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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the city of Umatilla for not giving voters there the opportunity to weigh in on a new OSU Extension Service taxing district.

All of the other 16 cities in Umatilla and Morrow counties took the democratic approach and let voters decide on a proposed levy to support extension services in the two counties.

Even if councilors in those municipalities are not personally in favor of a new taxing district, they know enough to allow the taxpayers the ability to make the decision for themselves. After all, taxpayers are the ones who will use and pay for extension services, so they should have the final say in the matter.

But in Umatilla, city government disagreed and kept the decision out of voter hands. Those in the city who do find value in the service will have to pay à la carte for the programs, if the district is approved.

That's still a big if — creating a new taxing district requires a lot of voter education and hard campaigning.

But Umatilla took its action without any consult with organizations — like the Umatilla School District — who currently benefit from OSU Extension services. Those programs are now in danger. So too, we argue, should be the status quo in how the city of Umatilla government operates.

A kick of the pants to the Oregon State Police Sex Offender Registration Section.

As we found in the course of reporting Thursday's story "Sexual predator sparks Pendleton man to sound alarm," the state's sex offender registry is often well behind on timely information about where offenders and predators are living and how people in the neighborhood should protect themselves.

It's disappointing that a service that can help keep Oregon safe so often offers a total lack of information, or information that is outdated and untimely.

We can argue the legitimate, complex issues surrounding the nation's and the state's sex offender registry system — both in its efficacy and its respect for the rights of people who have served their time for the crime they committed. But we should all be able to agree on the fact that state agencies, paid to enact the law, should do it to the best of their abilities, and to a standard that makes the law useful.

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 reins in prison spending with new law

Albany Democrat-Herald

A law approved by this year's Legislature appears to have made some immediate progress toward one of its goals, fending off for the time being the costly opening of a second women's prison in the state.

But whether the law in the long run improves public safety in Oregon will depend on a large degree on the state's willingness to properly fund community-based corrections programs.

A new report from the state Office of Economic Analysis reports that the state's prison population is expected to be 11 percent less in the coming decade than previously projected. That's mainly thanks to House Bill 3078, which made three adjustments to state law to try to reduce the number of female prisoners:

- First, it expanded eligibility criteria for the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program to allow more parents to participate.

- Second, it increased the limit for a supporting early-release program known as short-term transitional leave from 90 to 120 days.

- The third provision was by far the most controversial: It reduces the sentences for first-degree theft and identity theft, from 18 months down to 13 months. Lawmakers targeted those specific crimes because they're more likely to be committed by women. Many district attorneys, including Linn County's Doug Marteeny, had serious reservations about that provision. The bill ended up passing mostly on party lines, with Democrats tending to support it and Republicans against.

Mostly as a result of the bill, the number of inmates housed in Oregon prisons is (14,725 as of the Oct. 1 report) expected to fall significantly over the next five years and then should grow nominally. The number of female inmates is expected to drop by 8 percent. The overall inmate population is expected to drop by 0.1 percent in the next 10 years, compared to an estimated 12 percent growth in the state's

population. (Over the previous 10 years, the inmate population has kept pace with the state's population.)

One immediate result: Plans to open the second women's prison, with a price tag of \$10 million, have been put on ice for the time being.

But it will take years to gauge the full impact of the new law — and whether it makes Oregon communities safer.

Tim Colahan, executive director of the Oregon District Attorneys Association, told the *Portland Tribune* that the law needs "to be judged by the impact on the rates of crime and recidivism ... safety should not be compromised for savings."

One of the bill's proponents, Andy Ko, the executive director of the nonprofit group Partnership for Safety and Justice, argued the other side to the *Tribune*: "We know that addiction and mental illness are the primary contributors to many drug and property crimes." Ko said it makes more sense to invest in drug abuse treatment, mental health care and other services instead of warehousing inmates in prison cells.

But it's essential that the state follow through on this effort by ensuring that community-based correctional programs are properly funded. Prisons, of course, are by far the most expensive stop on the corrections program.

Which is why community-based programs, done right and funded adequately, can be considerably more cost-effective than prison and help reduce recidivism rates. But if we're just releasing offenders back into the community with limited supervision and without access to the mental-health and addiction programs they need, we won't be doing them any favors.

The \$10 million saved by not opening another women's prison helped to plug the state's billion-dollar budget shortfall. But imagine if we had been able to spend all of that money on community-based programs. It's another example of the difficulty state officials have in focusing on solutions that will save money and make communities stronger.

OTHER VIEWS



Weinstein and our culture of enablers

Of all of the dismaying and disgusting details of the Harvey Weinstein saga, none is more depressing than this: It has so few heroes.

There is a storybook villain, Weinstein, whose repulsive face turns out to be the spitting image of his putrescent soul. There are victims, so many of them, typically up-and-comers in an industry where he had the power to make or wreck their careers, or bully or buy their silence, or, if some allegations are to be believed, rape them.

But mostly there are enablers, both those who facilitated his predations and those who found it expedient to look the other way.

The enablers were of all sorts. Corporate board members who declined to investigate allegations of his sexual behavior and now claim the news comes as "an utter surprise." Assistants who acted as "honeypots," joining meetings between Weinstein and his intended victims to give them a sense of security — and then leaving the predator to his prey. Reporters who paid him tribute with awards, did his bidding with fawning coverage, or went after his enemies with hit pieces. A lavishly paid Italian studio executive whose real job, according to former *Times* reporter Sharon Waxman, was "to take care of Weinstein's women needs." (A lawyer for the executive reportedly denies the allegation.)

And then there was the rest of Hollywood. Weinstein's depredations were an open film industry secret, the subject of an onstage joke by Seth MacFarlane at the 2013 Oscar nomination announcement. Everyone laughed because everyone got it. Some of his victims, such as Gwyneth Paltrow, became Hollywood powers in their own right but never publicly rang an alarm until this week. The actor Ben Affleck, who owes his start to Weinstein, is an overnight laughingstock because he acts surprised by the producer's behavior. He won't be the only celebrity doing his best Claude Rains "shocked, shocked" impression.

Even some of the ostensibly good guys in this saga cannot be let off lightly. In *The New Yorker*, Ronan Farrow reports that Irwin Reiter, a top Weinstein Co. executive, sought to console one of the office assistants harassed by Weinstein by saying the "mistreatment of women" was a long-standing company issue and that "if you were my daughter he would not have made out so well." But Reiter never went public.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that an industry built around pretended characters and scenarios could have pretended for so long that nothing was amiss. Perhaps it should be no surprise, either, that its concept of ethics is every bit as ersatz and inconstant as most everything else in Tinseltown.



BRET STEPHENS
Comment

Weinstein is a storybook villain, but this saga has so few heroes.

The outrage over Weinstein also has a whiff of opportunism. In recent years, notes *New York* magazine's Rebecca Traister, Weinstein has "lost power in the movie industry" and is no longer "the indie mogul who could make or break an actor's Oscar chances." *Lame* horses get shot.

It's in this context that one can mount a defense of sorts for Weinstein, who inhabited a moral universe that did nothing but cheer his golden touch and wink at (or look away from) his transgressions — right until the moment that it became politically inconvenient to do so.

Conservatives are trying to make hay of the fact that Weinstein donated lavishly to Democratic politicians, backed progressive causes and distributed films such as "The Hunting Ground," a documentary about campus sexual assault.

But the important truth about Weinstein isn't his moral hypocrisy: In movies as in politics, hypocrisy isn't just an accepted fact of life but also an essential part of the job.

The important truth is that he was just another libidinous cad in a libertine culture that long ago dispensed with most notions of personal restraint and gentlemanly behavior. "I came of age in the '60s and '70s, when all the rules about behavior and workplaces were different," Weinstein wrote in his mea culpa to *The Times* last week. "That was the culture then."

That line was roundly mocked, but it contains its truth. Like those other libidinous cads — Bill Clinton and Donald Trump — Weinstein benefited from a culture that often celebrated, constantly depicted, sometimes enabled, seldom confronted, and all-too-frequently forgave the behavior they so often indulged in.

Hyenas cannot help their own nature. But the work of a morally sentient society is to prevent them from taking over the savanna. Our society, by contrast, festooned Weinstein with honors, endowed him with riches, and enabled him to feast on his victims without serious consequence for the better part of 30 years. The old saw that all that is needed for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing was never truer than it was in Weinstein's case.

It may be that Weinstein's epic downfall will scare straight other sexual miscreants, or at least those who tolerate their behavior and are liable for its consequences. Don't count on it. Our belated indictment of him now does too much to acquit his many accomplices, and too little to transform a culture that never gave him a reason to change.

Bret Stephens won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2013. He began working as a columnist at *The New York Times* in April.

YOUR VIEWS

Tax relief for billionaires at the expense of the middle class

The proposed tax reform bill under consideration by Congress will reduce the tax rate paid by those making over \$400,000 and eliminate federal income tax for those making less than \$25,000 per year, and it will eliminate the federal estate tax, which is imposed on joint estates over \$11,000,000.

The tax rate paid by corporations will be reduced from 35 percent to 20 percent. The bill will also eliminate substantially all itemized deductions other than mortgage interest and charitable donations.

This means that you will no longer be able to claim a deduction on your federal income tax return for the Oregon income tax and real property taxes that you pay, and substantially all other itemized deductions will

be eliminated except mortgage interest and charitable deductions. If you earn between \$25,000 and \$400,000 and claim itemized deductions on your tax return, you will probably pay more under the proposed tax reform bill. The richest and poorest and the corporations will pay less.

Eighty percent of the income tax benefits will go to people with incomes of more than \$740,000 per year. One hundred percent of the estate tax benefits will go to families with estates over \$11,000,000. Those of us in the middle class who claim itemized deductions will pay more.

Talk to your tax preparer to confirm that the above facts are true. Then call Greg Walden and let him know how you feel about this. You can guess how I feel about it.

Allen Drescher
Ashland

LETTERS POLICY

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