will release that analysis soon. There is no precedent, outside of wartime, for passing a bill this important in such haste.

After the House did, many observers assumed the bill was too flawed to have much chance in the Senate. Republican senators, aware of the bill's unpopularity, were careful to say publicly that they would start fresh. But the early signs suggest that Mitch McConnell and his Republican caucus are actually mimicking the House approach.

Think of it as the Upton strategy, and I'll explain the name in a minute.

It starts with avoiding public discussion. As Politico reported: "McConnell's strategy is to keep the debate within his conference for as long as possible. There will be no public hearings as a bill is drafted, according to several Republican senators and aides, and he's imploring senators not to leak."

The Democrats' process for passing the Affordable Care Act in 2008-10 was certainly not perfect. But it was radically more open than this process, including 44 hearings and other public events in the Senate alone. Republicans, by contrast, have invited select people to send feedback to an email address — [HealthReform@finance.senate.gov](mailto:HealthReform@finance.senate.gov) — no later than today. (I encourage you to send your



DAVID LEONHARDT  
Comment

own email!)

If secrecy is the first part of the strategy, distraction is the second. Eventually, before a vote is taken, the details of the Senate bill will become public, as they did in the House. And those details will include a long list of problems.

Here's where we get to the Upton maneuver. The House managed to pass its bill only after Fred Upton, R-Mich., offered a proposal purporting to fix one of the bill's highest-profile problems, related to pre-existing conditions.

Never mind that the proposal was only a superficial improvement. Never mind that the full bill was still opposed by conservative, moderate and liberal health care experts. Upton's proposal allowed House members to claim they had "fixed" their bill. It gave them an excuse to vote yes.

## House Republicans did not hold a single hearing, because they knew that attention would have been devastating.

Watch for similar moving of the goal posts in the Senate. There, Republican leaders are likely to brag about the ways they have improved the House bill or early versions of their own bill. They will also point to problems in insurance markets, some of which President Donald Trump is deliberately creating, as reason to do something.

But these are the wrong standards. The right standard is whether the bill improves the health care system. A bill that takes away health insurance from 15 million, 10 million or 1 million Americans — rather than the 20 million or so of the House bill — still deserves defeat.

The final part of the strategy will be arm-twisting. If victory is in sight, McConnell will invoke party loyalty to cajole his colleagues, whatever specific concerns some may have. Being the Republican who brought down Trumpcare wouldn't be fun.

So the current period is important. It's a time for all those groups that oppose the bill, and for the engaged progressive base, to put senators on notice. They shouldn't be tinkering around the edges of a bill that would hurt the middle class and the poor, the sick and elderly, children and the disabled. They won't get credit for making it marginally less cruel.

A small group of Senate Republicans has shown signs of being persuadable, and only three are likely needed to stop a bill. The group includes Lamar Alexander, Shelley Moore Capito, Bill Cassidy, Susan Collins, Dean Heller, Lisa Murkowski and Rob Portman.

They should hear a loud message that Americans aren't in favor of taking health insurance from their fellow citizens. The senators work for those citizens, not for Mitch McConnell, Paul Ryan and Donald Trump.

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

## YOUR VIEWS

### Sherman Co. weed problem about to get worse for farms

A serious misunderstanding is circulating concerning Azure Farms' weed problem. It is that they would lose organic status on crops currently growing if the county was to make an application of synthetic pesticides. This is not true.

The USDA allows for emergency weed control with synthetic pesticides when the state or county deems it necessary. And unless the fields at Azure Farms are so infested with weeds as to render them un-harvestable, this weed control will only occur outside of the crop-growing areas, in buffers and along fence lines. Should it prove necessary for the county to spray an entire field, including the standing crop, then there would have been little point in harvesting that crop.

In either case, the field itself would not lose its certification.

As for the plan put forth by the owners of Azure Farms, the only question is, why haven't they been implementing this plan all along? Organic weed control costs anywhere from 10 to 100 times as expensive as conventional or "chemical" weed control,

which is why farmers moved away from the old ways to the new ways, the same way you moved from a manual typewriter to an iPhone. And the single most important factor in determining how much an organic farmer will spend depends on how out-of-control the weeds have become.

As such, I predict that the owners of Azure Farms, contrary to their professed Biblical beliefs, will quickly grow tired and broke trying to deal with their runaway weed problem. I could be wrong. But any organic farmer who is so demonstrably delinquent in managing weeds over the years clearly has no ability to deal with them once they've become a problem for neighboring farms.

Things are about to go from bad to worse for the neighbors of Azure Farms.

Mischa Popoff,  
former USDA contract organic inspector  
Royse City, Texas

### Large majority of scientists agree on global warming

Do most scientists believe in global warming? I wish I could say no. Nothing would make me happier, and I mean that. Unfortunately, most scientists do believe in

global warming. Beyond that, they believe that it's caused by human activity. We can't even escape by saying "It isn't our fault! It's a natural weather cycle!"

A few facts: A scientist named John Cook in Australia led a long list of scientists in reviewing about 12,000 scientific articles on global warming that were published between 1991 and 2011.

Many of the authors of these papers expressed an opinion on global warming, although some just presented information. Of those expressing an opinion, over 97 percent agreed that humans are causing the problem.

A report on the review of these articles was published in 2013. At that time, about 57 percent of the American public either disagreed or were not aware that scientists overwhelmingly agree that the earth is

warming due to human activity.

The concept of global warming can be overwhelming and anxiety producing. It feels like a problem without a solution.

But there are things we can do. Paul Hawken's new book explains 80 solutions, some of which are already being implemented around the world.

The number one solution cited by Mr. Hawken is "refrigerant management." Refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, supermarket cases, etc., release gases that warm the atmosphere. Their capacity to do harm is 1,000 to 9,000 times greater than carbon dioxide. An amendment to the Montreal Protocol will begin phasing out HFCs in 2019. So: A problem was identified and a plan was made to solve it. This is how the world should work.

Paula Surmann  
Sisters

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