

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Offshore drilling here? Absolutely not

In view of all the other environmental rollbacks of the past year, it is unsurprising and yet still somehow shocking that the Trump Administration would move toward opening the West Coast to petroleum exploration.

Perhaps best viewed as a middle-finger salute by the president to the three mainland Pacific states that voted for his opponent, the immediate consequences of the oil-leasing plan are likely to be few — at least off Washington and Oregon.

Not only will the administration's action be tied up in political wrangling and lawsuits for years, there is substantial room to doubt whether there actually is an economic quantity of fossil fuel to be found here.

Past onshore drilling on the Pacific Northwest coast hasn't proven successful and there is reason to suspect that eons of subduction zone earthquakes have rendered our geology uncondusive to the formation of hydrocarbon deposits.

No matter what the prospects for future exploration and exploitation of oil may be in our waters, the governors of Washington, Oregon and California are absolutely right to mount a unified

front of opposition to the very notion of drilling. They deserve our ongoing encouragement and support in blocking this blockheaded proposal.

Time after time we have seen horrific environmental costs from oil development and transportation. From the *Exxon Valdez* disaster to the BP blowout in the Gulf of Mexico, the giant corporations that run this industry and the undermanned agencies that police it have shown themselves incapable of guaranteeing there will not be horrific, negligent incidents for which they are loath to take responsibility.

Any such "accident" off of the Oregon Coast would have the distinct potential of killing several crucial industries — tourism, oystering, crabbing and fishing.

As the governors asserted last week in a joint statement, the administration has "chosen to forget the utter devastation of past offshore oil spills to wildlife and to the fishing, recreation and tourism industries in our states.

They've chosen to ignore the science that tells us our climate is changing and we must reduce our dependence on



The oil drilling rig Polar Pioneer is towed in Elliott Bay in Seattle in 2015.

Associated Press

fossil fuels. But we won't forget history or ignore science ... For more than 30 years, our shared coastline has been protected from further federal drilling and we'll do whatever it takes to stop this reckless, short-sighted action."

Even the somewhat more modest exploratory activities associated with identifying oil deposits in the first place have the potential of harming rockfish habitat, interfering with whale migrations and feeding, and increasing vessel traffic and noise in areas essential to endangered species from salmon to orcas.

Those who oppose offshore oil and gas exploration in Pacific Northwest and Alaskan waters have been painted

as obstructionist worrywarts, more concerned with sea otters and kelp than energy independence.

In fact, few Americans of any political persuasion dispute that, for now, we continue to need fossil fuels to power our vehicles and help warm our homes. But there currently is no shortage of oil that could possibly justify placing the West Coast at risk. Gasoline prices remain stable. Adjusted for inflation, they are about what they were 90 years ago — and down from a decade ago.

Opening the West Coast to drilling is about greed and politics, not about need for energy. It should be stopped dead in its tracks.

OTHER VIEWS

The decline of anti-Trumpism

Let me start with three inconvenient observations, based on dozens of conversations around Washington over the past year:

First, people who go into the White House to have a meeting with President Donald Trump usually leave pleasantly surprised. They find that Trump is not the raving madman they expected from his tweetstorms or the media coverage. They generally say that he is affable, if repetitive. He runs a normal, good meeting and seems well-informed enough to get by.

Second, people who work in the Trump administration have wildly divergent views about their boss. Some think he is a deranged child, as Michael Wolff reported. But some think he is merely a distraction they can work around. Some think he is strange, but not impossible. Some genuinely admire Trump. Many filter out his crazy stuff and pretend it doesn't exist.

My impression is that the Trump administration is an unhappy place to work, because there is a lot of fighting and often no direction from the top. But this is not an administration full of people itching to invoke the 25th Amendment.

Third, the White House is getting more professional. Imagine if Trump didn't tweet. The craziness of the past weeks would be out of the way, and we'd see a White House that is briskly pursuing its goals: the shift in our Pakistan policy, the shift in our offshore drilling policy, the fruition of our Islamic State policy, the nomination for judgeships and the formation of policies on infrastructure, DACA, North Korea and trade.

It's almost as if there are two White Houses. There's the Potemkin White House, which we tend to focus on: Trump berserk in front of the TV, the lawyers working the Russian investigation and the press operation. Then there is the Invisible White House that you never hear about, which is getting more effective at managing around the distracted boss.

I sometimes wonder if the Invisible White House has learned to use the Potemkin White House to deke us while it changes the country.

I mention these inconvenient observations because the anti-Trump movement, of which I'm a proud member, seems to be getting dumber. It seems to be settling into a smug, fairy tale version of reality that filters out discordant information. More anti-Trumpers seem to be telling themselves a "Madness of King George" narrative: Trump is a semiliterate madman surrounded by sycophants who are morally, intellectually and psychologically inferior to people like us.

I'd like to think it's possible to be fervently anti-Trump while also not reducing everything to a fairy tale.

The anti-Trump movement suffers from insularity. Most of the people who detest



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Trump don't know anybody who works with him or supports him. And if they do have friends and family members who admire Trump, they've learned not to talk about this subject. So they get most of their information about Trumpism from others who also detest Trumpism, which is always a recipe for epistemic closure.

The movement also suffers from lowbrowism. Fox News pioneered modern lowbrowism. The modern lowbrow (think Sean Hannity or Dinesh D'Souza) ignores normal journalistic or intellectual standards. He creates a style of communication that doesn't make you think more; it makes you think and notice less. He offers a steady diet of affirmation, focuses on simple topics that require little background information, and gets viewers addicted to daily doses of righteous contempt and delicious vindication.

We anti-Trumpers have our lowbrowism, too, mostly on late-night TV. But anti-Trump lowbrowism burst into full bloom with the Wolff book.

Wolff doesn't pretend to adhere to normal journalistic standards. He happily admits that he's just tossing out rumors that are too good to check. As Charlie Warzel wrote on BuzzFeed, "For Wolff's book, the truth seems almost a secondary concern to what really matters: engagement."

The ultimate test of the lowbrow is not whether it challenges you, teaches you or captures the contours of reality; it's whether you feel an urge to share it on social media.

In every war, nations come to resemble their enemies, so I suppose it's normal that the anti-Trump movement would come to resemble the pro-Trump movement.

But it's not good. I've noticed a lot of young people look at the monotonous daily hysteria of we anti-Trumpers and they find it silly.

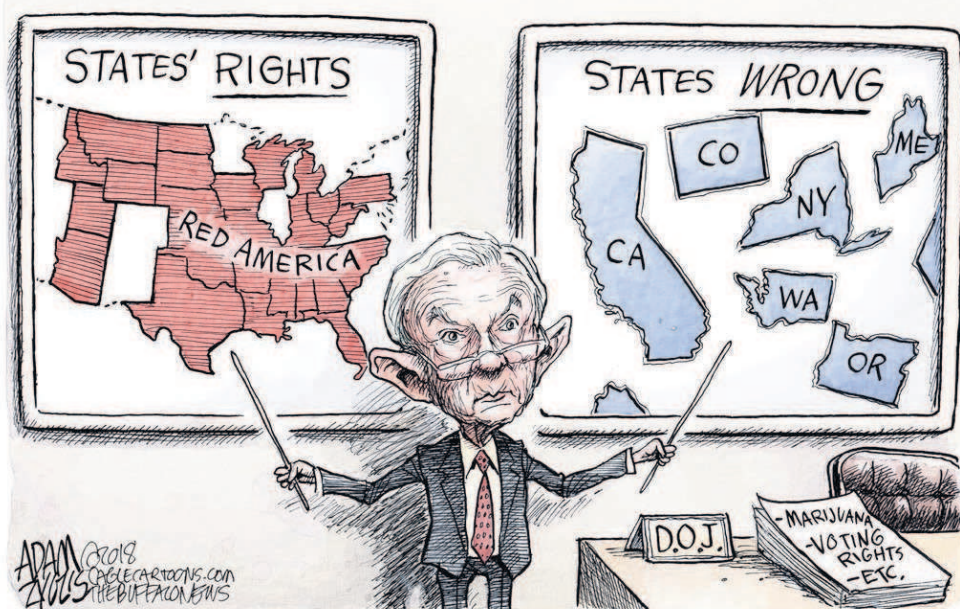
This isn't just a struggle over a president. It's a struggle over what rules we're going to play by after Trump. Are we all going to descend permanently into the Trump standard of acceptable behavior?

Or, are we going to restore the distinction between excellence and mediocrity, truth and a lie? Are we going to insist on the difference between a genuine expert and an ill-informed blowhard? Are we going to restore the distinction between those institutions like the Congressional Budget Office that operate by professional standards and speak with legitimate authority, and the propaganda mills that don't?

There's a hierarchy of excellence in every sphere. There's a huge difference between William F. Buckley and Sean Hannity, between the reporters at *The New York Times* and a rumor-spreader. Part of this struggle is to maintain those distinctions, not to contribute to their evisceration.

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

Class IS IN SESSIONS...



YOUR VIEWS

Attorney General Sessions sullies his Southern heritage

I do declare, Attorney General Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III has brought considerable shame upon the honor of his southern heritage. Why, if he stands by and allows the federal government to infringe on the rights of states to make a little ol' weed a legal and taxable commodity then he may as well take up with the damn Yankees! His dignity, I say, his very dignity is called into question by directing the U.S. Justice Department to flout the sovereign wishes of 29 members of this so-called Union and attempt to prosecute those in the humble business of cannabis harvestin'.

Why, I'd venture to guess that if President Jefferson Davis — a simple cotton farmer and the man Mr. Sessions, his daddy before him and his granddaddy before him were named after — was to hear that his namesake was defendin' the federal government's prohibition of a lucrative cash crop, why, he'd a be rollin' in his ol' Virginia grave! Does the Attorney General not remember that his kinfolk fought and died defendin' states' rights under the proud banner of Dixie? Or does he think that the Civil War was fought over somethin' silly like slavery? Frankly, I do suppose that if you were to ask him, he'd say somethin' like: "I do not recall ..."

Peter Walters, Pendleton

Vote no on Measure 101

My comments are made based on reviewing the Oregon Voters Pamphlet and "yes" vote advertisements and comments from folks I trust.

First of all, this Measure 101 is not just a simple "temporary" assessment (sales tax). If we vote against it, do you honestly think that this legislature will not pass another law with different language to reinstate the tax? Since when have you seen this

legislature respect the will of the voter?

Remember? The Federal Income Tax was put in as a "temporary" tax.

Second, this is a tax on existing health insurance premium payers, and some hospitals.

Third, this is a Medicaid tax, and insurance premium "stabilizer" (they don't explain what that is.) Medicaid is for the officially financially poor. Most of us are glad that Medicaid is there. We are not appreciating the lack of accountability and competence of the Oregon Health Authority in general (note the Secretary of State's recent audit) and, specifically, in handling the Medicaid program. This tax will be an act of throwing good money after bad.

Fourth, in the Voters Pamphlet, under "Estimate of Financial Impact," it says: "there may be an indeterminate effect on local government expenditures related to increases in associated insurances assessments. There is likely to be an indirect and indeterminate effect on the state economy and local government revenues and expenditures."

Fifth, comments on the "no" vote arguments listed below: Don't count on this medical "sales tax" only going to fund medical budget line items. Don't count on this medical "sales tax" only going to fund medical budget line items for "in-state" legal residents only. Don't count on this medical "sales tax" only going to fund medical budget line items to not increase your school district tax portion of your property tax (or, reduce educational services.) By reason of the "trickle down" or "pass through" or "domino effect," it is easy to see how school costs will rise and how commercial business costs will rise.

Who will pay? Answer: The property tax payer, the purchaser at the store, and the individual insurance premium payer. In most cases, that is you.

No new taxes.

Larry Nye, Athena