

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Trump's chance to prove he's serious on ag

Many people in agriculture find something to like about President Donald Trump.

The way the president and his Cabinet have pumped the brakes on ever-expanding regulations is enough to show U.S. farmers and ranchers that their interests are being taken seriously in how the federal government manages resources.

The encyclopedic Waters of the U.S. rules were a good example of how regulation writers can spin out of control. By the time the rules were written, they had created more problems than they solved, and farmers and ranchers were worried that any pothole on their property could be regulated.

Other regulations written by the Obama administration had sent a lightning bolt of concern through farmers and ranchers as they worried how much the federal government would intrude on their livelihood.

But there remains an undercurrent of concern about Trump and his administration: trade.

And for many in agriculture, trade isn't an issue — it's the issue.

About 90 percent of the wheat grown in the Northwest is sold to customers in Asia and elsewhere. Dairy, cattle and pork producers rely on exports. So do almond and hazelnut growers and apple,



AP Photo/Mark Humphrey
President Donald Trump hands an executive order to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, right, after reading it at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual convention Monday, Jan. 8, in Nashville, Tenn.

cherry and other tree fruit growers. In fact, if it's grown in the West, odds are much of it is sold overseas.

To do that, farmers, ranchers and processors rely on treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA includes Canada and Mexico. Together, those nations bought \$39 billion in U.S. agricultural products last year. The treaty has opened many doors

for U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Last year, the U.S. posted an overall agricultural trade surplus of \$21.3 billion worldwide.

Other U.S. industries did not fare as well under NAFTA, so the administration has set about renegotiating it.

Agriculture's plea: Do no harm.

During the campaign, Trump and his

opponent, Hillary Clinton, took turns bashing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which included 11 other nations, including Canada, Mexico and another huge customer, Japan, which bought \$11.8 billion in U.S. agricultural crops and goods last year.

What neither candidate apparently didn't realize was that agriculture needs free trade, the more the better. Without an agreement, tariffs and other roadblocks put U.S. farmers and ranchers at a disadvantage.

Trump has promised a better NAFTA and individual trade agreements with TPP partners. Progress has also been made with China, which last year bought \$22 billion in U.S. agricultural crops and goods, making it our biggest foreign customer. But the failure of TPP allows China to become the leader on trade across the Pacific.

Agriculture sees some good in Trump. He's tossed overwrought and underthought regulations into the waste bin. He has also offered hope for an industry that has struggled against public misperceptions.

But until he shows significant progress on trade, agriculture will be forced to withhold final judgment on his administration.

For Trump and agriculture, trade is a make-or-break issue.

OTHER VIEWS

The Democrats are right — and were right to settle

The government shutdown was overwhelmingly the fault of Republican leaders. They, not Democrats, are the ones trying to make sharp changes in federal policy, like reduced legal immigration and a border wall. Democrats are largely trying to preserve programs — children's health insurance and Dreamer protections — that many Republicans say they, too, support.

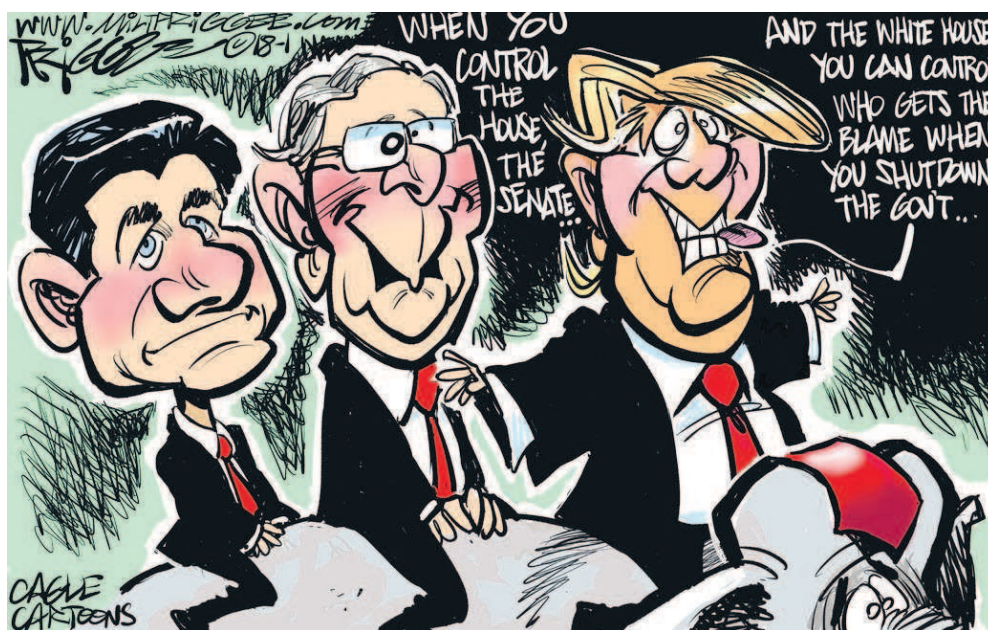
The Republican Party, of course, is also the one led by a president who doesn't know enough about policy to negotiate on his own behalf. Everyone was able to see that two weeks ago during a televised White House meeting, when other Republicans had to correct President Donald Trump — gently and awkwardly — about what he was supposed to believe. Trump, as *The Washington Post* reported this weekend, is "clearly not understanding the policy nuances of the negotiation."

And yet to say that Republicans are responsible for the shutdown is not the same as saying that they would suffer most from a protracted shutdown. I worry that some progressives are missing that distinction. The shutdown has created one of the more treacherous political moments of Trump's presidency for Democrats. It's one they can navigate, but it requires subtlety.

So far during Trump's time in office, principled policy and savvy politics have generally aligned for Democrats. They stymied Republican attempts to take health insurance from millions of people. Democrats tried to block a huge, permanent tax cut for the wealthy that came with small, disappearing tax cuts for everyone else. Democrats have opposed Trump's efforts to let big corporations operate without much oversight. In each case, it has been both good policy and good politics.



DAVID LEONHARDT
Comment



The shutdown is different, and more complicated. It's more complicated because it has turned into a mini-culture war, over immigration.

A culture war over immigration replays the racialized debate that dominated the 2016 presidential campaign. As much as it saddens me to say it, the evidence is pretty clear that a racialized debate helps Trump. It's the kind of debate that will make it harder for Democrats to retake the Senate and House this year.

Multiple studies have found that the political views of white Americans drift to the right when they are reminded that the country's population is slowly becoming less white. And many of these voters are winnable for Democrats. A good number, remember, voted for Barack Obama. They may have some racist views — many people do — but they're

neither deplorable nor irredeemable human beings. Steve Bannon, the guru of white nationalism, understood this dynamic, once saying, "The Democrats, the longer they talk about identity politics, I got 'em."

Similarly, some innovative polling by YouGov has found that a large portion of white Americans see "prohibiting

discrimination against women and minorities" as one of the Democratic Party's top priorities. Unfortunately, few white Americans who aren't already loyal Democrats say the same issue is one of their own priorities. They're more worried about their own struggles, many of which

are economic. "It's a political liability for Democrats," Doug Rivers, YouGov's chief scientist told me, "in the same way being the party of the rich is a problem for Republicans."

The smart move now for Democrats is to accept a short-term funding bill that ends the shutdown and diffuses the tension.

YOUR VIEWS

Valentine's Day is for everyone

As we near the end of January and approach February, I am reminded that once again we are coming up on Valentine's Day.

My husband and I have been married almost 37 years and I suppose after this much time we've gotten kind of jaded. We think of it as a day created by Hallmark, See's, and Kay to part lovers from their money or forever suffer a guilt trip if we don't get just the right thing.

At this time of year we should remember that not everyone can share equally in the joy of showing

their love and affection to that special person in their lives. They can't kiss in public or hold hands walking down the street without feeling nervous that someone will take offense.

PFLAG Pendleton (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is an organization founded on support, advocacy and education on behalf of the LGBTQ Community. If you are the friend of a gay person, or have someone in your family, or if you yourself are gay, we are here to offer you support and invite you to offer support in turn. Contact us at 541-966-8414.

Don't let this Valentine's Day

go by without remembering not everyone has the luxury of being jaded.

Alice Hepburn, treasurer
PFLAG Pendleton

Mental health services have long fallen short

The *East Oregonian* headline read "GOBHI: Lifeways crisis services below standards." Lifeways: Police chief frustrated with a lack of mental health services in the county. Was this headline June 2006 or maybe June 2015? Nope, it was January 2018. This lack of mental health services is unacceptable and has been

ongoing for years. Now GOBHI says an outside professional may be hired to oversee the Lifeways program. I thought Lifeways was the professional help?

Why not ask the police to suggest changes? Umatilla County police and law enforcement officers support a letter signed by all police chiefs and the sheriff stating their continued frustration with the lack mental health services.

This lack of vision by our local political leadership and ignoring requests from law enforcement reminds me of a story. It involved a Mexican gentleman named Pedro along with Al, a border security guy. Pedro would cross the border

into the United States with a wheelbarrow filled with sand. Later in the day Pedro would walk back into Mexico on his own. Intrigued, Al tried to work out what Pedro was smuggling. He searched the sand but never found anything in it.

Years later, when they'd both retired, Al said to Pedro: "I never quite figured it out. You must have been smuggling something but I just couldn't work out what it was." Pedro said, "Yes I was. Wheelbarrows."

Our local political leadership will never see the wheelbarrow because all they can see is the sand.

Sally Sundin
Walla Walla