

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

### Go ahead, put a label on it

Foodies, farmers, processors and others spend a lot of time talking about labels, and there are plenty to talk about.

They include how and where food was grown and processed and what is — and isn't — in it. Labels spell out whether food has gluten, genetically modified ingredients and whether it was grown organically.

They also include how many calories a serving contains and, in many cases, how much fat and other substances are in it.

All of which is fine. We're in favor of information.

But we also wonder how much time consumers spend reading labels on food items. Our guess is that while a few people read every word, others, particularly those who are pressed for time, probably don't. They might look for a particular brand or type of ingredient, but otherwise it may be a case of too much information.

For example, consider a small bag of Lays barbecue potato chips straight from the vending machine in the lunchroom. On the front is the fact that the chips were baked instead of fried. Because of that they have 65 percent less fat than regular chips, according to the label. Another label indicates they are gluten free, which isn't unusual since potatoes don't have gluten. And the entire 1

1/8-ounce bag of chips is 140 calories.

On the back are more labels, one stating that the potato chips have no artificial preservatives or flavors and another stating there are no trans fats.

A big label includes nutrition facts and ingredients. Consumers are told the bag has 5 percent of the total daily value for fat.

That includes 3 percent saturated fat, but no trans fat — the label on the front of the bag also said that — and no polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats. They are also told the chips have 8 percent of the daily value of sodium and 9 percent of the daily value of carbohydrates, including dietary fiber and total sugars and added sugars. There is no cholesterol. Then there are the ingredients, which include dried potatoes, corn starch, corn oil, sugar and salt — a total of 25.

Pretty exciting stuff. If anyone ever needs help getting to sleep, we suggest reading a food container. Or better yet, they can read the 3,600-word explanation of the nutrition label on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration website.

The proliferation of labels also makes us wonder whether consumers are being overwhelmed. Does the fact that potato chips don't have gluten warrant a separate label? Does a busy shopper need



A typical bag of potato chips includes labels about everything from gluten to trans fat and calorie count.

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all that information, down to the daily value percentage of dietary fiber?

Yet the call is for more labels, not fewer.

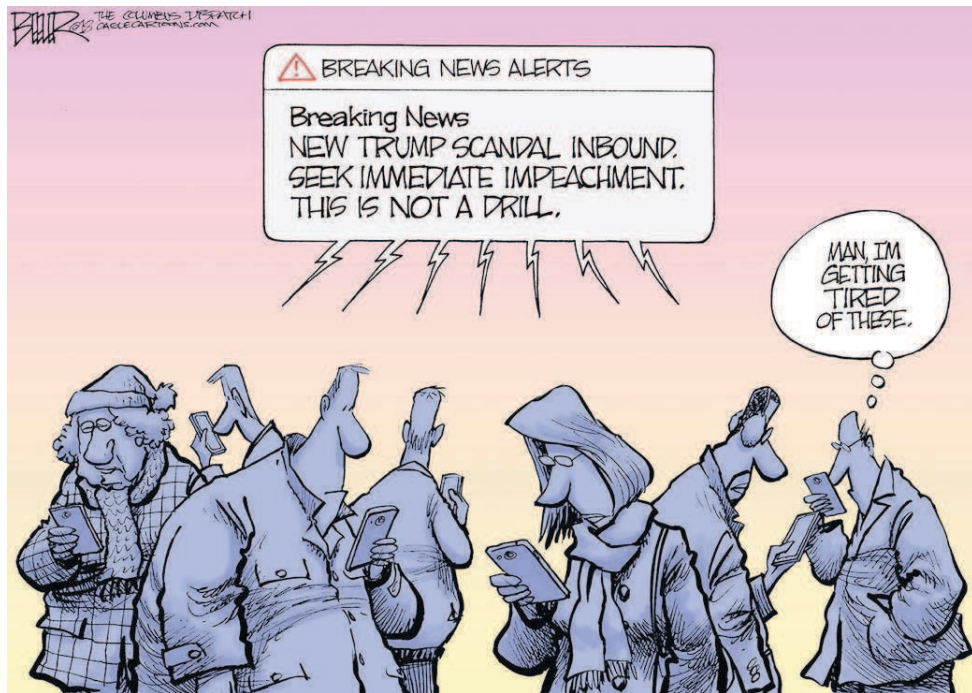
Some ranchers want U.S. beef labeled as such. The World Trade Organization forced the repeal of a mandatory country of origin label on beef because the governments of Canada and Mexico complained that it hurt trade.

However, nothing prevents processors or stores from voluntarily

labeling U.S. beef.

Likewise, some dairy farmers would like to see a "U.S.A." label on milk and dairy products. A version of the voluntary "Real" seal already in use includes "made in America."

So go ahead, plaster more labels on everything. But we still believe most consumers primarily rely on another label — the price tag — more than all the others combined when they decide what to buy.



## YOUR VIEWS

### President Trump's shameful language

I was ashamed to hear the remarks Mr. Trump made regarding people coming here from other countries. Any man's dystopian language demeans us all.

Dorys C. Grover, Pendleton

## OTHER VIEWS

### Measure 101 decision needs facts

The Oregonian/OregonLive

There are plenty of reasons to vote "no" on Measure 101, the referendum on new taxes to fund Oregon's Medicaid program. The sheer inequity of asking college students, K-12 school districts and small businesses to shoulder the cost of an essential program while exempting others is one of the biggest reasons *The Oregonian* editorial board recommended that Oregonians vote "no" and demand that the Legislature deliver a better solution.

Voters, of course, may well disagree. But they should base their decision on facts, not on inaccurate or misleading information peddled by those supporting the "yes" side. Here's a look at a few of the claims that deserve some truthsquadding.

**Claim No. 1:** Tax, schmax. The funding mechanisms in Measure 101 are "fees" and "assessments."

The provisions in Measure 101 — a 0.7 percent tax on hospitals and a 1.5 percent tax on select health-care premiums — are, without question, taxes.

Yet, you won't find that word anywhere in the ballot measure title and description, which was written by a committee of four Democratic legislators and two Republican legislators. Instead, the title uses the less-specific term "assessment."

**Claim No. 2:** Fine. It's a tax. But those responsible for paying it think it's a fantastic idea.

Who are the customers footing the tax? Thousands of college students who are required to buy health insurance offered through their schools, small businesses that

provide health plans for their employees and others who buy their insurance through the health exchange. The law also levies the premium tax on K-12 school districts and the Public Employees Benefit Board.

**Claim No. 3:** There's no Plan B. The argument from some on the "yes" side is that Oregonians should endorse the new taxes because the state has no back-up plan. But that ignores the fact that the Legislature actually moved the Measure 101 election to January for the express purpose of giving themselves a chance to develop a Plan B in the short legislative session if voters reject Measure 101.

**Claim No. 4:** Defeat of the measure jeopardizes \$5 billion in federal funds. The Yes on 101 campaign argues that the loss of \$210 million to \$320 million in state revenue would risk \$5 billion in federal funds. This isn't however, what the state's budget actually shows. As the financial impact estimate notes, those state funds are tied to \$630 million to \$960 million in federal funds — not \$5 billion.

**Claim No. 5:** Forty-nine states use "the same types of assessments."

That depends on how broad your definition of "same types of assessment" is. While every state except Alaska collects assessments from health-care providers, few states levy a tax on health care premiums, according to Rachel Garfield with the Kaiser Family Foundation, which tracks how states fund Medicaid.

Voters have until Jan. 23 to get their ballots in. Those who believe the Legislature can and must do better than this inequitable plan should mark their ballots "no."

## OTHER VIEWS

### Paul Manafort has a point

It's not a popular thing to defend Paul Manafort, the international influence peddler who ran Donald Trump's presidential campaign for a time in 2016. Just search for "Manafort" and, say, "sleazeball," and see what comes up. But even bad guys have a case sometimes. And Manafort has a case in his lawsuit against Trump-Russia special counsel Robert Mueller.

Mueller sent Manafort a strong message last July, when FBI agents working for Mueller, guns drawn, broke into Manafort's house in the pre-dawn hours while Manafort and his wife slept inside. Mueller sent another message last October, when he indicted Manafort on eight counts (out of a total of 12) that targeted allegedly criminal acts that ended in 2014 or 2015, before Manafort's participation in the Trump campaign. None of the counts concerned alleged collusion during the 2016 campaign between Trump or his associates and Russia.

Now, Manafort has pushed back with a lawsuit against Mueller. Manafort argues that the Justice Department gave Mueller overbroad powers, and that, as a result, the investigation of Manafort, and the resulting indictment, has ventured "beyond the scope of (Mueller's) authority" granted to him by deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein.

Some legal analysts have characterized Manafort's lawsuit as frivolous. If Manafort were really serious, they say, he would have filed a motion with the court that will try the case against him. Or he would have made a different legal argument.

This is not to argue with that legal thinking. But everything in the Trump-Russia affair operates on two levels, the legal level and the political level. And on the political setting, Manafort has made a strong case that he is being treated unfairly.

Rosenstein authorized Mueller to investigate three things. First was "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump."

Second was "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation."

Third was crimes like perjury or obstruction of justice that occurred "in the course of, and with intent to interfere with, the Special Counsel's investigation."

Manafort's objection is to the second part of Mueller's charge, "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation." Manafort's argument is that virtually invited Mueller to venture far afield from the Trump-Russia topic — and violated those Justice Department regulations guiding special counsels.

The regulations specify that the special counsel "will be provided with



BYRON YORK  
Comment

a specific factual statement of the matter to be investigated." That's what Rosenstein did when assigning Mueller to probe alleged coordination between Trump and Russia. Manafort does not object. But the regulations go on to say that if the special counsel feels the need to go beyond his original charge, he "shall consult with the Attorney General," who will decide whether that request should be granted.

Manafort argues that some of the charges against him — for example, that he failed to file reports on his interest in foreign bank accounts in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, as well as that he failed to register as a foreign agent between 2008 and 2014 — not only have nothing to do with the Trump-Russia affair but allegedly began and ended before Manafort's association with the Trump campaign. They clearly do not fall under the first part of Mueller's charge.

### Everything in the Trump-Russia affair operates on two levels: the legal level and political level.

If Mueller wanted to pursue those matters, Manafort argues, Justice Department regulations require that he "consult with the attorney general" (or in this case, the deputy attorney general), to get permission to broaden the scope of his investigation. But Mueller did not have

to do that because Rosenstein had already given him an overly broad appointment by granting him the authority to pursue "any matters that arose or may arise directly from" that investigation.

"That exceeds the scope of Mr. Rosenstein's authority to appoint special counsel as well as specific restrictions on the scope of such appointments," Manafort's suit argues. "Indeed, the Appointment Order in effect purports to grant Mr. Mueller carte blanche to investigate and pursue criminal charges in connection with anything he stumbles across while investigating, no matter how remote from the specific matter identified as the subject of the Appointment Order."

There is plenty of legal arcana in the suit, and many legal objections to be made to it. And Mueller and Rosenstein could moot the whole thing by explicitly expanding Mueller's authority to include specific activities that have no connection to the Trump-Russia affair.

But as a political case, Manafort makes a strong point: Mueller is prosecuting people (Manafort and associate Rick Gates) for alleged crimes that have nothing to do with Donald Trump, Russia and the 2016 election. That political argument may be heard more and more as the Mueller investigation goes on.

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

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