

# EAST OREGONIAN

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

# When principle hurts a politician

Greg Smith and Greg Barreto are both representatives in the Oregon House. They occupy neighboring districts and are both Republicans. They even share a first name.

But the similarities end there when it comes to their work on the massive Oregon transportation plan that passed the Legislature this session — the major piece of legislation to wind its way through the House and Senate to the governor's desk for her signature.

Rep. Greg Smith worked to pass the transportation bill, and his district received \$32 million earmarked for local projects — including millions for pedestrian improvements in Arlington and Milton-Freewater, as well as multiple million-dollar projects in Hermiston and at the ports of Morrow and Umatilla.

Rep. Greg Barreto didn't work to pass the transportation bill — he opposed it from the beginning, wasn't involved in negotiating its terms and ultimately voted against it — and his district didn't receive any consideration for special projects, despite significant and specific needs.

Both men have reasons for their vote and exemplify the two different philosophies of how to best serve your constituents when you're in the minority party.

You can be a hard, principled "no" on legislation backed by the majority party, hoping to obstruct its progress but giving up all bargaining chips as the bills move their way through the legislative process. That's Barreto's style. Perhaps that helped in keeping what he felt were bad bills from moving past committees or out of the House. But when those bills overcome Republican objections, he finds himself too far outside the discussion to have any impact on their crafting.

Smith has the opposite take. He injects himself into the debate, and sometimes works with the opposition party to craft legislation. Often that effort brings projects or carves out exceptions for his district, as evidenced by the transportation package. Taxes are going up in Oregon to fund transportation

infrastructure, but Smith's District 57 will see much more an impact of that than Barreto's District 58.

Transportation should be a major, bipartisan issue for Oregonians, and it makes sense that both parties would be involved in crafting it. No matter their political affiliations, everyone from Portland to Paisley depends on it and municipalities across the state have fallen behind on funding as the

gas tax earnings have slowed.

That's even more noticeable in places like Pendleton and La Grande and Enterprise — cities represented by Barreto that have dealt with longterm stagnation and fallen behind on their infrastructure upkeep.

Ask anyone in those city or county

offices if they could have found reasonable projects for millions in transportation dollars, and not one will tell you no. The need is great and the dollars locals are able to raise to address the problems are not sufficient. Leaders in Pendleton and La Grande are toying with the idea of another gas tax — something that will focus the tax burden on local businesses and customers, rather than bringing in dollars from across the state.

The tax burden of the transportation package will be spread relatively evenly across the state. Unfortunately, the benefits of the package will not. Residents of District 58 got the short end of the stick — and will likely be asked to fork over additional local taxes to make up the difference that is not coming from the state.

Political principles are well and good when it comes to abortion or the Second Amendment — no one should bend when the core of who they are is at stake.

But when we're talking about a transportation package that will benefit and burden every Oregonian, politicians owe it to their constituents to work hard to make massive legislation as good as it can be. That includes cutting costs and trimming excess where possible, but also securing money for necessary projects that will improve the lives of the people who got them elected.

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

# Popularity taking toll on state's wilderness areas

The Medford Mail Tribune

Oregonians are rightfully proud of the stunning scenic beauty of their state and are accustomed to striking out to experience it whenever they wish, backpacking into pristine wilderness areas at a moment's notice.

But some of the more popular areas are not so pristine any longer, largely the result of overuse and too many people behaving thoughtlessly while they are there. The U.S. Forest Service has responded by proposing to start requiring paid permits to hike and backpack in specific wilderness areas.

For now, the program would apply to the Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington, Three Sisters, Diamond Peak and Waldo Lake wilderness areas.

The Forest Service is compiling comments on the plan and will issue more details in time for a new comment period in February 2018. If adopted, the permit system likely would take effect in 2019.

The reaction from outdoor enthusiasts understandably has been negative. But look at things from the Forest Service's point of view.

The number of visitors to the wilderness areas in question has soared. *The Bend Bulletin* reports that

46,999 people visited the Three Sisters Wilderness in 2011. Last year, 132,118 people did. And they left more than footprints.

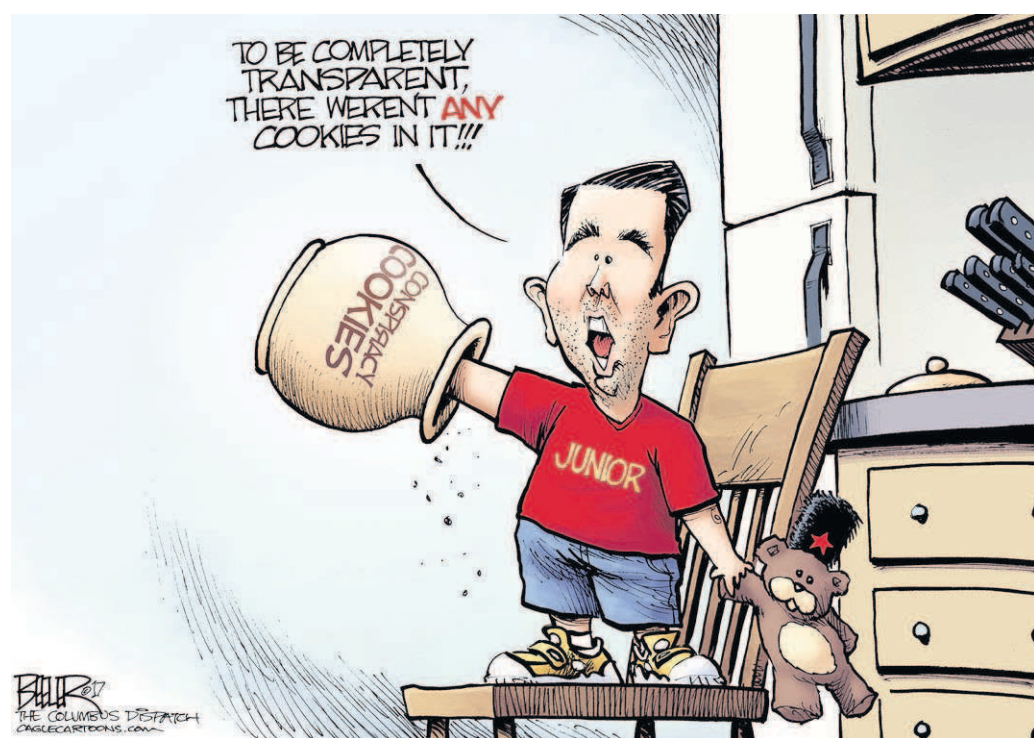
Forest Service rangers hauled 1,200 pounds of garbage out of Three Sisters in 2015-16, and buried human waste 850 times — something the visitors who produced it couldn't be bothered to do.

Better wilderness etiquette on the part of visitors would go a long way toward solving the problem, but people being people, we're not holding our breath. And the Forest Service is proposing the paid permit system because it's been proven to work.

Permit systems already are in place for specific locations that draw large numbers of visitors. Officials say the permit requirements successfully limited crowds and damage there.

Permits reportedly would range from \$6 to \$12. Recovering some modest administrative cost is acceptable, but fees should not be a money-maker for the Forest Service. If a permit is required for every person in a hiking party, the cost could become prohibitive.

If all visitors treated the wilderness as their own backyard, permit fees wouldn't be necessary. Since they don't, measures like this are an unfortunate necessity.



## OTHER VIEWS

# For Trump critics, to follow is to lead

President Trump's performance at the G-20 summit in Germany produced a wave of commentary claiming the United States has abdicated its role as world leader.

ABC News contemplated "A World Without U.S. Leadership." CNN reported that Trump exchanged "an aggressive, traditional American leadership role for isolation in a club of one." The liberal activist Neera Tanden tweeted, "Can we just admit that the era of American global leadership is over under Trump?"

The talking point quickly became conventional wisdom in Europe. In the UK, the Independent wrote, "The G-20 proves it. Because of Trump, the world no longer looks to America for leadership."

While there were disagreements in Hamburg between Trump and the other 19 nations on lots of things, including trade, the main factor in all the end-of-American-leadership talk was the president's decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Accord.

The idea is that, by not going along with the other 19 nations — Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the European Union — the United States is no longer leading.

In other words: One can only lead by following the group.

It's an odd formulation, reminiscent of the old Barack Obama "leading from behind" jokes, but it's the principle underlying the end-of-American-leadership talk. And it's not working with some of the president's key supporters on Capitol Hill.

"I'm glad that President Trump cares more about electricity rates in Paris, Arkansas than he does the Paris Climate Accord," Arkansas Republican Sen. Tom Cotton said in a text exchange Sunday. "Hollow agreements aside, the United States will continue to lead the world in environmental protection, while also exporting oil and gas abroad. In particular, American global energy dominance will help break Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas, if only Germany would stop posturing at one moment, while cozying up to Putin in the next."

Indeed, it seems safe to say that as the U.S. further develops its energy output, it will also achieve its own voluntary emissions goals for 2020 and beyond. (Each country in the non-binding Paris deal got to set its own.) But if Trump sticks with his decision, the U.S. will not take part in the vast, billions-and-billions-of-dollars global wealth-redistribution system that is part of the Paris Agreement.

It was of course well known ahead of time that the other G-20 leaders opposed



BYRON YORK  
Comment

Trump's move. The question in Hamburg was what they would say about it in a formal statement. The Guardian reported that "tensions ran particularly high between French and U.S. officials," who fought over whether the final G-20 statement would include a mention of the U.S. helping other countries "to access and use fossil fuels more cleanly and efficiently." (It did.)

At the same time, Trump's decision made the other countries want to showcase the depth of their commitment to the Paris deal. "We take note of the decision of the United States of America to withdraw from the Paris Agreement," the G-20 leaders' final declaration said. Then: "The leaders of the other G-20 members state that the Paris Agreement is irreversible."

## Detractors say one can only lead by following the group.

To American ears, the "irreversible" part sounded a little strange. In the context of government, what does "irreversible" mean? Americans, like all other humans, reverse things all the time. Even the Constitution can be amended.

But the Paris Agreement — which former President Obama imposed by executive authority without seeking the approval of the Senate in the normal treaty process — that is "irreversible"?

And even for the G-20, what does "irreversible" mean? It certainly does not mean "inflexible." The 19 leaders noted that they are "moving swiftly towards its full implementation in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances."

In other words, in a non-binding agreement like Paris, individual countries can do what they gotta do.

That, according to the commentators, is the definition of leadership. Donald Trump chose to take the United States on a different course, which according to the same commentators is the abdication of leadership.

In an alternate universe, one could imagine analysis of Trump's European trip noting that the president is in fact leading — leading, for example, in the defense of Western values. Bob Dole, the former Republican presidential candidate and senator, said just that, praising Trump for restoring "proud and strong American leadership" and helping "restore our position as leader of the free world."

But Dole, and Cotton, and other Trump supporters don't see leadership in the same way as the critics. For Trump's opponents, at least as far as the G-20 is concerned, leading is following, and following is leading.

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

## YOUR VIEWS

### PDC should develop idle land to reduce local tax burden

Although we have a new city council/Pendleton Development Commission, there are some carryover members. Mistakes of the past hopefully won't be repeated.

Currently, the PDC owns property north of the Umatilla River, property outside the Urban Renewal District, their area of responsibility. A trip to the Umatilla County Courthouse revealed that this property has belonged to the PDC since 2008. After sitting idle and off the tax rolls now for more than nine years, the PDC has finally declared the property excess and decided to put it up for sale. With the shortage of available housing, a small portion was deemed buildable and development seemed a way to recoup something on the city's original investment, especially considering the length of time the property has sat idle and off the tax rolls.

Now, those residents near the property want development stopped and instead want to create a nature preserve, adding to the one we basically already have running through town along the river.

I would question how the PDC has the authority to make decisions on property use outside the Urban Renewal District. As stewards of publicly owned property, the council/PDC has the responsibility to return this property to the private sector for development and recoup some of those lost tax revenues. It's surprising how much property they own that sits idle, off the tax rolls.

When questioned, a common answer is "it's only" — add up those "it's only's" and it soon mounts up. City, county, and school district budgets are impacted, resulting in increases in taxes and fees.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton

## LETTERS POLICY

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