

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

## What's in store for 2019?

Welcome to 2019. Make yourself comfortable. We've got some things to talk about.

We sent the old year out by reflecting on the steady development we've seen in Umatilla and Morrow counties, from new industries to new housing. We won't take any of that for granted — much of rural Oregon has been desperate for the kind of development we've seen in the past decade. We have natural assets like the Columbia River and open, flat land and infrastructural advantages like the intersecting interstates and cheap electricity.

We also have the unique location nearly equidistant from Portland, Seattle and Boise, all a quick trip away, but far enough to leave some room to breathe.

All this adds up to a spot perfect for growth, with the ability to attract developers, job-seekers in a variety of fields, educated professionals looking for better quality of life and retirees looking to step away from the high cost of living elsewhere.

The iron is hot, so to speak, and this is the time to build the kind of place where we'd like to live (and our children to be able to live) decades down the line.

To do that, we must look beyond this calendar year.

Schools are the bedrock of communities such as ours. The buildings are often the gathering places, but it's the teaching and mentoring that makes a difference in the long run.

Like it or not, our schools are full of students who need more than just lessons in math, history, science and language arts. For many, it's the only place of support in their lives. It's where they can get a healthy meal and validation from an adult in a safe environment.

That's a big task, and one we shouldn't ask the schools and teachers to take on alone. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer in classrooms and through extra-curricular activities.

Fortunately there are plenty of strong supporting organizations in place and good leaders in our districts. Along with the correct amount of scrutiny, we should find ways to lend a hand.

With the influx of jobs has come a staggering demand for housing. Cities have responded by creating incentives to put up new houses and apartments, and the market is now in a period of adjustment.

It takes all kinds. Stick-built



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Students and staff sing along with reggae singer Aaron Nigel Smith on his song "One" at Rocky Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Oct. 9, 2018, in Hermiston. The concert was part of the school's Run for the Arts fundraiser.

houses, apartment complexes and second-floor renovations fill different niches. Pendleton's housing inventory has been stagnant for a long time, and some fresh options will be in the renter's favor. Boardman, where the jobs outnumber the residents, is working to keep up with demand.

But one area that hasn't been adequately addressed in any of our cities is homelessness. The housing discussion has centered on the able-bodied workforce, but there are many who can't find an affordable place to live and are forced to sleep in their car or a tent.

It's time we devote a larger portion of our attention to these problems as we make sure everyone has a roof over their heads.

There are plenty more ways we can work together to make life better in our corner of the world. As a newspaper we'd like to be part of the solution, offering critical assessment, encouragement and a platform for ideas. That will be our goal in the coming year, and we hope you'll take advantage of our pages and website to join that conversation.

Welcome to 2019. It's time to get to work.

## OTHER VIEWS

## Trump in 2019: Untamed or contained?

In this dark time of the year, usually a pretty slow period for politics, I like to write a column cataloging my errors of analysis and prognostication from the previous 365 days (or sometimes further back) of columnizing. This year, though, the pace of news makes that exercise feel a little self-indulgent, so I thought I'd just consider what has changed in the Trump presidency since last February, when I wrote a column describing our demagogic chief executive as "tamed."

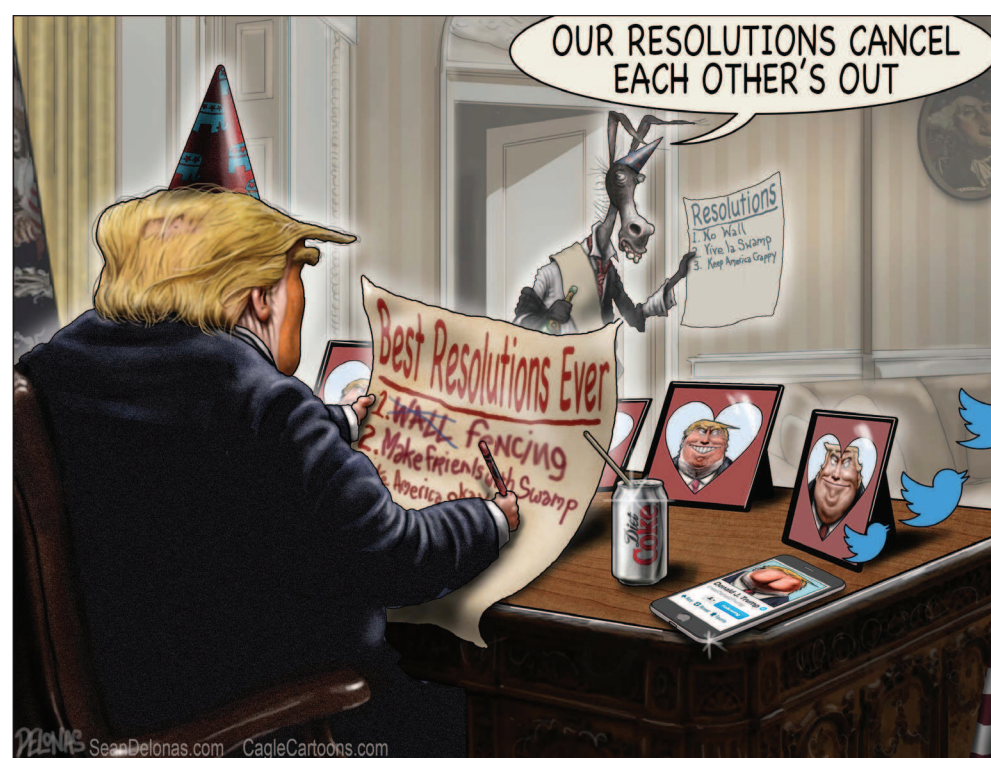
Back then the Trump tamers were his fellow Republicans — the mix of senators and Cabinet officials who had steered

his actual administration (not the Twitter version) into the channels of a semi-normal GOP presidency. Back then you could make a list of the wilder Trump campaign promises (or threats) and note how few of them had actually been implemented or pursued. Back then you could look at Donald Trump's economic agenda and his foreign policy and see something influenced more by Paul Ryan and James Mattis than by the president's distinctive impulses.

That was 10 months ago, and since then the Trump-administration world that I described has been deconstructed, piece by piece. The normalizing figures have departed or been unceremoniously dumped — whisk, H.R. McMaster and Gary Cohn; goodbye, Jeff Sessions; time's up, John Kelly — and their provisional replacements have more of the island-of-misfit-toys feel that characterized Trump's inner circle in the 2016 campaign.

Meanwhile, all year there has been more and more overt Trumpishness in the administration's policy moves — the trade warring, the end of the Iran deal, the performative cruelty and performative militarization at the border, the made-for-reality-TV dealmaking with North Korea, the president's strange fanboy encounter with Vladimir Putin.

And both trends, the personnel and the political, have reached a crescendo this Christmas season, with the sudden pullout from Syria, the equally sudden departure of James Mattis, the president's war with the Federal Reserve amid a tumbling stock market, and now a government shutdown over the Trumpiest sticking point of all, the fabled



border wall. When NeverTrumpers envisioned the Trump presidency, it was basically the last couple weeks of headlines extended over four long years — Defense secretary quits while accusing Trump of being soft on Russia ... Stock market tumbles as Trump denies plan to fire Fed Chair ... Trump welcomes government shutdown over immigration ... Trump pulls out of Syria after conversation with Turkish dictator ...

So here we are, with Trump finally unbound, just as everyone who once opposed him had feared. Except that Trump unbound is also Trump hemmed in — no longer steered by the departing Mattis or guided by the unlamented Speaker Ryan, but opposed directly by a Democratic House armed with subpoena power and prepared for political war. And Trump unbound is also Trump alone, his electoral mystique gone with the midterms and Senate Republicans more inclined to distance themselves the further off the policy reservation he goes and not even Chris Christie willing to take the job of managing his White House.

So the president is at once more dangerous and less so, more unconstrained and yet easier to balk, more liberated and more isolated — a strange state of affairs even by the strange standards of this administration. And to save myself the embarrassment of future

mea culpas, I won't make predictions but just offer scenarios for how this combination might shape the next exciting year of Trump.

The first possibility, and to my mind the least likely, is a return to (relative) normalcy. In this scenario Trump reacts to indicators he understands, the jittery stock market above all, by containing his impulses a little more, finding (somewhere) a new set of establishment hands to guide him, making the necessary deals with House Democrats, and hunkering down to survive what the Mueller investigation has to throw at him. D.C. politics becomes, by this presidency's standards, strangely boring; there is a grind of subpoenas and scandals but Republicans stick with Trump; there is zero policy progress and a basic Democratic advantage but no dramatic change.

The second possibility is one Elizabeth Drew, the chronicler of Watergate, sketched in a column on Thursday — a march to impeachment and perhaps Trump's resignation, in which the president's erratic behavior, the chaos it sows in markets and American alliances, and Republican self-interest end up in a mutually reinforcing dynamic, and after a devastating Mueller report, perhaps, key Senate Republicans finally deem the president "too great a burden to the party or too great a danger to the country" to continue in

his office.

I find this scenario less likely than does Drew, but more likely than the return to normalcy. However, it coexists with a third possibility that might be termed the Trump Vindicated scenario (or, for true Trump haters, the LOL Nothing Matters scenario), in which Trump unbound turns out to be no more unpopular than the tamed-by-the-establishment version, his preferred policies prove less destabilizing than all the wise men fear, and we get a 2019 in which Trump flails around but his approval ratings actually go ... up?

This possibility is, I think, a somewhat underrated one, because some (not all!) of Trump's Trumpiest ideas are either more sensible or more popular than the establishment alternative. Paul Ryan's agenda dragged down Trump's approval ratings, not the other way around, and the Kim Jong Un summit was as popular as anything he's done. Even in the chaotic controversies of the last few weeks there is at least a case for pulling out of Syria, perhaps a stronger one for pulling out of Afghanistan, certainly a case that the Fed's interest rate policies are hurting both stocks and workers ... and little evidence that swing voters will be furious with Trump for ending poorly understood military missions or picking fights with central bankers.

But for Trump to be vindicated this way, by which I mean for him to retain a low-40s approval rating and avoid impeachment even as his administration is reduced (to swipe a joke from MSNBC's Chris Hayes) to his family, Stephen Miller and Mick Mulvaney roaming the White House like the Torrances in the Overlook Hotel, he would need his erratic governing style to avoid meeting a crisis large enough to make White House incompetence matter on a catastrophic scale.

And of course the man and the crisis might meet. So the final possibility worth considering as 2019 dawns is the same one that informed my opposition to Trump two years ago, which is that we should fear most from an unbound Trump isn't bad policy or sleaze or norm violations. It's that with Mattis gone and McMaster gone and Cohn gone and Kelly going and only Mulvaney and Jared and Steve "All is well!" Mnuchin at battle stations, the equivalent of 9/11 or the financial crisis will come along and things will get very, very dark before there's even time to read the full text of the 25th Amendment.

On that note, Happy New Year, America. And stay frosty out there, Mike Pence.

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