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OUR VIEW

Port of progress

If you want a picture of progress, there's a snapshot in our own backyard.

The Port of Morrow has been an engine for jobs and development for years, through aggressive leadership in the front office and industry of all kinds seeing potential in the well-connected and wide open plots.

The state legislature has fueled that machine too, adding \$27 million since 2009 for projects extending rail and roads, building education centers and funding water projects. Those projects simply would not have happened, at least at the pace we've seen, without money being set aside by the legislature time and again.

It doesn't come out of thin air. Every district in the state could find a use for those taxpayer dollars, but the legislature and those who pull its purse strings are looking for return on investment and good faith.

On Thursday, the Port of Morrow and Rep. Greg Smith invited House

Speaker Tina Kotek to tour the port and see where that money has been going.

As the leader of the Democrat-controlled House, all that funding had to cross Kotek's desk for approval before becoming real dollars that can be spent on the ground. Smith and Port General Manager Gary Neal felt it only fair to show her what's been happening.



Staff photo
Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek and Umatilla-Morrow Head Start associate director Dan Daltoso talk in the new Head Start early learning building in Boardman.

Spending capital improvement dollars should not be affected by politics, and that seems to be true at the Port of Morrow. It's a dark red district represented by the Republican Party's longest serving House member, who

has earned a favorable view from Kotek (who, by the way, represents the Port of Portland).

We're not so naive as to be unaware of the undercurrent of political favor guiding such decisions, but we're pleased to see practical concerns hold more sway than ideological differences.

Healthcare 101

In 2017, it seems like we never get a break from politics. And there will be no rest for the weary once we turn the calendar to 2018.

The political season will get off to a fast start next year, with Oregon voters having an important referendum in January, followed by important primaries in May and a critical election awaiting again in November.

So what's this January thing again?

It's Measure 101, a referendum on health insurance premium taxes that were approved by the state Legislature during the previous session. Opponents of the taxes gathered signatures to put pieces of that package before voters.

The whole process has been controversial since the beginning. Some argue the referendum process is a bad way to set complicated tax policy. Others say the ballot language itself is biased, arguing the semantics of "tax" against "assessment." And they argued some more over the date that the actual vote will tax place (It's January 23).

All this ... and we haven't even gotten to the meat of the issue, which has both sides taking principled and impassioned stands on how critical their victory is.

Opponents say the tax allows legislators a "back door" to suck health care into the general fund, which will eventually lead to worse health budgets and outcomes.

Proponents of the tax say this is the least-harmful way to take a step toward guaranteeing health care for more Oregonians, perhaps as many as 300,000.

We're digging deep into the issue over the next month, so look for editorials on the subject before ballots go out.

But we want to make voters aware of this issue right now, so they can look critically at their ballot guide when it arrives.

Take this seriously. You are likely to hear exaggerations from both sides, but there is no debating the fact that this is an important issue that will be decided by relatively few informed voters. Do your best to make sure you are one.

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

In the end, reality will win

Who, boy. The truth just keeps getting whacked by this gangster White House. The how-low-can-he-go bar keeps falling. Is there no bottom? Not for some time, friends, so hold on.

We learned this week that President Donald Trump does not believe his own words on videotape — words that he had earlier acknowledged, in explaining how a star can get away with the type of predatory behavior that has caused everyone but him to get fired.

We learned that he endorsed a website that says the pope uses magic to mastermind world events. This, after he gave a thumbs up to a media outlet that claims NASA runs a child labor colony on Mars.

We learned that he still believes 3 million fraudulent voters caused him to lose the popular vote, that no president has accomplished so much in 10 months as he, that Barack Obama is not a citizen of the United States.

We may soon learn that Trump won a gold medal in synchronized swimming. This is likely to come from a public servant being paid tax dollars to defend a dog's breakfast of fantasy. That would be Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House spokeswoman, who crossed a big Rubicon this week.

After Trump tweeted out discredited hate videos from a fringe group, he was praised by the former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, but condemned throughout Britain. Even the reliably compliant Piers Morgan wrote, "Please STOP this madness and undo your tweets."

When pressed on this, Sanders said, "Whether it's a real video, the threat is real." Well, I'll be cow-kicked. There it is, from the podium that represents the most powerful person on earth: a declarative affirmation that truth does not matter.

By that logic, it does not matter if Trump implies that someone he dislikes may have committed murder, because the threat of murder in general is real. Wait — he did that as well, in defaming Joe Scarborough on Wednesday.

It used to be that a press secretary would say, "I have no information on that." Now it's standard operating procedure to shrug a whatever and wait for Sean Hannity to clean it up on state-run television. That's what happens when your boss shows signs of dementia.

Do you see what they're doing? If facts don't matter, then a professional press that tries to deal scrupulously in facts is irrelevant. Everyone is a liar. Welcome to the club.

Trump is a hooligan to the Constitution. But he has a gaggle of people being paid very well to help him subvert truth, justice and the American way.



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

One of them just set a spectacular Dumpster fire. That would be James O'Keefe. He runs something with the perfectly Orwellian name of Project Veritas. O'Keefe is a criminal, having pleaded guilty to his part in an attempt to enter a U.S. senator's office under false pretenses.

You'd think this would ruin him. Nope. Rich people give him money so that he can use fraud to prove that real reporters are just as awful as him.

A woman last seen scurrying into the offices of Project Veritas tried to set up *The Washington Post* with a phony story. The intent was to protect Roy Moore, accused of being a child molester and running for Senate in Alabama.

O'Keefe and his people use false identities and lies to bring down people who work their butts off to get at the truth. His operation is tax-exempt, under a clause designed to help religious and charitable groups.

"At Veritas, we believe that we're all journalists now," he said this week. Sure. Your average journalist, laboring in the trenches of tedium at school board meetings, makes less than \$50,000 a year. O'Keefe takes a salary from his nonprofit of more than five times that amount, according to a 2016 tax filing.

As with Trump's tweets, the design is to bring everyone into the sewer. If O'Keefe were a lawyer, he'd be disbarred. Instead, he's protected by the First Amendment that he and Trump are trying to subvert.

Trump attacked CNN International this week, joining autocrats, drug cartels and Islamic militants who also hate independent fact-finders. Already this year, 34 journalists have been killed. Last year, 259 of them were imprisoned.

This president calls journalists "the lowest form of humanity." You know who was a journalist? Winston Churchill. Mark Twain. Frederick Douglass. Teddy Roosevelt. Rachel Carson.

But here's the thing. O'Keefe's fake reporters proved that real reporters have standards. They make mistakes. They issue corrections. They have biases. They're human. But they take the business of news-gathering seriously. And the Dutch Embassy corrected the mighty president on his hate videos.

So in the end, reality will out. You can't stop a hurricane by calling it a snowflake. You can't say you won the Masters when nobody has given you a green winner's jacket on the 18th hole of Augusta National. Well, you can try, and try, and eventually you'll be led away under escort of people in white coats.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the *Pacific Northwest* correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.

YOUR VIEWS

Bipartisan action is possible, even in these divided times

Even with the partisan divisions in Congress today, it is good to know our delegation can find ways to work together on issues that matter to Oregon.

I am writing to thank U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Greg Walden for their work this year to secure a reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program. This program pays for critical research into treatments for diabetes-related illness and a potential cure for Type 1 diabetes.

Earlier this year, both the House and Senate took initial action to reauthorize the program. But there is still work to do before the Congress adjourns for the year.

Reauthorizing the program for at least two years at \$150 million a year will create certainty for medical researchers to help them go forward in their search for new treatments and cures.

As I understand it, U.S. Rep Walden already played a leadership role in getting this issue through the House. It is now before the Senate and I anticipate Sen Wyden will provide leadership there.

Diabetes has a big impact here in Umatilla County, with nearly 1 in 10 residents

impacted by the disease. Diabetes can have a major impact on health, leading to amputations, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, and even premature death.

Thanks to Senator Wyden and Rep. Walden for both being engaged in this issue.

George Murdock
Umatilla County Commissioner, Pendleton

Thanksgiving is a feast to thank God for his blessings

According to the *Indian Country Today* editorial that appeared in the Nov. 22 *East Oregonian*, Thanksgiving 1) "is a myth," 2) the 1621 feast "was not repeated in the years to follow," 3) the Pilgrims "didn't exist until 1870s" and weren't included in the celebration "until the 1890s," 4) "no proof of turkeys," 5) the Indians (Wampanoag) were not invited nor friendly. According to the editorial President Abraham Lincoln made up the myth of Thanksgiving to "calm things down" because the theme of Pilgrims and Indians eating happily together was "a nice unity story."

Most egregiously the editorial quotes "from the mouth of a 5th grader," praising the Pilgrims (that didn't exist yet) for their slaughter of the Pequots. "For the next 100

years, every thanksgiving day ordained by a Governor was in honor of the bloody victory."

The EO did not fact check the veracity of the editorial, which cast doubt on a cherished tradition in America. Here is the documented record written by the Pilgrims that started the Thanksgiving celebration:

"Our governor sent four men on fowling, so that we might after a special manner rejoice together ... many of the Indians coming in amongst us, (including) their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted ... and they went out and killed five deer which they brought to the plantation." (Edward Winslow, Mount Relations, Pilgrim Hall Museum).

Governor William Bradford also documented the first Thanksgiving in 1621 because the pilgrims were "all well recovered in health & strength and had all things in good plenty ... and besides water fowl, there was great store of wild turkeys." (Diary of Plymouth Plantation, Pilgrim Hall Museum).

In 1623 Gov. William Bradford issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation to "render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all his blessings." In 1668 the Plymouth Colony Court decreed the "25th day of November ...

to be kept as a solemn day of thanksgiving." (Pilgrim Hall Museum) The first national day of Thanksgiving was decreed by the Continental Congress on Dec. 18, 1777, in gratitude for the American victory at Saratoga.

President Lincoln had it right when he proclaimed a "National day of Thanksgiving to our benevolent Father who dwellest in Heaven."

Enjoy your turkey and do not allow fake news editorials to undermine your appreciation for the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

Rep. Walden's votes against Medicare will cost him seat

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden: I hope you enjoy your last term.

You have voted without discussion on a bill that will harm Medicare, and those who rely on it and have paid into it for most of their lives.

You are no longer a representative of the people, only the rich.

Randy Holman
Pendleton