

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

KATHRYN B. BROWN  
PublisherDANIEL WATTENBURGER  
Managing EditorTIM TRAINOR  
Opinion Page Editor

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## OUR VIEW

## Marijuana money rolls in

The results are in: Marijuana receipts in Pendleton — the only municipality in northeast Oregon to allow recreational and medical sales — are far beyond initial expectations.

In the current fiscal year, which started in July and still has six months to go, the city has already brought in \$131,963 in tax money from marijuana. The Pendleton City Council had budgeted just \$25,000 in marijuana revenue for the entire fiscal year. Remember, for instance, the gas tax the city floated (and was defeated by voters) in November 2015 that was expected to bring in about \$550,000 per year. Now the city is getting half of that with a voluntary sin tax (approved by voters).

The council was right to start with a conservative estimate of marijuana tax income. When they had to first ballpark a number, there were no retailers open yet in the city and it was unknown how many — if any — entrepreneurs would take the plunge.

But three stores have since opened, and despite some concerns with how a couple are operating, it has been a relatively easy jump across the gorge of prohibition.

And for Pendleton, it has been a leap that came with serious monetary reward.

The city has no shortage of uses for the money. Although not the most useful about 360 days of the year, the city could do worse from a public relations perspective than buying a sparkling new snowplow (or better yet, a half-priced used one!) to help clear its streets each winter. The city public works department could certainly use another infusion for its roads — and using the money on something tangible may help persuade those who were not supportive of allowing a new, federally prohibited industry to operate in city limits. And public safety, the department that deals with the downsides of legal marijuana, could use a cut to cover the costs of dealing with the new businesses and their customers.

This all comes, however, against the backdrop of noise that marijuana may be once again in the crosshairs of the federal government. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a noted marijuana opponent, removed the barrier last week that kept Department of Justice



AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty

prosecutors from pursuing marijuana cases in states that had made pot legal.

It's hard to parse the conflicting messages coming from the White House, but we don't think Sessions' actions will have much impact on policy. Marijuana has arrived to a number of states, it has worked better than expected, and it is helping raise money for cash-strapped governments.

We think that other municipalities in Eastern Oregon, especially smaller

ones suffering from a lack of revenue and new industries, should reconsider their opposition to the drug. The upside is higher than many in the region thought it would be, and the downside is manageable. Assuredly, Pendleton is hoping other cities keep their bans and keep sending their customers in its direction.

Marijuana tax revenue is not a panacea, but it pays better than prohibition.

## OTHER VIEWS

## With DC distracted, immigration debate reaches critical point

While Washington obsesses over a new book on White House intrigue, the Trump administration is reaching a critical point on the issue of immigration, one of the president's top priorities and the subject of his most often-repeated campaign promises.

There are multiple moving parts: The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, a border wall, chain migration, the visa lottery and — hanging over it all — funding the government. But everything hinges on DACA, unilaterally imposed by Barack Obama to temporarily legalize nearly 800,000 people who were brought to the U.S. illegally when they were young.

When President Trump rescinded DACA last Sept. 5, he delayed implementation for six months to give Congress time to come up with some sort of solution for the so-called Dreamers. That means lawmakers need to act by March 5 or face a decidedly uncertain future.

Nearly everyone on Capitol Hill wants a fix that results in legalization for the Dreamers. Democrats want to legalize right away, straight up, no strings attached. But Trump and most Republicans want a deal: immigration reforms — the wall, chain migration, visa lottery — in exchange for legalization.

That's where funding the government comes in. A temporary funding resolution passed last month expires on Jan. 19. Congress can pass a "clean" bill to avoid a partial shutdown, or it can have a fight if one party tries to attach unrelated policy preferences to the must-pass spending bill.

That is the traditional Republican role, which has led Republicans to believe that they always lose shutdown fights. But it is probably more accurate to say that Republicans don't always lose shutdown fights — it is the party that tries to attach unrelated policy preferences to must-pass spending bills that loses shutdown fights. In the past, that has been Republicans. This time, it might be Democrats.

The Senate's No. 2 Democrat, Dick Durbin, appears to be itching to set off a shutdown crisis over DACA. "President Trump has said he may need a good government shutdown to get his wall," Durbin said recently. "With this demand (for wall funding), he seems to be heading in that direction."

But Trump, who in the past has threatened a government shutdown over the wall, is now proposing trading his policy preferences — the wall, etc. — in exchange for DACA legalization. "The wall is going to happen, or we're not going to have DACA," he said recently. He hasn't demanded they be passed in order to keep the government running. Durbin is suggesting Democrats demand DACA passage to keep the government in business.

It's a losing strategy. Democrats could

have pursued it when government funding came up in December. But when push came to shove, they didn't. Now, will they try for real?

"If the government were to shut down because of DACA, it would elevate the question of amnesty for these illegal immigrants far beyond the status it has now," says one GOP lawmaker. That seems less likely to capture the voters' attention than a question of shutting down the government.

It's one thing to block a DACA fix because of a policy demand — in this case, the wall. But it's a much different thing to force a partial government shutdown because of a policy demand. Durbin and Democrats are likely to find that out, if they don't already know.

Assuming the government is funded, with either a long-term or kick-the-can, short-term measure, the DACA negotiations will start in earnest ahead of that March 5 deadline.

Can Trump get what he wants, or part of what he wants? At the moment, Democrats seem determined to throw their bodies in front of any plan to build a wall. The president has asked Congress to put aside \$18 billion over the next 10 years for the job. That seems doomed.

But what about some other idea? What about passing a down payment — the House has already approved \$1.6 billion — as part of another plan?

"One possibility would be a relatively modest down payment that Democrats could swallow," said the GOP lawmaker, "and then authorization for a user-fee model for future years. So a fee for visas or border crossings could be turned into a dedicated revenue stream for wall construction." (That would, by the way, mean that, yes, Mexico pays for the wall, or at least a significant part of it.)

The president also wants a measure to stop chain migration, and perhaps a provision to end the visa lottery, too. It seems highly unlikely he would get it all. But he might get something.

Trump will be offering permanent legalization for those nearly 800,000 Dreamers, or perhaps for an even larger group referred to as DACA-eligible. It depends on whether Democrats believe that giving Trump something in return is the only way to achieve that legalization.

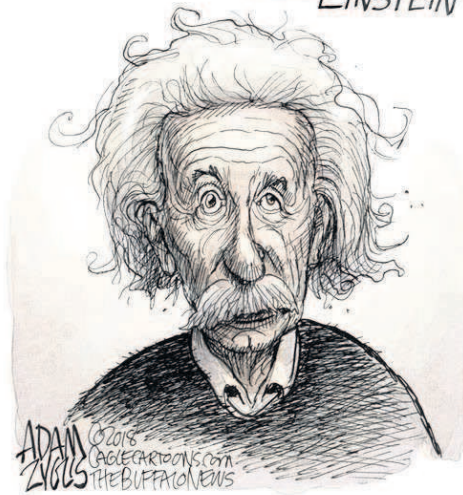
It is a decisive moment in the Trump presidency, and in the debate over immigration. Right now, it's fair to say nearly no one in the Washington press corps is paying much attention — they would much rather discuss Steve Bannon, or the 25th Amendment or whether the president watches too much TV. But the coming weeks will be crucial for the agenda that won Donald Trump the White House.

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

The more I learn,  
the more I realize  
how much I don't know.

— EINSTEIN

I'm, like, really  
smart and a stable  
GENIUS!



## YOUR VIEWS

### Cleaning up dogs' business has become our business

The good news? Perhaps after New Year's Day people have resolved to get out and walk with their dog more often. Good for the health of the dog and the human. The bad news? Some humans are forgetting to pick up after their dogs do their business. In fact, quite a few seem to have forgotten.

Recently we were walking our dog along the river walkway, played at the dog park, and then stopped at a local park on the way home to enjoy a cup of coffee from Buckin' Bean. I'm not exaggerating when I say we picked up eight piles of dog feces along the way. I'm not counting the business of our own dog. Thank goodness, we always carry many bags.

But that is ridiculous! Dog owners, haven't you noticed that runners and walkers with whom we share the areas have frequently stepped in it, getting it on their shoes and smearing it further on the pavement or grass? I can assure you that they are just as disgruntled as we are.

More surprisingly, we have found numerous piles at the dog park. The Pendleton Parks and Rec Department thoughtfully placed two bag dispensers, (yes, they are full of bags) and two waste receptacles. There's no reason there should be piles of feces at the dog park.

So, you bag-less dog walkers out there, it's really easy: put several bags in your pocket. Pick up after your dog. Dispose of the bag. We can all continue to walk, run, bike and be healthy in 2018 without having to worry about stepping in a pile.

Connie Macomber, Ron Fonger & Tia the dog  
Pendleton

### Drug companies make millions off our poor health

Most everyone knows we have an opioid crisis. Big city hospitals are snowed under by overdose patients now on a daily basis. Overprescription of

painkillers is one of the big causes.

However, you would be surprised to find out who is the biggest drug pusher in your community. No, it isn't the suspicious character in the hoodie and sunglasses lurking in the park. No, the worst drug dealer by far is your local TV provider.

The corrupt drug companies have used their wealth, power and expensive lobbying to force the FDA to allow TV advertising, which means we now get about 80 drug ads per hour every day of the week. This seemed impossible to me, so I started keeping track of the drug ads on TV, and I was astounded to find how bad it really is.

In just a couple days I had a very long list of TV drug ads, seen while the kids are watching cartoons and people are watching football, evening news and "The Price is Right." There was \$6 billion spent in 2016 on drug ads, with Lyrica spending \$313 million, Humira spending \$303 million and Eliquis \$186 million.

So think about that — drug companies are not happy with the obscene amount of money they make just allowing doctors to prescribe them normally. Drug companies now want to get to the customer — before they even see the doctor — to try and condition them to need this drug before they have their first appointment.

As a cancer survivor, I am thankful for good doctors and good medicine, but then I would probably also be dead if the Veteran's Administration didn't step up and help pay the more than \$200,000 in chemo treatments to beat this horrible disease. And think of the thousands of good people who die anyway after having to pay this huge amount for medications, hospital stays, scans and surgeries anyway.

Also consider the billions and billions of dollars spent on cancer research, and we are still not much closer to finding a cure. The sad truth is thousands of clinics, research centers, doctors and drug companies might go out of business if a cure was found.

David Burns  
Pendleton

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