

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

FARM II project needs a close examination

After years of running in place, Blue Mountain Community College’s FARM II project is suddenly on the fast track to reality.

But after the college approached Pendleton City Council Tuesday night with their plans, it’s clear that some minds remain unconvinced. And there is a debate over whether the \$10 million to \$12 million facility should be located on Pendleton Round-Up property right in the heart of the city.

BMCC has nearly pushed its boulder up the mountain, lassoing \$5 million from the state for the facility that would house an expanded animal science program and the college’s rodeo team. It has also secured investments from Umatilla County Commissioners and the Port of Umatilla. It has an agreement to erect the building on Pendleton Round-Up property. It still needs to raise more private dollars, and keep an eye out for other public grants and loans.

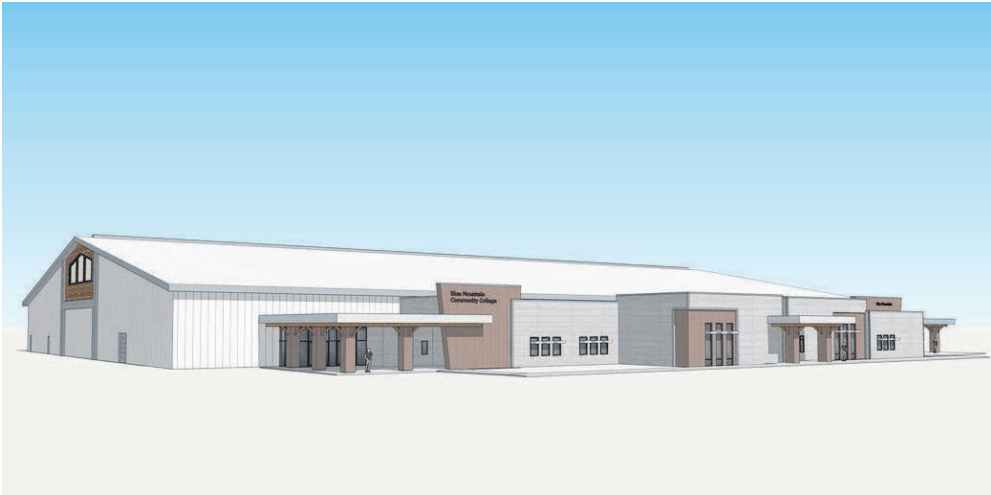
It’s also asking for \$150,000 from the city of Pendleton, which has much to gain and much to lose from the facility. In addition to the one-time cash

handout, if FARM II goes forward it will likely take prime land off the tax rolls for the foreseeable future. It may even help the Round-Up’s cause to become exempt from paying property taxes. That would amount to more than \$100,000 in annual lost tax revenue for local municipalities.

But there are benefits, too.

The two things Pendleton does best is rodeo and hospitality, and FARM II would hit that sweet spot perfectly. Visitors love to come here, and among horse and rodeo fans the Pendleton brand speaks for itself. We have no doubt that if the FARM II grew legs and sprouted, it would find its success and attract its share of events.

And it goes without saying that it would be beneficial to BMCC, and especially its rodeo team. And what’s good for BMCC and the local economy is ultimately good for the city of Pendleton. It would also be good for the Round-Up, giving the space-starved organization a place for storage and cowboys opportunity to warm up their horses, and year-round



Architectural drawing courtesy Blue Mountain Community College

opportunities to expand the brand.

But then again, there are underlying issues. The property itself and its value to the city is a main one. And the land will remain owned by the Round-Up, though the building will be owned and operated by BMCC. As we’ve seen across the county with EOTEC, perfect partnerships can dissolve when two groups have different priorities.

And speaking of EOTEC, there is no reason Pendleton should cede events to Hermiston. But local taxpayers cannot be on the hook for two indoor event centers within 30 miles.

In a perfect world, FARM II is built on the BMCC campus. It helps attract more veterinary and livestock students

as well as rodeo athletes. The school’s rodeo teams win national titles. The facility helps bring in horse shows and indoor rodeos, filling Pendleton hotel rooms and bringing in tax dollars. The Round-Up has the opportunity to spearhead development around its campus, expanding at a pace that fits their finances.

No world is perfect — the cost increases for putting FARM II on BMCC’s hilly campus — and there are pluses and minuses to every decision. But just because we’ve worn down legislators and have a big check in our back pocket does not mean we should barrel forward without questioning the consequences.

OTHER VIEWS

Trump tries for a reset

Where policy was concerned, the story of Donald Trump’s first year in office was simple: The populist of the campaign trail, the man who won the Republican nomination and the White House by ignoring conservative orthodoxy and promising the moon, was replaced by a president who essentially conceded control of his agenda to Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell and spent down his limited political capital pursuing conventionally right-wing policies — unsuccessfully on health care, successfully on taxes, but in each case without much moderate or bipartisan support.

There are many reasons — one for almost every tweet — that Trump arrived at his first official State of the Union address as a wildly unpopular president despite a reasonably strong economy, but his failure to follow through on his campaign’s populist promises is high on the list. So you could read Tuesday night’s remarks (a better idea than listening to their somewhat soporific delivery) in part as an attempt to hit the reset button, to pitch himself as a centrist dealmaker rather than a predictable ideologue, to leave the legislative struggles of his first year behind and get back to selling people on things they actually want.

Thus even as he touted his tax cuts, Trump effectively buried further efforts at Obamacare repeal by suggesting that the repeal of the unpopular individual mandate sufficed as health care policy. There was no mention of deficit reduction or spending cuts, nor of the entitlement reforms dear to the heart of the House speaker just behind him. Apart from a long riff on immigration and a nod to judicial nominations, the conservatism of the speech was heavy on generalities about flag, faith and family, with more polarizing issues like abortion mentioned only by implication. Apart from the Islamic State, North Korea and Guantánamo Bay, the foreign policy section was ... strikingly empty. America First, it seems, means not having to bore viewers by bringing up anything about the world beyond our shores except our enemies. And then for domestic policy there was a list of ideas that Bernie Sanders might campaign on in 2020: cheaper prescription drugs, a \$1.5 trillion gusher of infrastructure spending, even a promise to pursue paid family leave. Not conservative ideas, these — but mostly popular ones.

In this sense, and also in the canny and sometimes moving choices of inspirational figures in the balconies, I suspect the speech was effective, that it might help lift Trump temporarily upward from his mean



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

of 38 percent approval toward the “we’re holding the House by our fingernails” promised land of 44 percent.

But an effective speech is not the same thing as an effective agenda, and right now there are no prospects for Trump’s popular ideas getting enacted or even really considered on the Hill. His party’s ideologues don’t want them, the opposition party doesn’t want to make a deal with Trump to get them, and his White House doesn’t actually have any detail behind the rhetoric. The ideas are just things that the president

There are many reasons why Trump is unpopular, but his failure to follow through on his campaign’s populist promises is high on the list.

would probably like to do but that someone will talk him out of, or that he’ll forget about, or that he’ll offer in a halfhearted way and that Congress will never bother to take up. The only exception, the only issue where he does actually have some details to offer, is immigration reform. But here the speech’s appeal to the assembled legislators to make a version of the deal he’s offering on DACA — essentially an amnesty and path to citizenship now in exchange for future immigration reductions — was undercut by all the fearmongering about immigrant crime that Trump wrapped it in. For Democratic politicians whose base doesn’t want to compromise and whose own political interest isn’t served by any kind of major immigration deal, the bloody-shirt business with MS-13 murders was a permission slip for intransigence: Why make a bargain with a president who talks like half your immigrant constituents are gangbangers?

So this State of the Union both showed what a more successful version of the Trump presidency would look like — still conservative on many fronts but more genuinely populist, less same-old GOP — and why the possibility of that success has probably already slipped from this administration’s grip. There were ideas here that could make Trump’s second year more successful than the first, but there was no plan to actually enact them, no sign that Trump is prepared to build bridges where he’s burned them, no plan for getting more out of this speech than just a temporary polling bump.

What there was instead was something you can expect to hear a lot of between now and November 2020: If you like this economy, you should like me, too.

Politicians have won re-election with that sort of messaging. But few of them have had as far to climb to reach even basic likability as President Donald Trump.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009.



YOUR VIEWS

Women’s choice is code for killing babies

This letter is a challenge to the faulty assumptions of “A challenge to choice” (Page A4, Jan. 25). In this editorial the *EO* attempts to argue abortion, including any attempt to limit “a woman’s natural right” to abort her baby, is a “fight ended long ago.” I challenge the *EO* to research and document or correct your disingenuous “challenge to choice.”

According to a January Marist poll 76 percent of Americans want restrictions on abortion; 63 percent of Americans support a ban of abortion at 20 weeks.

The *EO* uses the spurious argument of woman’s choice to justify the abortion industry that sells baby body parts for profit. The *EO* supports U.S. Senate Democrats that last week defeated a bill to restrict abortions after 20 weeks. President Trump correctly pointed out only seven nations in the world allow abortion after 20 weeks. That puts America in the rarefied company of China, Vietnam, North Korea, Singapore, Netherlands and Canada.

Here is the nitty gritty of what the *EO* and Democrats advocate in the name of choice: killing a baby at 20 weeks that has ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart that beats, will sleep and wake, can make faces, and yes, can and does feel pain.

Oregon’s HB 3391 (passed 2017) allows free abortions for any person (including foreigners and undocumented illegal immigrants) for any reason, “at any time, including sex-selective and late term abortions.” (ABC News) The best part for the *EO* and the liberal Democrats — all Oregonians will be forced to foot the bill. No wonder the *EO* wants the opposition to the war on babies silenced.

The next time you hear the word choice with abortion, understand choice is just a code word for death to an innocent human being.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

Americans need health care

Why do people turn to fundraisers and GoFundMe accounts when disaster hits and they are faced with a sudden health care crisis? Has it happened to you?

The recent horrific example happened in Pilot Rock when a young boy died from a flesh-eating bacteria. Emergency room, life flight to Portland, two different hospitals — a horrifying account of all the measures that were taken, and yet the boy died. At the end of the story were the details of the to-be-expected GoFundMe account and fundraising activities planned to help pay for medical and funeral expenses. A grieving family faced with exorbitant medical bills, possible bankruptcy, and the community now trying to help. It has happened and can happen to anyone.

This is one reason (of the many) why we need health care for all. However, a recent report of “legislative victory” for our U.S. Rep. Greg Walden with passage of the CHIP program says that he is most concerned with health care and gives “thanks to all who called and wrote in support of funding this critically important health insurance program that provides coverage for at least 122,000 Oregon kids and pregnant women.”

Yes, the CHIP program is critically important and Greg Walden is all for the CHIP program, but why not health care for all? Last spring at town hall meetings in Hood River and The Dalles, Rep. Walden asked “Who supports health care for all?” Both crowds roared with approval.

Quit teasing us with these attempts at caring about health care. Now is the time, Greg Walden, to look at health care for all as a comprehensive, equitable, publicly funded and high-quality system to serve everyone — men, women and children. Health care for all, universal health care, Medicare for all. It is the right thing to do because not only will health care for all change lives (no more grief-stricken fund raisers), it will save lives too.

Beverly Sherrill
The Dalles

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