

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

## Better forestry needed to avoid an age of bad air

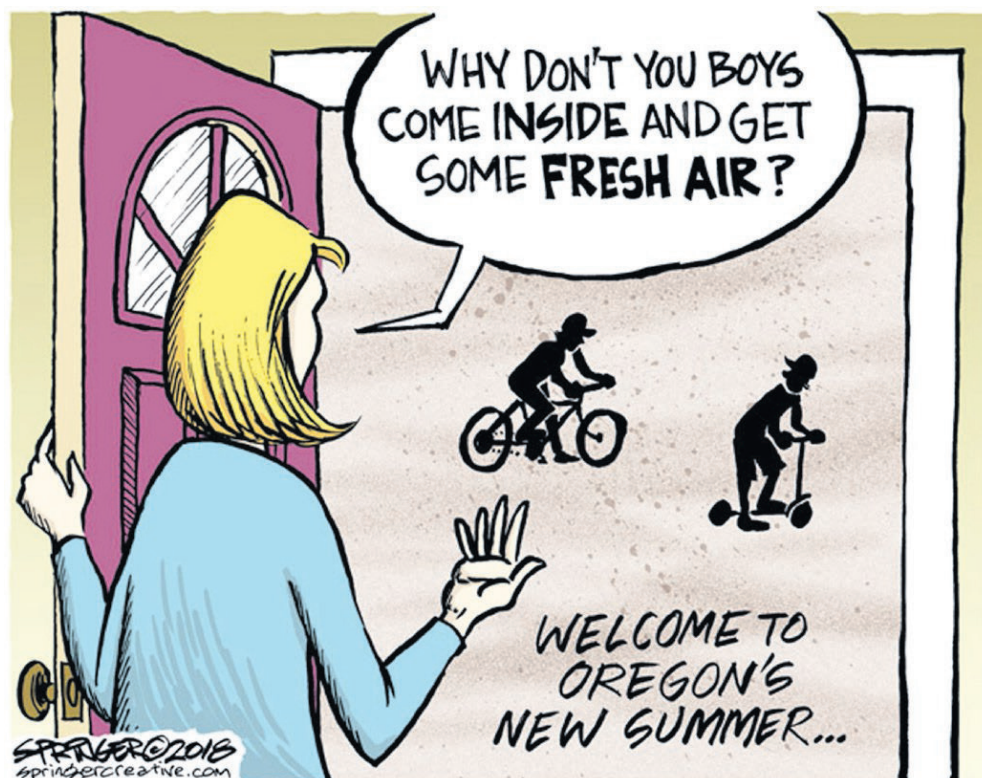
Americans have looked down our noses at the Chinese, whose dirty air we've seen on television — dreary gray and brown, shrouding ugly streets in a kind of sickly twilight. How disheartening it is to find ourselves dealing with such ugly air here in the Pacific Northwest this August.

Forest-fire smoke surrounds us. As the National Weather Service maps have clearly shown, Umatilla and Morrow counties are the edge of the dustpan, where smoke from fires in British Columbia and elsewhere in the Northwest collects and sticks.

As a result of fires, air-quality monitoring systems in the two states have classified conditions as unhealthy across many thousands of square miles of the Pacific Northwest. This comes with warnings about limiting the amount of time spent outdoors and curbing physical activities that might cause us to breathe in more smoke. It's a little like being stuck in a smoky tavern with no exit — although diluted forest fire chemicals aren't as injurious as tobacco smoke, thankfully.

It's possible our region hasn't suffered such persistently bad air — especially in non-urban areas — since the catastrophic Oregon North Coast burns of the 1930s and 1940s, during which much of the Coast Range went up in smoke.

Aside from being grateful for clean-air rules that began curbing industrial air pollution in the 1970s, what should be our response to forest fires and the smoke they cause? If the past several



years are anything to go by, developing better strategies will become vital as our continent's climate changes. And although it's safe to say that almost everyone is against smoke, dealing with underlying issues will be extremely tricky.

It rushes us headlong into controversies over forest thinning, timber harvests, under-story maintenance, controlled burns and how (or even whether) to regulate residential building within the Pacific Northwest's forest interface. All these subjects have evoked expensive lawsuits and destructive political battles. To say that there is little trust would be an

understatement. Circumstances may force the combatants to overcome these differences, or at least spur less-polarized middle-of-the-road citizens to begin mandating smarter decisions.

So when it comes to avoiding dangerously destructive forest fires and the harms they create, what might smarter management look like?

Many solutions are likely to entail seeking and following the advice of professional forest managers, rather than either acquiescing to decisions forced by environmental lawsuits on the one hand, or back-room industry manipulations on the other. Forest policies should be made on a time scale of multiple

decades or centuries, and not change with presidential administrations. Neither the environment nor industry are well-served by a tangled-up political mess in which strategic decisions are so hard to make and stick with.

Foresters aren't guaranteed to agree with one another, of course. While there was disagreement within the agency, National Forest Service policies notoriously favored harvest over all other options during much of the 20th century. The same was true of state forestry agencies in the Pacific Northwest. Only with generational change in personnel was there a gradual shift to more balance between harvest, thinning, conservation and other options. Moving forward in the 21st century, we should insist on carefully designed consensus-based management groups, with mechanisms to protect against political and judicial manipulation.

The answers won't be easy to find or accept. Additional harvest is likely in many cases to be the most affordable way to control fire risk, while providing a useful economic boost to rural areas. Thinning will be more environmentally palatable in other places, but tends to be expensive. Prescribed burns — never popular — will sometimes be the right way to go.

We in the Northwest don't want to have to get used to having dangerous air. Nobody should have to become good at wearing filtration masks, or interpreting air-quality warnings. We must get ahead of the fires before they get ahead of us.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Qualifications ignored in filling the port job

The definition of cronyism: the appointment of friends and associates to positions of authority, without proper regard to their qualifications.

I think that it is sad and wrong that Port of Morrow wasted so many folks' time and energy in the interview process. Mr. Ryan Neal's qualifications were not even considered, only that he's known by the port. Wow!

So the Port of Morrow is not interested in true economic development, only that you are a crony! What an unjustifiable reason to even "pretend" to go through an interview process. I believe that other parties involved in the interview panels would have agreed that another candidate would have been the most competent and knowledgeable to do something wonderful with the port.

Leonie Batchelor  
Pasco, Wash.

### Might as well go all-in on open borders

Because Washington, Oregon, and California want to be sanctuary states and do not believe in borders, I suggest that the above states give up their borders and become one state. Sanctuary believers should welcome this proposal with open arms. Think about how all the above three states could welcome all the rest of the world to the land of opportunity. We could open our homes to live with us. Give them the right to vote. Free tuition to all schooling, never work, and the new government could just tell how much we can earn, because someone has to pay for all this.

Wm. Roesch Kishpaugh  
Pendleton

## OTHER VIEWS

## High crimes and misdemeanors

For all of my opposition to Donald Trump, I have long been skeptical of the political wisdom or evidentiary basis of efforts to impeach him.

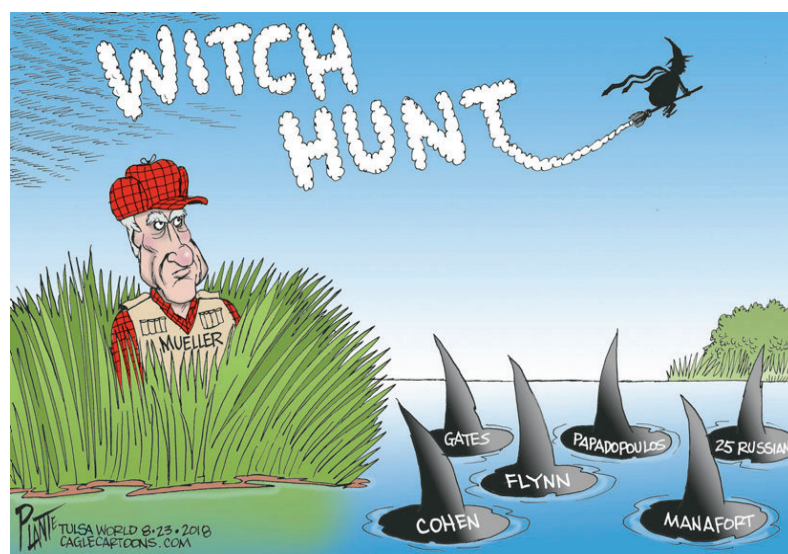
My reasons: First, being a terrible president and a wretched person are not impeachable offenses. Second, Robert Mueller's investigation has so far produced evidence that can be interpreted as obstruction of justice but not as clear proof.

Third, impeachment in the House would be unlikely to translate into conviction in the Senate, even if Democrats win both chambers in the fall. Fourth, impeachment without conviction could strengthen Trump politically, much as it did for Bill Clinton after his own 1998 impeachment.

And, like it or not, Trump remains popular with tens of millions of Americans. To overturn the results of an election for anything less than unambiguous evidence of criminal behavior is a danger to democracy itself.

At least that was my view until this week. Michael Cohen's guilty plea changes this. The Constitution's standard for impeachment is "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." The standard is now met.

Trump's longtime fixer acknowledged in court Tuesday that he had violated campaign finance laws by paying hush money to two women "in coordination with and at the direction of a candidate for federal office." That means Trump. That means that, as a candidate, Trump is credibly alleged to have purposefully conspired with Cohen to commit criminal acts. That



means the duo did so "for purposes of influencing [an] election for Federal office," which is the legal definition of a campaign contribution.

It also means that, as president, Trump allegedly sought to conceal the arrangement by failing to note in his 2017 financial disclosure forms his reimbursements to Cohen. The president most likely continues to lie to the American people about the nature and purpose of those payments.

The Trumpian rebuttal to these charges is that Cohen is a sleazy lawyer and proven liar. And that the most prominent attempt to prosecute a political figure for violating campaign-finance laws — involving former Democratic senator and 2004 vice-presidential candidate John Edwards — failed in court. And that campaign-finance violations don't rise to the level of impeachable offenses, anyway.

But if Cohen's lies as Trump's lawyer are one thing, lying under oath to a federal judge is quite another. Cohen's sentencing isn't until December, when he's expected to be sent to prison for up to five years. If he's being untruthful, that leaves plenty

of time for any deceptions to come to light. Ask yourself: Does he look like a guy eager to have his sentence doubled?

As for the Edwards standard, the case failed because prosecutors could not prove that the former North Carolina senator received campaign donations from benefactors to influence an election, rather than simply cover up an embarrassing affair. In Trump's case, there is little doubt about the purpose of the payment to Stormy Daniels: To prevent disclosure of their alleged liaison, less than a month before the election and barely two weeks after the "Access Hollywood" tape came to light.

To suggest that this doesn't amount to a felonious act also doesn't pass the smell test. The president is now, in effect, an unindicted co-conspirator on charges already prosecuted by the government as a criminal matter against Cohen. Why should a lighter standard apply to Trump, since he's the one at whose direction Cohen claims to have carried out the payments?

That question should especially engage those conservatives who demanded Clinton's impeachment

(as I did). Take South Carolina's Lindsey Graham, one of the House managers overseeing the case against the 42nd president.

"Twenty-five years ago," he said that December, "a Democratic-controlled judiciary committee, with a minority of Republicans, reported articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon. Why? Nixon cheated — he cheated the electoral system by concealing efforts of a political break-in, and his people thought the other side deserved to be cheated. They thought his enemies deserved to be mistreated. Ladies and gentlemen, they were wrong."

To conservatives reading this column, ask yourselves the following questions:

If breaking the law (by lying under oath) to conceal an affair was impeachable, why is breaking the law (by violating campaign-finance laws) to conceal an affair not impeachable?

If "cheating the electoral system" (by means of a burglary) was impeachable, why is cheating the electoral system (by means of illicit hush money) not impeachable?

If cheating "our institutions" (by means of an "assault" in "every way" on the legal system) is impeachable, why is cheating those institutions (by means of nonstop presidential mendacity and relentless attacks on the Justice Department and the FBI) not impeachable?

Pragmatists will rejoice that there's no sense in advocating impeachment when the GOP controls Congress. I'm sorry that so many congressional Republicans have lost their sense of moral principle and institutional self-respect, but that's a reason to seek Democratic victories in the fall. The Constitution matters more than a tax cut. What the Constitution demands is the impeachment and removal from office of this lawless president.