

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH  
PublisherKATHRYN B. BROWN  
OwnerDANIEL WATTENBURGER  
Managing EditorWYATT HAUPT JR.  
News Editor

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## OUR VIEW

# Oregon, our valentine

It's fitting that Oregon's birthday is on Valentine's Day. It's the loveliest state we can imagine, and we're glad to call her ours.

From the expansive deserts to the rugged coastline, from the breathtaking Columbia River Gorge to jaw-dropping Crater Lake, from the hidden gem of the Eagle Cap Wilderness to the eclectic neighborhoods of Portland, from Hell's Canyon to Mount Hood; every square mile of the state is filled with unique beauty.

We don't take that for granted. There are entire countries that would kill for this geographical diversity. You could set out on a field trip every weekend to a different corner of the state and see something new and interesting each time.

Have you been to the caves in the Siskiyou Mountains, with their twisting marble hallways? Or the lava fields of central Oregon, where astronauts prepared for space travel in the 1960s? How about the Pendleton Underground Tours, telling the frank and wild history of this western town, or the Astoria Column, towering above the mouth of the mighty Columbia River?

It's no wonder Oregon has become one of the most popular states for relocation. United Van Lines, which runs an annual survey on which states people are moving to and from, had Oregon as the second most popular destination in both 2017 and 2018 behind Vermont.

Young and old alike come looking for the high quality of life. It's something you can't manufacture. It goes way back, to the days of the Oregon Trail, when people from the east set their eyes and their wagons on this place.

The urge to come here has been called "Oregon Fever," as recounted by Stephen Dow Beckham, a professor of history at Lewis & Clark College in the Oregon Blue Book.

"It caused dreams, persuaded men and women to give up all that was familiar, risk their lives and fortunes, and set out for the far shores of the Pacific. The overland emigrations of the mid-nineteenth century were one of the epochal events of human history. Seldom had so many people



EO file photo

The Lower Oneonta Falls are at the end of Oneonta Gorge off the Columbia River Gorge.



EO file photo

Perfectly still Tombstone Lake reflects the granite cliffs that surround it in the Eagle Cap Mountains.



EO file photo

Sand dunes run toward the horizon north of Lake Abert off Highway 395 in Harney County.



EO Media Group file photo

Haystack Rock is a perennial draw for visitors to the Oregon Coast.

traveled so far by land to seek a new beginning."

Oregon bears a resemblance to Eden, providing a cornucopia of nature's bounty.

We're famous for our fish and forests, pears and potatoes, wheat and watermelon, hazelnuts and berries of all kinds.

A certain spirit has shaped the state in the last century and a half, as we've come to understand the land we inhabit.

We've passed bills to protect our beaches and keep them accessible to the public, making our coast a wonderful place to visit.

We've gone out of our way to pro-

tect the environment (admittedly, sometimes to a fault), because we want to be able to hand this state to the next generation the way we found it.

So we wish Oregon a happy 160th birthday, and a happy Valentine's Day, too.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Democrats ready to go fishing for Trump's tax returns

Yes, Democrats want to start a new investigation into already-under-investigation Trump-Russia allegations. And yes, they want to investigate Trump associates like Michael Cohen, Roger Stone and others. But the biggest thing Democrats want is to get their hands on the president's tax returns.

House Democrats want to use a 1924 law that allows any one of three entities — the House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee or the Joint Committee on Taxation — to demand that the Treasury Department turn over the returns of any individual. The law has almost never been used. For the



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first 50 years of its existence, no one tried to get a president's returns and in the years since Gerald Ford took office, presidents have voluntarily made their returns public. Until Donald Trump.

So now, Democrats propose that the entity they fully control — the Ways and Means Committee — force Treasury, parent agency of the Internal Revenue Service, to turn over the president's returns. What do they hope to find? What is remarkable is that even the most aggressive Democrats don't seem to have a clear idea what they will find in the returns. They're just sure there must be something bad in there.

The former prosecutor

Andrew McCarthy has written of Trump-Russia special counsel Robert Mueller that "Mueller does not have a crime he is investigating. He is investigating in hopes of finding a crime." That is what Democrats are planning with the president's tax returns.

"President Trump's refusal to release his tax returns makes it clear he has something to hide," said Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who is a sponsor of the Presidential Tax Transparency Act, which would require presidents and presidential candidates to release their returns.

Of course, Democrats do have some broad ideas about what might be in the returns.

"We want to see if the president of the United States has a conflict of interest that he brought with him or that he created since

he got here," Rep. Bill Pascrell, a member of Ways and Means, said recently. "The only way to do that is to get his tax returns."

Others think — no surprise — that there's a Russia connection. Rep. Jackie Speier, a member of the Intelligence Committee, said it is important "for the American people to know to what extent Russia was engaged with then-entrepreneur Donald Trump. ... Was there money laundering going on? ... That's why having his tax returns becomes so important."

Trump broke a 40-year tradition by not releasing his tax returns during the campaign or since.

Now, there are bills in both the House and Senate that would require presidents, and party nominees for the presidency, to release their returns. But they're

not law yet, and might never be.

Whatever happens, there will likely be serious consequences if the Ways and Means Committee chooses to force the release of the president's returns. For one, it will set a precedent for the House majority to go after the tax returns of individuals. It is not hard to imagine that coming around to bite Democrats in the future.

At a recent Ways and Means hearing into the issue of acquiring individual returns, Rep. John Lewis summed up the situation, and in the process said perhaps more than he intended: "This is not the end," Lewis said. "This is just the beginning."

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