

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEWS

Sitting out the shutdown

Questioning the fundamental usefulness of government is the backbone of some American political factions, notably including the now seldom-mentioned Tea Party. Most of these righteous skeptics don't live off the grid in libertarian enclaves, hatching anarchist plots. Instead, they are good people simply wondering what the heck all our taxes and deficits pay for.

No matter whether a U.S. citizen is anti-government or not, we all will be increasingly noticing just what government does, now that a significant fraction of it has been turned off by a political squabble.

Any attempted discussion of the ongoing partial federal government shutdown inevitably ignites bitter infighting between those who believe President Trump can do no wrong and those who think he's a lightweight conman doing the bidding of radical talk-show hosts. However, here in this mutually reliant Eastern Oregon enclave so far removed from the beltway, we need not and should not resort to useless finger pointing. It's fair to say that nobody in

Washington, D.C., gives a moment's thought to local political analysis in the form of angry Facebook posts.

What we must do is mitigate harm to local people and assets, while calmly pulling toward future election results that put an end to these ridiculous and damaging shenanigans.

Beyond the stark impacts of the government shutdown on some federal workers, this situation threatens to delay payments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as food stamps. More than 14,000 people in Umatilla County — about 18 percent of the population — are helped by SNAP.

Around half of these households include one or more disabled people, more than 40 percent include children, and around one-third contain senior citizens.

While this sorry situation grinds on, we all must do our best to help with local food drives, and contribute cash to food banks so they can address what is certain to be a surge in requests for help. State legislators and agencies may need to shuffle spending priorities to ensure our fellow citizens don't go hungry.

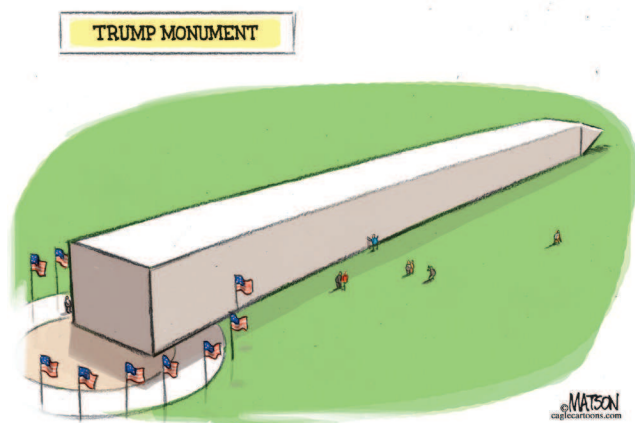


Much remains uncertain, starting with whether the shutdown will be allowed to go on for months — as the president has suggested. How will lack of federal salaries and aid reverberate in the local economy, as spending on everything from groceries to cups of coffee begins to dwindle? Is it time to convene emergency community meetings to plan responses?

This shutdown, like those in the past, will eventually be resolved. It's likely most furloughed employees

will receive back pay — even those who, unlike the Coast Guard and ICE, aren't still actively on duty. But we should be sure to elect people to Congress and the White House who are prepared to maturely and sensibly confront our national spending addiction, border protection and other priorities without resorting to destructive gamesmanship.

Shutdowns are a ridiculously blunt weapon, when what we really need are national leaders ready to make intelligent decisions.



OTHER VIEWS

Wall would be a Pyrrhic victory

Major political parties need to present qualified and honorable candidates for public office.

The current occupant of the Oval Office is a world-class embarrassment. Should he win "his wall," it would be a Pyrrhic victory and a monument to his galactic ego.

The hardship and stress caused by his "gut reaction" is unwarranted and detrimental to the welfare of the country. If the wall is so important, have him pay for each mile. We still don't know how many miles he could afford, so let him sacrifice for the protection and welfare of our nation.

Put a leash on old "Ready, Fire, Aim."

J.S. Willis
Pendleton

The real drug crisis

Prescription drugs are like alcohol. Both are more dangerous drugs people don't want to recognize. Why? Because those are the most used and abused drugs in United States.

Alcohol alone damages more lives, families, jobs, security, health than any other drug! Prescription drugs are easily available and usually cost nothing through insurance coverage, easily accessible from doctors. It is so widely available that most people aren't even aware what they have in their cabinets. The denial of addiction is highest in the use of alcohol and pills!

Now, for those politicians you are so proud to elect. If they are taking big bucks from pharmaceutical companies, what does that make them? Drug mafia, drug pusher, U.S. drug cartel or drug mules? Politicians who are "bought" by these companies — and the companies themselves — are 1,000 times worse than anyone smuggling drugs into the U.S. They just don't like the competition! They can't make money off the foreign suppliers!

Trump is worried about Mexicans bringing crime and drugs across our borders? Thinking is still free. Think about the real drug pushers. And how the wall money could be used to clean up our own governments' involvement in illegal drug business!

Bernie Sanderson
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS

What, precisely, do Democrats want to impeach Trump for?

Newly sworn-in Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib electrified progressives with her passionate declaration that she and her colleagues will "impeach the motherf---er" — the "motherf---er," of course, being President Trump.

Democratic leaders were embarrassed that a high-profile freshman would speak so frankly in public. But hours before Tlaib spoke, on the first day of Democratic control of the House, another Democrat, Rep. Brad Sherman, filed a resolution of impeachment. Sherman's resolution was later co-sponsored by another colleague, Democratic Rep. Al Green.

The efforts by Sherman and Green, who filed his own articles in 2017, and another House Democrat, Rep. Steve Cohen, who also introduced articles in Trump's first months in office, are nothing new. Nor are those efforts a lonely quest. In an early 2018 procedural vote, 66 Democrats voted in favor of moving an impeachment measure forward.

But on what grounds, specifically, do the pro-impeachment Democrats intend to remove the president? The new Sherman/Green resolution, and Green's and Cohen's resolutions from last year, are not exactly a comprehensive recounting of Trump's alleged offenses.

Sherman's is based entirely on the president's firing of FBI Director James Comey and the Comey memos, while Green's articles seek to remove Trump for "sowing discord among the people of the United States" with his comments on Charlottesville, transgender troops and Muslim immigration. (In an earlier version, Green also sought to impeach Trump for statements about Rep. Frederica Wilson and NFL players who do not stand for the national anthem.)

Cohen's articles rehashed much of Sherman's obstruction allegation, while adding a charge that Trump violated the Constitution's emoluments clause, plus articles seeking to remove Trump for tweeting about federal judges and calling some press organizations "fake news."

Judging by the articles currently on the table, Democrats will have to raise their impeachment game if they choose to go forward with an attempt to remove the president.

Sherman's single article of impeachment, originally filed on July 12, 2017 and refiled last week, said Trump violated his constitutional oath to take care that the laws be faithfully executed because he "prevented, obstructed and impeded the administration of justice during a federal investigation." Specifically, Trump violated his oath by "threatening, and then terminating, James Comey."

As evidence, Sherman cited a "pattern of behavior" in which Trump asked Comey to lay off Michael Flynn; decided to fire Comey before asking the Justice Department for a rationale for the move; gave varying reasons for the firing; and said sacking Comey had reduced the pressure on him from the Russia investigation.



BYRON
YORK
COMMENT

Green's resolution of impeachment did not really accuse Trump of committing high crimes and misdemeanors as president. It was, instead, an argument that Trump should be removed from office because his "bigoted statements" have "harmed American society."

Cohen's articles, introduced in the House on Nov. 15, 2017, were the most extensive of the lot. They overlapped with Sherman's on the Comey obstruction charge, but also included an extensive list of alleged violations of the emoluments clause by Trump's various businesses. Trump's decision to retain links to his business, the articles said, "undermined the integrity of his office, brought disrepute on the presidency, and betrayed his trust as president in a manner subversive of constitutional government, against the cause of law and justice and to the manifest injury of the people of the United States."

Of the three measures, only Green's has received a vote. It came on Jan. 19, 2018, when the House voted on a motion to table the measure. Sixty-six Democrats voted against the motion, meaning they favored moving forward with the articles, while 121 Democrats voted to table the measure and three voted present. All Republicans voted to table the measure.

There's little doubt the new Democratic majority leans farther left than last year's Democratic minority. Were they put to a vote today, Green's resolution, or Sherman's, or Cohen's, might receive more than the 66 votes a year ago.

On the other hand, even put together, the Green, Sherman and Cohen articles are pretty thin gruel. Yes, the Comey matter would likely be part of any Democratic impeachment articles, but Democrats would certainly want to throw in additional reasons why Trump should be removed. They would certainly want to include, for example, the allegation made by federal prosecutors in New York that Trump violated campaign finance law by not reporting a hush money payment to Stormy Daniels.

It's a difficult legal argument, but House Democrats don't need to convict the president in a court of law; they just need to give senators a reason to vote for removal. Beyond that, it seems unlikely — although there's no way to say for sure at this point — that Democrats would try to remove Trump for tweeting about judges and bashing the press.

Part of the Democratic leadership's dismay at Rep. Tlaib's remark is that it might direct attention to the lawmakers who are currently advocating impeachment, and the actual content of the articles they have filed. Is that what the party wants? Green, Sherman, Cohen, et al are on the fringes of the Democratic caucus. But at some point, the big Democratic guns will take over the impeachment effort, and the public will see how serious they are about removing the president.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.