

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Listen to legislative leaders

If the Oregon Legislature intends to pass tax and spending reforms in 2019, the work should have begun months ago.

That was the message from veteran legislators at the recent Oregon Leadership Summit. It echoed what Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders said in June: In the 2019 Legislature, focus on structural budget and tax reforms.

Yet Brown told the Leadership Summit this month that she wanted to achieve such reforms a year earlier — in the 2018 Legislature. She said her staff was working on “options to solve the structural deficit issues Oregon faces, not just for the short term but for the long term.”

With that 35-day legislative session starting in February, Brown has yet to show her hand.

Which reinforces why four veteran legislators — Democrats and Republicans — were skeptical about the state soon being able to make progress on tax and spending reforms.

The four lawmakers steered the massive transportation-finance plan through this year’s Legislature. The Democrats — Springfield Sen. Lee Beyer and Coos Bay Rep. Caddy McKeown — chaired the special transportation committee. The Republicans — Dallas Sen. Brian Boquist and Ontario Rep. Cliff Bentz — served as vice chairs.

Their collaborative success might provide a guide for handling revenue and budget reform, which is why the summit’s organizers asked them to speak. Yet the lawmakers warned that financial reform would be far more complicated, difficult and

potentially divisive than the state’s transportation package, far-reaching as it was.

Three approaches were key to the transportation plan:

First, the four legislators operated as a bipartisan leadership team, instead of the Democrats controlling the outcome. The four trusted and respected each other, even when they disagreed, sometimes vehemently.

That team approach recognized political practicality — the majority Democrats would need minority Republicans’ votes for passage. Widespread bipartisan support also would deter critics from trying to overturn the transportation plan through a voter referendum.

That approach also reflected the leadership quartet’s commitment to a transportation plan that would overcome ideological and geographical differences. Maybe it’s noteworthy that three of the four came from rural regions; none represented the Portland metro area; none was considered an ideologue.

Second, the negotiations involved months of work — or years, if you count past iterations of transportation plans.

Third, everyone had a say. Scores of individuals and interest groups from throughout Oregon participated in workgroups. They could not reasonably claim they had not been heard.

In contrast, the 2018 Legislature is only weeks away and Oregonians know little about the governor’s and legislative leaders’ plans for genuine tax and spending reforms. We are not filled with hope.

**With a 35-day session starting in February, Brown has yet to show her hand.**

## OTHER VIEWS

# Raising graduation rates

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Oregon Secretary of State Dennis Richardson’s just-completed audit of high school graduation rates was one of those good news-bad news reports.

While there has been some improvement in the number of students who graduate from high school in four years, overall graduation rates have remained flat if you include students who take longer than four years to graduate.

Improved on-time graduation rates are a good thing for both students and taxpayers, but the bottom line is that too many students — almost one in five — are still leaving school without earning a diploma.

The new audit is useful because it drills down below these numbers to look at which groups are struggling and what might be done to help them.

This is the kind of information that is needed for the state Department of Education to set priorities and craft a plan to reach these goals.

Auditors were critical of the department’s response to low graduation rates in the past, saying it needs “to step up its game and assume its leadership role to make Oregon a leader in education.”

This puts the ball squarely in the court of the department’s new acting head, Colt Gill, a former superintendent of Bethel School District.

Gill was named the acting deputy superintendent in October after his predecessor was fired. Based on Gill’s initial response to the audit, Gov. Kate Brown’s confidence in him is justified.

Gill concurred with the audit recommendations made by the secretary of state — and outlined efforts that are planned or already underway to deal with the concerns raised by auditors.

In some cases, these efforts surpass the recommendations or goals outlined in the audit.

This kind of initiative is going to be needed. Based on federal budget priorities, Oregon public schools are likely to face increased financial pressure in the next few years.

For example, plans at the federal level to do away with the state and local tax exemption, or SALT, are likely to make it even harder to increase local or state taxes to pay for improvements in education.

Currently, taxpayers are allowed to deduct state and local taxes when they file their federal income taxes. In Eugene, for example, a homeowner with an

income of \$75,000 currently can deduct about \$10,300 in state and local taxes from his or her federal income tax obligation, according to the Government Finance Officers Association. Remove those deductions, and that homeowner will pay about \$1,550 more in taxes per year.

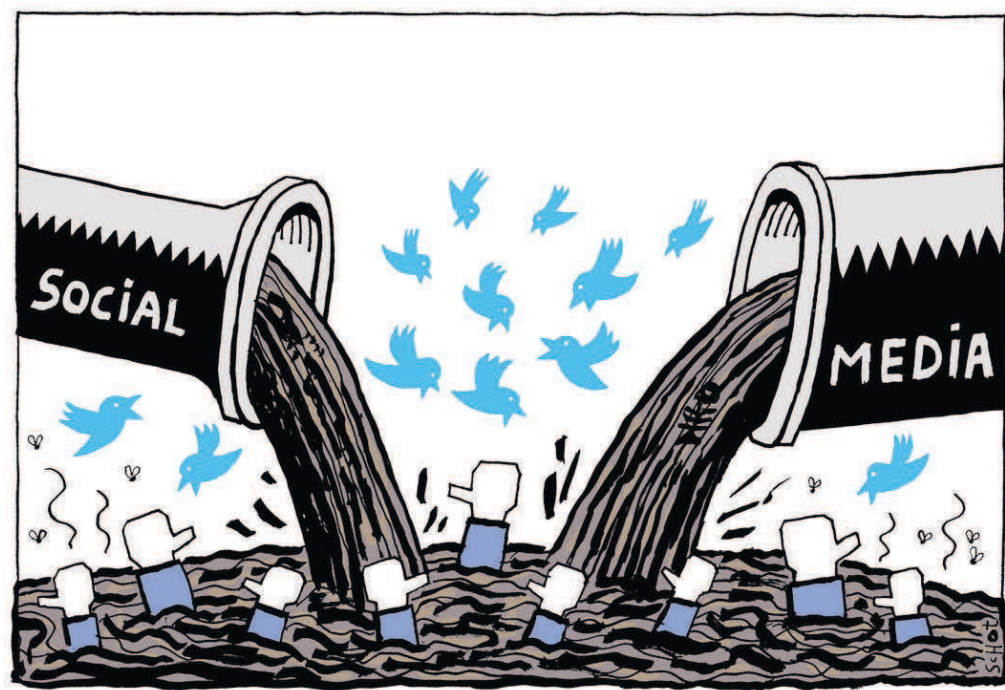
The vast majority of taxpayers who benefit from these SALT deductions are middle income or working class.

For example, about eight times as many taxpayers earning less than \$25,000 a year claim this deduction nationally compared to people with an income of \$1 million or more.

If this tax break goes away, it is likely to make it harder to pass state or local tax measures for schools.

The good news is initiatives already underway within Oregon should help improve graduation rates, including recent increases in funding for Career and Technical Education.

But it’s going to require building a partnership between the Department of Education, local school districts and community members to improve graduation rates in the face of these new challenges.



## OTHER VIEWS

# Bringing down our monsters

WASHINGTON — Jaws drop and drop and drop. Until it seems it will never stop.

You would think we would get numb at some point. But no. There are just too many numbskulls.

We cannot refresh our browsers fast enough to see the latest stupefactions on sexual violations and Trump violations — which dovetail in a surreal way.

Every day, TV anchors breathlessly report some bizarre new insult or accusation or hissy fit or Putin nuzzling by the president, as he wanders around howling in the storm like a late-stage Lear — raging, blowing, spouting, wits turning — in his White House of dark delusions.

The dynamic in the capital grows ever more dangerous, as Donald Trump tells fables to justify the unjustifiable and his staff feeds him more fables in a futile attempt to manage his puerile moods. Truth is held hostage to Trump’s ego. The country’s fate — and the world’s — rests on who best flatters America’s Grand Canyon of Need.

As men are falling, women are rising. The gender gap in Virginia and Alabama presages a gender chasm in 2018.

Democratic women in Congress have decided they may be able to expel the president on his self-confessed sexual larceny. If they can purge their own party’s offenders and drive women to the polls by whipping up outrage over the absurdity of the nation’s avatar of aspirations and values being immune from the penalties facing other gropers, then they could take back the House and maybe even the Senate and hold hearings on the Harasser in Chief.

“We are not going to let up,” Rep. Lois Frankel of Florida, chairwoman of the Democratic Women’s Working Group, told *The New York Times*’ Carl Hulse. “This is so much bigger than us.”

The country is going through twin traumas that seem pagan in their lack of decency.

With so many grotesque stories tumbling out about marauding men treating women as property or their office as their “stable,” as one former NBC producer said in the case of Matt Lauer, you’d think it would be hard to remain at peak disgust.

And yet I felt the revulsion rising yet again as I read Salma Hayek’s *Times* op-ed piece about her nightmarish experience with the depraved Harvey Weinstein when she was trying to get her Frida Kahlo movie made with Weinstein producing — and demeaning and threatening and pouncing and punishing.

Hayek recalled that she was “lost in the fog of a sort of Stockholm syndrome,” thinking if she made some compromises — Weinstein demanded she add a full-frontal nude sex scene with Ashley Judd — that he would come to see her as an artist.

It perfectly captured the rotten little secret that has long been corroding Hollywood. The industry that helps shape our view of women has fallen into gender apartheid — Saudi Arabia on Sunset Boulevard.



**MAUREEN DOWD**  
Comment

Even though women are half of ticket buyers, only 4 percent of the 100 top-grossing films over the last decade were directed by women. Women make up 11 percent of writers, 3 percent of cinematographers, 19 percent of producers and 14 percent of editors. The quality of women’s roles, once so rich in the ‘30s and ‘40s, has atrophied. Last year, women comprised only 29 percent of protagonists.

There has been lip service given to fixing the inequality, but no one in power ever raised holy hell about it — not the women studio chiefs, not the male studio executives, not the unions.

Hollywood was a warped society and everyone knew it. Gender stereotypes were enshrined in amber: Women can’t direct because it’s too risky to trust them with big budgets; they get too emotional; they only want to direct movies where people talk or, God forbid, cry; they don’t have the authority to come across as commanding generals.

That’s why monsters were allowed to roam, feeling entitled to human sacrifices, vulnerable young women offered at the altar of art, ambition and box office.

Hayek asks the infuriating key question: “But why do so many of us, as female artists, have to go to war to tell our stories when we have so much to offer? Why do we have to fight tooth and nail to maintain our dignity?”

With so many talented women and so many ticket-buying women, why had Hollywood stopped trying “to find out what female audiences wanted to see and what

stories we wanted to tell.” When I wrote a *Times* Magazine piece two years ago, interviewing scores of women directors, writers, producers and cinematographers and studying their amazing work, I got more and more angry as I realized that these women were being systematically excluded based on ridiculous biases.

I believed the top woman producer who told me that it involved something as primitive as men in Hollywood not wanting to be bossed around by women because it made them think of hectoring wives and mothers.

There are a lot of well-meaning people with power in Hollywood. But they have looked the other way for far too long on shameful imbalances.

As Melissa Silverstein, founder and publisher of *Women and Hollywood*, told me, “Just because we finally had a successful superhero movie directed by a woman, we now see that we are still really at the beginning.”

Hayek nailed it when she concluded: “Until there is equality in our industry, with men and women having the same value in every aspect of it, our community will continue to be a fertile ground for predators.”

No wonder, given the state of Washington and Hollywood, Dictionary.com chose “complicit” as its word of the year.

Maureen Dowd, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, became a *New York Times* columnist in 1995.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Widening opportunity gap requires immediate action

As 2017 draws to a close, we consider the challenges, hopes and opportunities for the year ahead and we are confronted with the stark reality that Oregon can and must do better for children and families. It is humbling to know that more than 100,000 children in Oregon are living in households with \$800 a month or less in income. If nothing changes, these children — and many more in Oregon — are unlikely to escape poverty and its effects during their lifetime.

New research from The Oregon Community Foundation confirms that disparities in Oregon are growing along socioeconomic, racial and geographic lines. The circumstances of one’s birth, where one is born, and longstanding patterns of discrimination determine the lifelong opportunities that are available to Oregon’s children. Families face economic stagnation, children face barriers to quality education and neighborhoods are increasingly segregated and isolated. Left unaddressed, this gap in opportunity will cut to the very core of Oregon’s future.

But we can change this trajectory and close the opportunity gap for many of Oregon’s children by supporting economically and racially integrated affordable housing

solutions, encouraging community engagement and promoting leadership development. Parenting education and expanded career and technical education opportunities are also part of the solution. We need to invest in education, from quality and affordable childcare and preschool to out-of-school enrichment, mentoring, and access to higher education.

These strategies will be most successful when they are led by community members who can best define community assets, problems and potential solutions.

Challenges and assets in each community are varied and there is not one “silver bullet” solution. But we have faith in the real power of Oregon communities to address these challenges because we see examples around the state where communities, donors, volunteers, government leaders and nonprofit organizations are addressing these challenges.

As we enter the new year, we challenge Oregon to focus on the children whose promise of the American dream is becoming an illusion. Timely solutions will come from committed Oregonians who are willing to organize, collaborate, advocate and invest in families and strategies that renew the promise of the American dream for every Oregon child.

**Tim Mabry**  
Hermiston