

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Pot export proposal has merit

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon farmers have grown so much legal marijuana in the last couple of years that it would take, by one estimate, almost eight years to smoke the excess, if no more were grown. Neither of those things is likely to happen, and that has at least one group looking at out-of-state sales as a partial answer to the problem.

It's an idea worth exploring.

The state's marijuana industry is in its infancy, and it's bound to change in the years ahead. We do know some things, however. The state's legal marijuana flower supply stands at about 1.3 million pounds, according to Willamette Week, far more than the 166,000 pounds of recreational weed sold in here in 2018.

Allowing exports to other states would cut the surplus and certainly keep some farmers in business. It's an idea being pushed by the Craft Cannabis Alliance.

It's also an idea that made its way into a bill sponsored by Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, in 2017. The measure, Senate Bill 1042, made it out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on a 3-2 vote, but saw no action after that. Prozanski has said he's willing to work with the cannabis alliance on a proposal for the coming legislative session.

Even if lawmakers can agree on a measure that overcomes the legal problems out-of-state sales would face — shipping across states where weed is illegal, for example — sponsors could expect pushback from those who believe the state shouldn't have legalized marijuana for recreational use.

Still, it's an idea worth pursuing. Use of recreational marijuana is allowed in only 10 states, to be sure, but that no doubt will change. Knowing that, there's no reason why Oregon farmers should not be allowed to grow weed here and ship it elsewhere, just as they do Christmas trees.

Letters to the editor

• Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.

Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald,
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GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts announced last week that she would form an exploratory committee, the likely prelude to a declaration that she will seek her party's 2020 presidential nomination. She is one of many potential Democratic candidates: young and old, male and female, white and black, political veterans and relative newcomers, centrists and progressives.

By now it seems quaint as well as futile to complain about the early onslaught of presidential campaigns. But the prospect of a large and dizzyingly diverse Democratic field raises another question: Would a competitive primary campaign undermine the effort to unseat President Donald Trump, assuming that he will be the Republican

nominee? It's widely believed, though hard to prove, that the nasty 2016 primary battle — and lingering resentment by supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders — cost Hillary Clinton crucial support in the general election.

Ideological and generational fault lines are already evident among Democrats, with centrists and progressives drawing very different lessons from the "blue wave" in the midterm elections that restored Democratic control of the House of Representatives. Outgoing Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who lost a Texas Senate race, hasn't yet announced his candidacy for president but is already being criticized for not being progressive enough. The likely presence of several women in the race almost guarantees disappointment if the party ends up nominating a male

candidate.

But this presidential election will be different from the last one in two important ways. First, as wasn't the case in 2016, Democratic candidates and voters now understand that Trump is a highly formidable candidate with a deeply committed core of supporters. Second, it will be harder for supporters of losing candidates to claim, as Sanders' backers did, that the nomination process was "rigged." The party has significantly reduced the influence of "super-delegates" — party notables not chosen in primaries or caucuses.

Some might argue that Trump's manifest unfitness for the presidency is a reason for the Democrats to mute their differences with one another and settle quickly on a

consensus nominee. But even if party rules allowed a top-down decision (and they don't), it would be a disservice to the party's voters and to the democratic process.

Of course the Democrats need to keep their eyes on the ultimate prize: the defeat of the current president. But it also seems likely that the all-too-real possibility of a Trump re-election will concentrate Democrats' minds on the importance of unity in the general election. That argues for, rather than against, a spirited nomination contest in which differences among the candidates — on economics, foreign policy and health care reform — and among Democratic party voters are fully ventilated. Then, when a nominee has been selected, the focus can shift to unseating Trump.

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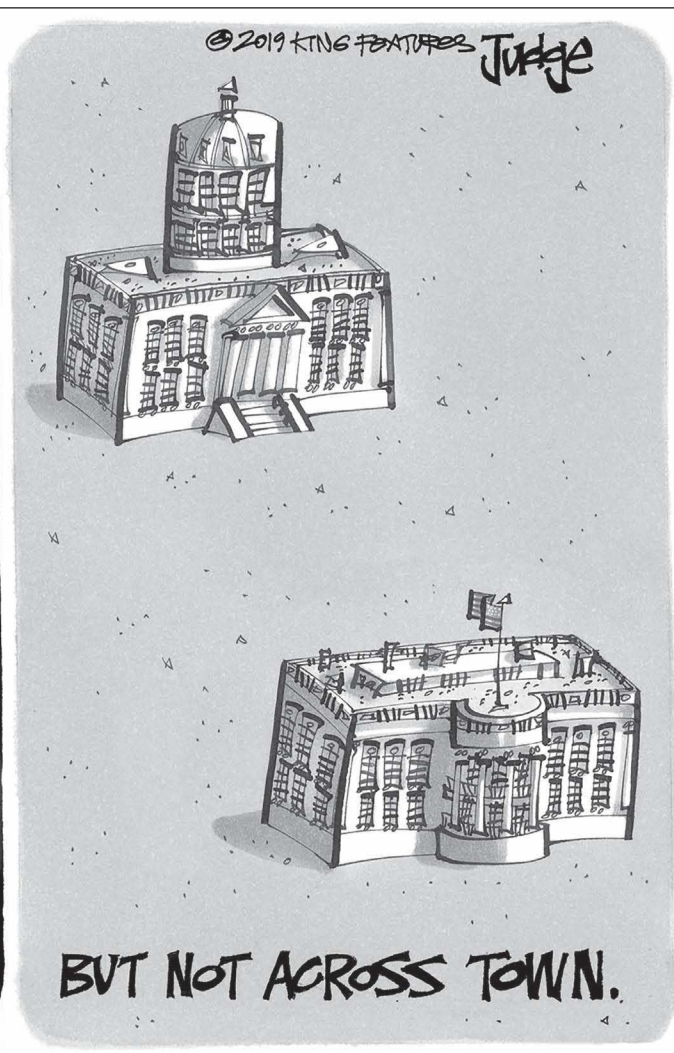
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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.



Gun buybacks aren't working

MAX MEIZLISH

When the Baltimore Police Department announced its December gun buyback program, some city residents surely cheered with great enthusiasm at the opportunity to exchange their firearms and high-capacity magazines for cash. Others, however, likely saw an opportunity to lawfully game the system at the taxpayer's expense.

Here's how.

Any Baltimore resident in possession of a firearm or high-capacity magazine was eligible to participate in the buyback program. But the program's buyback offerings were ripe for abuse — and indeed, it is likely that some will be again if the city doesn't learn from its obvious mistake.

At issue is the Police Department's offer to pay \$25 to any city resident who brings in a high-capacity magazine. For believers in gun buyback programs, that exchange rate probably sounded reasonable, if not encouraging. Regardless, a quick search shows that many high-capacity magazines can be purchased for just \$9 to \$15 online. See what is wrong here? Anyone looking for a quick payday need not look any further; the City of Baltimore was apparently ready and eager to double their money at the taxpayer's expense. Just show up, drop off your goods, collect your cash and be on your way. It was that easy.

Supporters of the buyback program might argue that the payouts were limited to just two high-capacity magazines per person. But someone interested in leveraging loopholes within the system — of which there were many —

would have been quick to offer any kid on the street a quick buck to take their high-capacity magazine and exchange it on their behalf. Many in the pro-gun control movement have practically raised arms themselves over straw purchases in which criminals barred from buying firearms pay others to buy them on their behalf. Well, in this case, the Police Department was unknowingly incentivizing "straw returns" that may have helped line the pockets of anyone conniving enough to take advantage of the city's oversight. The math was simple. This policy just did not add up.

While we are at it, before the buyback was over, there were already reports of at least one Baltimore City resident publicly boasting that she intended to take the money offered for her 9 mm handgun to buy what one shocked reporter described as "a bigger weapon!" Surely, if the objective was to get more guns off the streets of Baltimore, offering \$200 for what is practically the down payment on someone's next firearm is hardly the way to go at it. And yet, here we are.

Gun buyback programs can also offer regular, everyday people a quick and easy way to sell their old guns that no longer work. These are not criminals who would otherwise use their firearms in the commission of a crime so much as they are your elderly grandmother who simply does not want to

keep around your grandfather's relic of a pistol around the house.

There is no arguing whether the gun buyback program was well-intentioned. It certainly was. But its merits nevertheless warrant additional scrutiny. Time and time again, cities seeking to rid their streets of crime have turned to buyback programs to show their communities that they are doing something, anything to fix the problem before them. But buybacks, especially those that incentivize the purchase of the very items being bought back, have a questionable record of success to say the least.

By offering cash payments, particularly for low-cost high-capacity magazines, the city's buyback program may very well have produced some seriously unintended and costly consequences. Indeed, some nefarious and unscrupulous actors will likely take advantage of the city's unforced error if such a program is ever again executed. It is therefore incumbent upon the city to right these wrongs and commit to rethinking future buyback programs before more undue damage is done.

Perhaps instead of doling out dollars to support these buybacks, elected officials could find a way to better support law enforcement and increase the number of officers patrolling the city's streets. Tried and true policing produces results. Misguided and poorly executed buybacks do not.

Max Meizlish is a Baltimore native and policy analyst who works in Washington, D.C.

