

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

## Agricultural trade needs long-term plan

As Eastern Oregon farmers reap their year's worth of work from its fertile soil, national and international pressures are tugging and tearing at their bottom line.

President Donald Trump said this week his administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will use a Depression-era law to provide up to \$12 billion in aid to farmers hurt by its trade policies.

Those policies — which include placing taxes on imported goods — have been reciprocated by foreign governments. That has damaged the American farmer's ability to compete at a level playing field on the worldwide market.

Thus the \$12 billion bailout. Sure, it's much cheaper than the \$700 billion Economic Stabilization Act that American taxpayers paid to bail out the banking and auto industries in 2008. But the deal for farmers is good for just one growing season, and includes few details on how exactly the money will be dispersed. If President Trump has not solved our trade war by next year, American farmers will either see depressed prices, or taxpayers will once again be on the hook for another bailout. And China, which holds much of America's debt, will hold the final call.

There's a political irony in this too, given that the political movement that catapulted Trump to the White House was partly inspired by understandable disgust in the American heartland over the 2008 federal bailouts.

This is a serious issue in Eastern Oregon, perhaps one of the most important in a generation. For us



A field of soybeans is seen in front of a barn carrying a large Trump sign in rural Ashland, Neb., Tuesday. AP Photo/Nati Harnik

to survive on the east side of the Columbia Basin, we must make money from agriculture. It's the linchpin of our economic system and our region depends on it.

So it's understandable to get nervous when D.C. and Brussels, Moscow and Beijing start haggling over agricultural policy — and when our traditional customers start looking elsewhere.

Reuters reported this week that three major grain milling companies in Mexico that have purchased a majority of their wheat and other grains from the U.S. are turning to Russian suppliers and other options in Latin America.

Canimolt, a Mexican trade group that represents 80 percent of Mexican milling companies, told Reuters that pre-emptively shifting import priorities away from U.S. suppliers is a way to send a "message" to President Trump over tariffs that many U.S. allies have denounced. Global U.S. wheat exports have decreased by a total of 21 percent since the beginning of the year.

It's not just foreign buyers who

are disappointed with Trump's recent activity. The rather pro-Trump, pro-business *Wall Street Journal* wrote the administration "is trying to fix an economic problem of its own making by putting the victims on the federal dole."

This issue has everything to do with policies, not politics.

Like most Western farmers, we remain convinced that the Trans-Pacific Partnership was the right way to lead on international trade and get a leg up on China.

Unfortunately, the partnership was opposed by a whole range of politicians — Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Trump all said they were against it during the 2016 campaign, as were a majority of Americans polled on the subject. Its demise is a missed opportunity for fair and free trade.

We understand there are emergencies where federal involvement is necessary. Some argue that was the case in 2008 as the American economy collapsed, while others disagree. Most all believe

it was necessary after natural disasters, such as hurricanes in Louisiana and New Jersey.

Oregon's federal delegation has argued this week that farmers harmed by the Substation Fire need federal help, too, and should get a piece of the \$12 billion package.

All are good arguments to have, and we imagine conservatives would argue against government involvement more often than not. And we think most people would argue against government bailouts of problems that have been government-created. Spending \$12 billion to get back to where we were prior to government action seems wasteful and inefficient.

Trump disagrees, and thinks he will pull the country out on the other side with a better trade deal.

"Negotiations are going really well, be cool," Trump tweeted this week. "The end result will be worth it!"

Maybe Trump is right and the deals will get done. We promise to commend him if that turns out to be the case. But it's hard to "be cool" with an economic linchpin in the balance.

American farmers — just like any industry — want stable, practical international trade policies. No one wants to rely on government subsidies. No one wants to operate not knowing if those subsidies will arrive or not.

As our conservative readers know, a subsidy is just another word for a bailout — government picking winners and losers and redistributing taxpayer cash. Perhaps farmers are winners now, but no industry wants D.C. to have the ability to push them onto the other side of that ledger.

## OTHER VIEWS

## Where American renewal begins

Sarah Hemminger grew up in Indiana understanding the debilitating power of social isolation. When she was a girl, her father discovered that their pastor was dipping into church funds and reported it to the congregation. Instead of doing something about the pastor, the community shunned her family. Sarah and her siblings would sit at parties and neighborhood events and nobody would talk to them. She spent eight years of her childhood ostracized.

She also learned what it looks like when people come around to heal isolation. When she was in high school one of her classmates, Ryan, failed his freshman year because his home life was crumbling. Six teachers rallied around him, serving as extended family members. Ryan recovered, ended up getting into the U.S. Naval Academy and married Sarah.

Years later, she was beginning work on her Ph.D. in biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins, mapping the neural structures of the brain. She was lonely, and she saw kids throughout the Baltimore schools who were lonely and isolated, too.

She got the principal at Dunbar High School to give her names of some of the school's most academically underperforming kids and persuaded dozens of Hopkins students to volunteer as extended family members for the kids, driving them to school, bringing them lunch, driving them back to school when they skipped out, doing homework with them, taking them camping.

The organization Sarah Hemminger formed is now called Thread. I am constantly using this column to argue that social fragmentation and social isolation are the fundamental problems afflicting America today. Organizations like Thread are the best way to address them.

Thread has taken 415 academically underperforming students in Baltimore schools and built an extended family around them, with about 1,000 volunteers. Each student is given up to five volunteers, who perform the jobs that a family member

would perform.

Each volunteer is coached by a more experienced volunteer, called the Head of Family. The Head of Family is coached by a Grandparent, who supports the Head. The Grandparents are coached by Community Managers, who are paid Thread staffers. Circling the whole system are Collaborators, who offer special expertise — legal help, SAT tutoring, mental health counseling, etc.

In short, the organization weaves an elaborate system of relationships, a cohesive village, around the task of helping kids. The social network is as much for the adults and the city as for the kids.

The students are lured with free pizza and asked if they would like to join the program. They are told they will be in it for 10 years, until they are in their 20s. They sign a contract demonstrating commitment, and no one has left early.

For the first few months, the students often reject the relationships. "You expect people not to be there for you," says Marcus, one of the students.

Hemminger observes: "Unconditional love is so rare in life that it is identity-changing when somebody keeps showing up even when you reject them. It is also identity-changing to be the one rejected."

The institutional structure of Thread is impressive, but not as impressive as the ethos that pervades it. Thread cultivates an ethos of utter vulnerability, which starts at the top. Hemminger and her staff are very open when they don't know what they are doing and need help.

Thread also has an atmosphere of intense intimacy and outspoken love. The volunteers are not there to do social change. They are there to be changed.

These days, I spend my mornings writing depressing columns about a political culture marred by distrust and my afternoons visiting places like Thread. There is no way to repair national distrust without repairing individual relationships one by one. This is where American renewal begins.

— David Brooks, *New York Times*



## YOUR VIEWS

### Primus wrong to disqualify Judge Temple from cases

I do not know why Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus is filing motions to "disqualify" the Honorable Circuit Court Judge Eva Temple. I only know District Attorney Primus socially as I don't practice criminal law. Therefore I cannot comment on the way he runs the DA's office.

However, I have known Judge Temple professionally for many years. I worked with her in private practice and have appeared in her courtroom many times. Judge Temple is an excellent jurist. I have found her to be hardworking, intelligent, fair and impartial.

For the county's sake, I hope the two can work out their differences privately and that this current motion practice against Judge Temple by Primus stops.

Timothy J. O'Hanlon, Pendleton

### Temple is a fair and impartial judge

I take issue with the Phil Wright's article regarding the District Attorney's decision to disqualify Circuit Court Judge Eva Temple. From my view, the article may lead readers to believe that Judge Temple lacks the ability to be fair and impartial. I also strongly disagree with the District Attorney's decision to take this matter to the public. As a sitting member of the state judiciary, Judge Temple is prohibited from defending herself to the

press. No such prohibition exists for me as a member of the Oregon State Bar.

I have been a practicing attorney in this area for 31 years. I've appeared countless times in circuit courts, including Judge Temple's. In all my professional dealings with her, I've found Judge Temple to be fair and openly impartial in all my civil and criminal cases. And while I may not always agree with her rulings, not once have I taken issue with her capacity as a judge. I am not alone in my assessment. Many of my professional colleagues likewise hold Judge Temple in very high esteem.

By taking this issue to the newspaper, the District Attorney surely knew that Judge Temple would not be able to openly defend herself. That strikes me as patently unfair. Additionally, I grow increasingly concerned about the consequences of the District Attorney's decision. The vast number of court filings are generated by the District Attorney's office. By eliminating one judge, the burden of moving criminal filings now falls squarely on the shoulders of the remaining judges. The system is already bogged down by the sheer volume of cases. Now the public will likely wait even longer.

Generally, I do not write letters to the editor. But I couldn't let this pass. I strongly urge the public to not conclude that Judge Temple is unfair. She is anything but. I likewise encourage the District Attorney to reconsider this policy.

Kurt Bendixsen, attorney  
Hermiston

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