

# EAST OREGONIAN

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

# Legislators left Salem with lots of unfinished business

The Legislature closed its 2017 session a few days ahead of schedule, and there has already been plenty of political posturing about the successes, missed opportunities and issues that need to be revisited.

Many veteran lawmakers say the session was one of the toughest they've participated in and they closed it with a feeling of unfinished business.

As state Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, said in a statement afterward, "We had some satisfying wins. At best, our successes are tempered by disappointment."

On the plus side, lawmakers were able to balance a \$21 billion operating budget that began with a \$1.4 billion shortfall even though the state experienced record revenue leading up to the session. Along the way, they managed to approve:

- A long-term, \$5.3 billion transportation improvement package.
- A \$600 million tax on insurers and providers that preserves health care for about 350,000 Oregonians who gained Medicaid coverage under the expanded federal Affordable Care Act.

- Record funding for K-12 public schools, up 11 percent from the state's 200 or so school districts, lawmakers say it's enough money to keep current services going.

- A controversial \$10 million reproductive health bill expanding funding for no-cost abortions, family planning services and postpartum care. Oregon's bill is unique to other states in that patients would have access to the procedure for virtually any reason, at any time, including sex-selective and late-term abortions.

- A plan to reduce state spending over the next two years by \$200 million.

Lawmakers also approved the state becoming REAL ID compliant, which will allow residents to upgrade their driver's licenses or identification cards to federal

standards in the future.

Oregon will now also be joining a handful of other states that give judges the power to take guns away from suicidal or dangerous people.

The state also became the third in the nation to raise the tobacco sales age to 21, although tobacco possession isn't affected.

**With successes, though, there were certainly failures.**

With successes, though, there were certainly failures. Lawmakers couldn't agree on revenue reforms that included a corporate income taxing structure that would stabilize and provide long-term school funding, and they declined to tackle the elephant of the session, the spiraling costs of the Public Employees Retirement System and instead kicked that \$22 billion problem down the road.

Gov. Kate Brown has vowed to get all parties to the table to work out solutions to both of the major issues, but her lack of leadership was evident throughout the session, so the jury is out on whether she can follow through.

It also remains to be seen what the session's impact will have in our region. Lawmakers drastically cut funding from Measure 98, which voters had approved, that would have provided money to help schools raise graduation rates and provide more vocational and technical education, something that would be very helpful in rural areas of Eastern Oregon. Community colleges also didn't get as much funding that they need, which can hurt BMCC.

It's also uncertain what the taxing impacts will be on our region, especially combined with local city, county and school taxes, and what benefits the transportation package will provide our area.

What is certain, though, is that there is unfinished business. Democrats and Republicans alike should start thinking about how to address those issues, and about who among them is up to providing bipartisan leadership that all Oregonians can look up to.

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

# State justice system needs balancing

The Bend Bulletin

When somebody has a day in court, it should be a fair fight. But in Oregon, if the accused can't afford a lawyer, there's reason to worry.

The pay disparity between court-appointed indigent defense lawyers and the people who prosecute is substantial and problematic. The Legislature took up this issue again this year in House Bill 2561, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Williamson, D-Portland. But again, this year the bill did not pass.

The reason is simple: It would cost the state millions to fix.

The bill directs Oregon's Public Defense Services Commission to adopt policies that make appointed-counsel pay commensurate with the equivalent position within the office of district attorneys. That change would cost Oregon nearly \$20 million for the 2017-2019 biennium and \$26 million in the following biennium.

The pay disparity that would be corrected can be substantial. In Deschutes County, a public defender starts out at \$63,000 a year. A deputy district attorney starts at about \$84,000. And that disparity grows.

Thomas Crabtree, executive director of the public defender's office for

Deschutes County, provided a specific example. A decade ago, an attorney left his office and went to become a deputy district attorney in Deschutes County. For just switching jobs, the attorney immediately made \$21,000 more a year in salary. That's enough of a difference to make anyone think about leaving.

Crabtree says his office typically has not had the funding from the state to be able to offer cost of living increases or automatic salary increases every year. Deputy DAs frequently get both. So that deputy DA had his salary grow from about \$70,000 to \$113,000. An attorney hired to replace the deputy DA had his salary grow from \$43,000 to \$76,000 over the same time period.

Money isn't everything. What matters is the quality of the legal representation. But the problem for Oregon's justice system is that experienced public defense lawyers tend to leave. Many follow the money that can be made as a deputy district attorney or in private practice. That undermines the experience and quality of the defense.

Trials need to be conducted in a way that protects the rights of the accused. It's essential to a fair trial that the accused have legal counsel. And it's only fair that the state pays enough to make it a fair fight. The Legislature needs to look for a way to make that happen.

## OTHER VIEWS

### The CAT HERDER



# Moral vacuum in the House of Trump

Donald Trump's grandfather Friedrich emigrated to the United States when he was 16, in 1885. He ventured west to seek his riches and finally settled in Seattle, where he opened a restaurant that, according to family historian Gwenda Blair, likely included a section for a bordello.

Gold fever hit the Pacific Northwest, and Grandfather Trump moved up to Bennett, British Columbia. It was a fast, raucous, money-grabbing atmosphere, and Trump opened the Arctic Hotel, which had a bar, a restaurant and, according to an advertisement in the Dec. 9, 1899, edition of *The Bennett Sun* newspaper, "private boxes for ladies and parties." Each box apparently came equipped with a bed and a scale to weigh the gold dust that was used to pay for the services offered in it.

Friedrich returned to Germany, married and was sent back to the United States by German authorities (he hadn't fulfilled his military service requirement) and amassed a modest fortune.

Frederick, Donald's father, began building middle-class housing. Profiles describe an intense, success-obsessed man who worked seven days a week and encouraged those around him to be killers in their field. "He didn't like wimps," his nephew told Philip Weiss of *The Times*. "He thought competition made you sharper."

He cared deeply about appearances. "Freddy was always very neat, a Beau Brummell," Sam LeFrak told Weiss. "He had a mustache, and that mustache was always right, perfect." He was also remorseless. In an interview with Michael D'Antonio, Donald Trump described his father as "very tough" and "very difficult" and someone who "would never let anything go."

Biographies describe a man intent on making his fortune and not afraid of skating near the edge to do so. At one point, according to Politico, federal investigators found that Frederick used various accounting measures to collect an extra \$15 million in rent (in today's dollars) from a government housing program, on top of paying himself a large "architect's fee." He was hauled before investigating committees on at least two occasions, apparently was arrested at a KKK rally in Queens (though it's not clear he was a member), got involved in a slush fund scandal with Robert Wagner and faced discrimination allegations.

I repeat this history because I don't think moral obliviousness is built in a day. It takes generations to hammer ethical considerations out of a person's mind and to replace them entirely with the ruthless logic of winning and losing; to take the normal human yearning to be good and replace it with a single-minded desire for material conquest; to take the



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

normal human instinct for kindness and replace it with a law-of-the-jungle mentality.

It took a few generations of the House of Trump, in other words, to produce Donald Jr.

The Donald Trump Jr. we see through the Russia scandal story is not malevolent: He seems to be simply oblivious to the idea that ethical concerns could possibly play a role in everyday life. When the Russian government offer came across his email, there doesn't seem to have been a flicker of concern. Instead, he replied with that tone of simple bro glee that we remember from other scandals.

"Can you smell money?!?!?!?" Jack Abramoff emailed a co-conspirator during his lobbying and casino fraud shenanigans. That's the same tone as Don Jr.'s "I love it" when offered a chance to conspire with a hostile power. A person capable of this instant joy and enthusiasm isn't overcoming any internal ethical hurdles. It's just a greedy boy grabbing sweets.

**Don Jr. appeared incapable of even entertaining any moral consideration.**

Once the scandal broke you would think Don Jr. would have some awareness that there were ethical stakes involved. You'd think there would be some sense of embarrassment at having been caught lying so blatantly.

But in his interview with Sean Hannity he appeared incapable of even entertaining any moral consideration. "That's what we do in business," the younger Trump said. "If there's information out there, you want it." As William Saletan pointed out in Slate, Don Jr. doesn't seem to possess the internal qualities necessary to consider the possibility that he could have done anything wrong.

That to me is the central takeaway of this week's revelations. It's not that the Russia scandal may bring down the administration. It's that over the past few generations the Trump family has built an enveloping culture that is beyond good and evil.

The Trumps have an ethic of loyalty to one another. "They can't stand that we are extremely close and will ALWAYS support each other," Eric Trump tweeted this week. But beyond that there is no attachment to any external moral truth or ethical code. There is just naked capitalism.

Successful business people, like successful politicians, are very ambitious, but they generally have some complementary moral code that checks their greed and channels their drive. The House of Trump has sprayed an insecticide on any possible complementary code, and so they are continually trampling basic decency. Their scandals may not build to anything impeachable, but the scandals will never end.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Barreto's impact minimal in Salem, negative in District 58

In response to Rep. Greg Barreto's letter of July 12, in my opinion Mr. Barreto showed a lack of political savvy in his decision to vote "no" on the transportation bill.

It was a very well known fact, prior to this legislative session, that passing a transportation bill was a very high priority for the Democratic majority in both houses of the legislature.

With that knowledge it appears as though Representative Greg Smith and Senator Bill Hansell knew that a transportation bill was going to pass, so they got on board. Their constituents were rewarded with \$32,000,000 to be used for transportation projects in District 57.

Mr. Barreto chose not to get on board and his constituents in District 58 were punished for that decision. In politics, as in life, sometimes you have to just hold your nose and do something for the people who are counting on you, even when is something you don't agree with. It appears as though he couldn't get past his ideological views in this instance.

I did do some investigation into his letter

and it is true that the *East Oregonian* was in error when they reported that he had been lobbied by the mayor of Pendleton. (*Editor's note: Mayor John Turner clarified to an East Oregonian reporter that he lobbied legislators, but did not directly lobby Barreto.*)

He was, however, incorrect in his statement concerning Nancy Pelosi's statement about the Affordable Care Act. He quoted her as saying, "We have to vote for the bill to see what's in it." He is wrong about what she actually said. Although I am not a Pelosi fan, I am a fan of the truth.

Her statement was actually, "But we have to pass the bill so YOU can find out what is in it — away from the fog of controversy." Mr. Barreto's version is one that has been used by the "far right" folks for about seven years now. For those of you that want to check it out for yourself, you can find it on YouTube.

If I remember correctly, Mr. Barreto stated several years ago that if he couldn't make a difference or have an impact in Salem that he would get out. I sincerely hope that he will carefully consider his statement since his impact has been minimal in Salem and somewhat negative to District 58.

Ed Taber  
Pendleton