

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

MARISSA WILLIAMS
Regional Advertising Director

MARCY ROSENBERG
Circulation Manager

JANNA HEIMGARTNER
Business Office Manager

MIKE JENSEN
Production Manager

OTHER VIEWS

Lawmakers disregard voters' will, shortchange education funding

The Oregonian/OregonLive, July 8

Oregon voters enthusiastically endorsed two education measures on the ballot last November, directing legislators to devote millions of dollars to expand career and technical education for high schoolers and provide outdoor school programs for 5th and 6th grade students statewide. Measure 98, the high-school initiative, and Measure 99, the outdoor school initiative, both passed by huge margins — 32 percentage and 34 percentage points respectively.

But what voters approve isn't necessarily what lawmakers do. For the coming biennium, legislators have set aside \$170 million for Measure 98 programs, a little more than half of the \$300 million that the initiative called for in funding of career and technical education, dropout prevention efforts and expanded college-prep courses for high school students across the state. As for Measure 99, the Legislature is allocating only \$24 million of the \$44 million envisioned by the initiative to pay for the multi-day outdoor education program for middle-schoolers that several districts have struggled to maintain through fundraising or reserving scarce funds.

There's nothing wrong with legislators' amending what voters hand off to them. Making funding decisions and changing state law, whether it originates from the initiative process or legislative process, are routine functions of the Legislature. Initiatives are blunt instruments as public-policy making goes, rarely including the detail and nuance needed to fairly, legally and effectively administer the programs they create. And an initiative's focus on a single issue contrasts with the broad array of concerns and needs that legislators must balance in making difficult budget decisions.

And many school districts aren't geared up yet to take advantage of the funds for either program. Adding or expanding curriculum in these programs involves far more than just flipping a switch, particularly for career and technical education, even if the funding is available in full.

Still, the amounts allocated for programs identified in both Measure 98 and 99 are not sufficient for what's known to be needed now. Toya Fick, executive director for Stand for Children Oregon, a primary backer of the Measure 98 campaign, called the \$170 million "a down payment" but warned that it is far from what will be required

to help high school students. That's not hyperbole, considering that some 10,000 students a year drop out of high school in Oregon, which has the third-worst graduation rate in the country.

Similarly, Rex Burkholder, chairman of the Outdoor School for All committee, told *The Oregonian/OregonLive* Editorial Board that those tasked with administering the outdoor school fund have tallied the cost of existing outdoor school programs at \$30 million, \$6 million more than the allocation from legislators. That means the fund won't cover current demand nor can it accommodate additional outdoor school programs from other districts that want to start a program in the next two years.

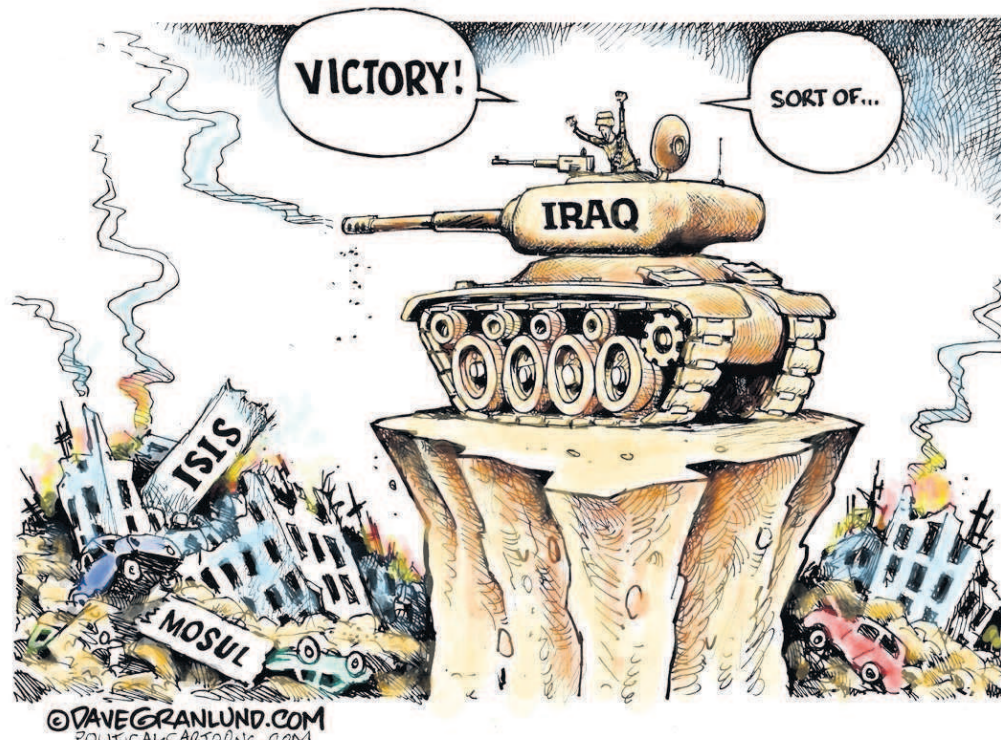
Elected leaders have bemoaned the budget crisis that they faced this legislative session due in part to the new initiatives. But voters — who cast their ballots amid a sustained economic boom that continues to generate record amounts of tax revenue — aren't to blame. The culprits have been legislators who ignored for years the question of how to pay for Medicaid expansion and who have refused to confront escalating pension and health benefits costs for public employees.

Ultimately, legislators need to think about the reasons two-thirds of voters backed both of these measures. Could Oregon's chronically poor graduation rate have been a motivator to back these two measures? Both invest in strategies known to engage students in their education, open them up to new experiences and career tracks, and keep them connected to high school. Could it be frustration with the paltry offerings that some school districts offer? Or could it be a message to legislators to do a better job of directing Oregonians' tax dollars into student-focused programs instead of employee benefits, which are taking larger and larger shares of school district budgets? Even an 11 percent increase in the K-12 education budget for the coming biennium isn't enough to stave off layoffs in some districts because of those surging personnel costs.

Legislators and voters alike should remind themselves of a simple truth. These measures began as petitions filed by citizens who wanted to put new laws on the books because policymakers weren't addressing the need. They gained traction, attention and, in the end, overwhelming victories that deserve respect, even by those who opposed the initiatives. This is what voters' will looks like, and Oregonians unhappy with the direction of the state should remember how powerful that can be.

Legislators need to think about the reasons two-thirds of voters backed both of these measures. Could our chronically poor graduation rate have been a motivator?

Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

The West and what comes after

While Donald Trump was giving a speech in Poland last week depicting a West whose values, heritage and freedoms are threatened by the weakening of borders and a loss of confidence within, I was reading about the last days when European empires ruled the globe.

Those years, the years of decolonization that followed World War II, are the subject of a book by anthropologist and historian Gary Wilder, "Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization and the Future of the World." Wilder follows two black intellectuals and politicians, Aimé Césaire of Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, who shared a striking combination of anti-imperialist zeal and desire for continued political union with the French Republic.

Césaire's tiny Martinique did indeed become a French département. But in Senegal and Africa and the once-colonized world writ large, their project never had a chance. Once the age of empire ended, political separation became inevitable.

Yet against critics who deemed both men sellouts and self-haters for desiring to remain in some sense French, Wilder argues that their vision was complex and potentially prophetic.

They were Western-educated Francophones who read deeply in the European canon, who believed in the "miracle of Greek civilization," who drew on Plato and Virgil and Pascal and Goethe. At the same time, they argued for their own race's civilizational genius, for a negritude that turned a derogatory label into a celebration of African cultural distinctiveness.

And finally they believed that part of the West's tradition, the universalist ideals they associated with French republicanism and Marxism, could be used to create a political canopy — a transnational union — beneath which humanity could be (to quote Césaire) "more than ever united and diverse, multiple and harmonious."

This vision was rejected by both the colonized and the colonizers. But in certain ways it was revived by global elites after the Cold War's end, with neoliberalism substituted for Marxism, and a different set of transnational projects — the European Union, the Pax Americana — taking the place of the pan-ethnic, multicultural French Union envisioned by Césaire and Senghor.

Of late, though, this project has run into some of the same difficulties that made theirs an impossibility. The cultural reality that Césaire and Senghor grasped — that civilizational difference is real and powerful and lasting — has a way of undoing the political unity for which they fondly hoped.

On the evidence of recent European controversies, it is hard enough for a political union to reconcile the different branches of the West — German and Mediterranean, French and Anglo-Saxon. It becomes harder when that same union is trying to manage a society so multicultural — as European



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

nations under the pressure of mass migration may become — as to lack religious or linguistic or historical common ground. And it becomes harder still when your ruling elite's cosmopolitanism is essentially superficial, more "eating ethnic food and cheering for Obama" than "celebrating negritude while reading Goethe."

Thus the nationalist backlash against cosmopolitanism, embodied in its starkest form by Trump, is somewhat equivalent to the anti-colonial nationalism that rejected Senghor and Césaire's unionism as hopelessly naive.

Yesterday's African nationalists argued, reasonably, that you cannot develop an African civilization if your center of political authority is still in Europe.

Today's Western nationalists argue, also plausibly, that many European distinctives are unlikely to survive if nation-states are weak, mass immigration constant, Christianity and Judaism replaced by indifference and Islam, and young elites educated as global citizens without knowing their own home.

This nationalist argument comes in racist forms, but it need not be the white nationalism that Trump's liberal critics read into his speech. It can just be a species of conservatism, which prefers to conduct cultural exchange carefully and forge new societies slowly, lest stability suffer, memory fail and important things be lost.

As such, it's a view I endorse. But in the European case I don't necessarily believe that it will prevail. I certainly don't believe in Trump as its paladin — not when his entire career makes a mockery of faith, family, tradition, virtue. Nor do I have much confidence that the present burst of European nationalism is more than a spasm, a reflex — not when religious practice is so weak, patriotism so attenuated, the continent's birthrate so staggeringly low.

What's more, I can read the population projections for Europe versus the Middle East and Africa, which make ideas like "managed migration" and "careful cultural exchange" seem like pretty conceits that 21st-century realities will eventually explode.

Which brings me back to Césaire and Senghor, men who loved their African heritage and yet also knew European civilization better than most educated Europeans do today. Their fantasy of a post-imperial union between north and south, white and black, was in their times just that.

But as a striking sort of African-European hybrid, as prophets of a world where the colonized and the colonizers had no choice but to find a way to live together, the West's future may belong to them in some altogether unexpected way.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at *The Atlantic*.

YOUR VIEWS

Too many junk laws out of legislature

In reading the laws recently passed by the legislature, I was dismayed at the ludicrous ones passed by elected persons who are supposed to be doing something responsible for the people.

An example of this is when they passed a law that lets 16-year-old persons register to vote, even though the law says they can't vote until 18 years old. Excuse me, but when you register to vote the state will send you a mail ballot allowing that person to vote. I for one do not feel that persons in high school should have access to vote for various taxes that I would have to pay — and, of course, they do not.

Why can't we get legislators to do a proper job instead of passing junk laws like this?

James Tiede
Hermiston

Barreto's 'no' vote no help for district

So, Mr. Barreto, let me get this straight: You voted "no" on the transportation bill because

they didn't need your vote. So I take it that you knew the bill was going to pass. Where does that leave those of us who live in District 58? Oh yeah, we get to pay higher gas taxes, higher income taxes, a bicycle fee, higher vehicle registration fees, and higher costs on car purchases.

What do we get with your "no" vote? Absolutely nothing in earmarks for needed transportation projects in our communities. Just who are you representing in Salem? Certainly not the people who live in District 58.

When you were elected in 2014 it was a concern that you would vote in accordance with your ideology and not in the best interest of those who live in the district. That concern was just confirmed. Thanks for your support!

Ed Taber
Pendleton

Leave Renewable Fuels Standard alone

As an elected official, I understand the challenges (and the pressures) of complex policymaking, where we must represent diverse interests and

balance all perspectives. But that's exactly why Oregonians have asked us to do this job. Sometimes, we must examine the larger picture to make the right decision, whether it's here at home or in Washington, D.C.

One such topic is the Renewable Fuels Standard, a bipartisan policy that promotes competition at the gas pump from homegrown biofuels, including those produced right here in the Beaver State. It has and will continue to deliver significant benefits to our economy and environment in Oregon and across the United States.

While there's no shortage of opinions about the RFS, there's no debate that clean fuels are helping to deliver savings at the pump for consumers. And because they compete against foreign oil, biofuels increase American energy security.

I encourage Congressman Greg Walden and his colleagues to recognize that any legislative or regulatory changes to the RFS would be disruptive to a program that is currently working. When so many other policies are in flux, consumers and American businesses need to have a stable

energy sector. Please reject pressures to undermine the RFS and protect current renewable energy goals.

Craig Pope,
Polk County commissioner,
Monmouth

Goats or fish, you can't have both

The main stressor on fish in the Umatilla River is lack of oxygen, caused by water that gets too warm (warm water holds less oxygen) and nitrogen-rich pollution that promotes algae growth (that uses up the oxygen).

Goats eat the reeds, shrubs, and small native trees that would normally thrive along the river, and grow into larger trees. Goats eat the

bark from saplings, killing them, too. These would normally produce the shade that helps keep the river cooler — and more oxygen rich.

Goats produce nitrogen. Each goat produces 5-7 pounds of nitrogen rich poop each day. If there are 50-100 goats for 10-14 days, they will produce one to five tons of poop! That poop, besides being something you do not want your children to play in, also sends a flood of nitrogen into the river each time it rains, feeding those slimy algae blooms that clog the river, use up the oxygen and suffocate the fish.

Want fish? No goats. No livestock of any sort near the river, period.

Jill Johnson
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.