

# EAST OREGONIAN

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**KATHRYN B. BROWN**  
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## OUR VIEW

# Hermiston, Washington

## School district smart to join out-of-state sports league

Hermiston athletics is heading north, across the state line to become the only Oregon school in the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association.

Local prep sports fans and athletes do lose something with the decision — nostalgia, old rivalries, Hermiston's ability to play for an Oregon state championship. But we gain much more — fair competition for a school that has outgrown its neighbors, less travel time and fewer missed classes for student athletes and their coaches, more money in the school's athletics budget and more high profile events in Hermiston against big institutions from across the river.

In the past, we've encouraged the thought of Hermiston joining the Mid-Columbia Conference, which consists of schools in the Tri-Cities and Walla Walla, but it always felt like a longshot. Getting both the OSSA and WIAA to agree to a plan — however reasonable — was never a sure thing for two organizations hyper-aware of tradition and not looking to upset the applecart.

But as the OSAA continues to fine-tune its classification system, it became clear that Hermiston didn't fit in well in whatever system they settled on. Both the OSAA and WIAA deserve credit for seeing the

better choice, albeit one outside-the-box of state borders.

The arrangement sets up Hermiston for big games in every sport with nearby, right-sized competition. It's good for the city to have some regional promotion and welcome out-of-state visitors, who should be aware of the growing city that may soon be their equal. Hermiston's excellent athletic facilities are sure to impress, and the extra attention afforded them may help bring in even more regional events to a community known for accommodating such events.

And at the same time, we do hope that rivalry games with local schools — most notably Pendleton — continue in the future. Umatilla County wouldn't be the same without the War on 84.

So no, the city of the Bulldogs is not going to become Hermiston, Washington, any time soon. Keep your grubby Starbucks-and-plutonium hands off our watermelons, Washingtonians.

Sports fans there will soon learn that in Eastern Oregon we spend a lot of time, energy and enthusiasm on high school sports. Giving each student athlete the best opportunity to work on their talents — while keeping the "student" in front of the "athlete" — should remain the goal.

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

### Is this education budget for real?

The Oregonian/OregonLive

The K-12 education budget approved by the Legislature's Joint Ways and Means education subcommittee Thursday would — in functional states, at least — seem like great news. The committee is recommending allocating at least \$8.2 billion in general fund and lottery dollars for the coming biennium to Oregon's school districts — an 11 percent increase over the current biennium's allocation.

Not in Oregon, however. That enviable increase, fueled by a booming economy that's pouring record amounts of money into state coffers, still won't be big enough to stave off teacher layoffs and cuts across school districts due to rising employee health-care costs and pension obligations. And while Democrats on the subcommittee bemoaned large class sizes and short school years, they promptly approved the budget, arguably taking away some of the momentum for breaking Oregon's cycle of shortchanging students.

This is the price of legislators' inaction in dealing with Oregon's runaway spending problem. Despite facing a \$1.4 billion budget deficit, lawmakers have yet to show the public a plan for restructuring how much public employers pay for benefits that threaten to gobble up bigger and bigger chunks of taxpayer dollars. While there's talk of cost-containment proposals coming next week, time is getting short for the thorough analysis and evaluation that must take place. With just over a month left in the session, Democrats — who control the House, the Senate and the governor's office — have a narrowing window to show just how genuine their commitment is to students and Oregonians as a whole.

"Kicking the can down the road is no longer an option," Jim Green, executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association, told *The Oregonian/OregonLive* Editorial Board. Health care and pension contributions are only slated to soar in future biennia. "We need leadership."

Unfortunately, the leadership we're seeing is in the form of how to deflect criticism or shift the blame. Consider Thursday's subcommittee meeting.

Sen. Rod Monroe, D-Portland, who co-chairs the Ways and Means education subcommittee with Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, reminded those at the meeting that each school district is governed by an elected school board that decides how money is spent. People, he advised, should go to their school boards to chime in on what they choose to fund. Except, as Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, pointed out, the state interferes with districts' authority when it comes to employee compensation, even preventing them from seeking alternatives to the generous and expensive state-run health plan for Oregon educators. She, as well as other Republicans on the committee, voted against the budget for failing to include cost-containment provisions.

Then, Smith Warner provided her own spin. The Portland Democrat decried that her own children will receive a year's less instruction than students in Washington by the time they graduate. She shared her frustration of "having to patch together budgets year after year." And giving a nod to the strong economy that is expected to deliver \$1.3 billion more revenue in the 2017-2019 than in the current biennium, she then leaps to this conclusion: "Here, in a year where our economy continues to go great guns, I think what this all demonstrates is we have a broken revenue structure."

How about broken logic? The National Education Association says Oregon's education spending per student exceeds the national average, yet our graduation rates are third worst. The state spends about \$2,000 more per student than Washington does on its students. So the question should be: How do we use that money differently so that students get the education Oregonians are paying for?

Such denial of Oregon's unsustainable spending only turns Oregonians against all taxation proposals, including ideas that deserve consideration. That's regrettable especially because Smith Warner and other Democrats have a legitimate point: Oregonians do need new tax measures that ease the burden on individuals, increase revenue from businesses and provide more stability than the volatile ups and downs driven by Oregon's overreliance on personal income taxes.



## OTHER VIEWS

### Time to govern, Republicans

On Nov. 9, 2016, in the stunned afterglow of Republicans taking the White House and holding both chambers of Congress, former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor put it plainly:

"It is now time for Republicans to govern," he said on CNBC. "There'll be no excuses now. And I think the number one focus will be repeal and replacement of Obamacare. I think that's where they'll go first."

Cantor was right, and it's a reminder Republicans need to hear today, as they return from recess with the first six months of the Trump presidency almost over.

Members of the GOP majorities need to realize that they have a job to do right now. Contrary to what many politicians seem to believe, that job is not, first and foremost, to get re-elected. Under President Barack Obama, Republican leaders had an effective formula for that. They would hold message votes, pass bills such as the repeal of Obamacare that had no chance of becoming law, avoid forcing members to take difficult votes, and suppress dissent and display unity by curtailing the committee process and the tradition of floor amendments.

That won't work anymore. There is now no easy formula for Republicans to win elections. The job of Republicans, now that voters have handed them control of the federal government, is to govern.

Specifically, they must repeal Obamacare and make sure that its replacement is reasonable, responsible and workable. Then voters will support it. Second, Republicans need to reform the complex, distorting federal tax code, for both individuals and corporations, rekindling economic growth and, again, winning voter support.

Neither of these tasks will be easy. Both will, indeed, be very difficult, and will meet fierce opposition. But important jobs are often hard, and the nation sent the current crop of lawmakers to Capitol Hill to do this one.

The promise to repeal Obamacare is the central pillar of Republican control of government. Its passage in 2010 guaranteed the GOP takeover of the House. Republicans lost in 2012 when they nominated Mitt Romney, who had created Obamacare's predecessor in Massachusetts. Running on Obamacare repeal won the Senate in 2014. Trump won the White House in 2016 promising grandiosely to repeal the bill on his first day on the job.

Rushing repeal and replacement was never a good idea, and the American Health Care Act's failure in March highlighted that. It raised doubts around the country about whether Republicans were capable



BYRON YORK  
Comment

of governing. Most of Washington blamed that failure on intransigent conservatives in the Freedom Caucus. That charge stuck because in the Obama days, the Freedom Caucus felt free to be the loyal opposition to the loyal opposition, the out-of-power caucus within the out-of-power party.

But then in May, the Freedom Caucus negotiated, cut deals, compromised and, in the end, voted "yes." It started to try to govern rather than simply oppose. Conservatives weren't the only ones to adapt. The Tuesday Group of centrists splintered, and enough of them got behind the bill. House Speaker Paul Ryan also changed his ways and fostered a more collaborative, not merely consultative, legislating process.

There's still a long distance to cover before Republicans can be said to be governing. The healthcare bill needs to pass the Senate, pass the House again and become law.

Republicans need to do tax reform, and as a practical matter, they need to get it down before election season heats up next year.

On both of these efforts there will be dozens of competing interests.

First, there's K Street and the donor base. Industry lobbyists generally oppose

Republicans' repeal and replacement of Obamacare. Special interests trying to protect their credits and loopholes have successfully fought off tax reform for years. Passing the bills they need to pass will require, at some point, telling lobbyists to buzz off and telling the donors they don't call the shots.

Second, there's political pressure on vulnerable incumbents. Liberal activists are dialing up the heat, and many Republicans are terrified of losing if they vote for something unpopular.

But Obamacare is crumbling and needs to be replaced. Likewise, our tax system needs to be reformed. Statesmanship requires taking unpopular stances. So, lawmakers, screw up your courage and get it done.

In any event, Republicans worried that an unpopular vote will cost them their seats need to realize that there is no safe harbor anymore. Failure to govern will also cost Republicans their majority. Their choice is between being thrown out of power for incompetence, and heading into the 2018 midterm elections having demonstrated ability and resolve.

Coming up with a tax bill and a healthcare bill that can pass both chambers will be very difficult. Passing them will be risky. Governing isn't easy, but for Republicans today, it's their job.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

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## YOUR VIEWS

### New faces, same story in Pendleton city government

I've talked to a few people and asked, "Why didn't you vote?" The usual answer was: "It makes no difference, they'll do what they want anyway," lost confidence in leadership being a common thread.

Though we have several new faces in city hall, I can't help but wonder whether anything has really changed.

Goals were set and ignored by the city manager because of distractions and city officials continued to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on projects that benefit a few friends and very little that benefit everyone.

City officials continue to ignore the obvious, extension cords hanging from trees and light poles on Main Street, weeds popping up in street and sidewalk cracks, a dead tree still standing in front of city hall after two years, light poles still missing from the new overpass and viaduct, and deteriorating streets, to name a few. These and many others are all too visible to residents and visitors alike.

## 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.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton