

# Opinion

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Marijuana and mixed messages

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregonians and those who work for them in the Legislature continue to have mixed feelings about marijuana, apparently. How else to explain a pair of Senate bills that will be taken up when the Legislature convenes Tuesday?

Senate Bill 218 could limit the amount of weed in the state by giving the Oregon Liquor Control Commission the right to deny folks production licenses if too much of the stuff is being grown.

Senate Bill 365, on the other hand, would bar cities and counties from imposing system development charges on projects related to the production, processing or retailing of marijuana.

The measures would intrude on the marijuana market in ways that state law applies to little else.

As one example, while both state and federal governments require would-be brewers to obtain permits or licenses, neither decides whether your new brewery will be the last one in the door. Permits and licenses in hand, you have the right to brew your beer even if the state is swimming in the stuff.

To be sure, there is a glut of marijuana these days, and Oregon has a stake in seeing that what's grown here stays here. One could make the case, however, that trying to control the market by controlling the supply is a sure way to drive some growers underground.

As for system development charges, cities, park districts and counties don't generally waive the fees. Bend did give builders more time to pay the fees during the depths of the Great Recession, however. Nor does Bend charge system development charges on affordable housing, and it has, at least temporarily, lowered some of them on day care facilities in an effort to encourage their growth.

Marijuana businesses, like other businesses and homeowners in the area, should pay system development changes when new development occurs. Just as the state shouldn't try to control how much marijuana is grown, it also shouldn't give marijuana business owners a break not available to other Oregonians.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Legislature should end prison-based gerrymandering

### Editorial from The Eugene Register-Guard

Oregonians who live in the southeastern part of the state have more voting power in state legislative races than residents of Lane County — about 5 percent more in House races. It's all thanks to the Snake River Correctional Institution and the way governments count prisoners in the census. The Legislature has considered fixing that discrepancy in the past but has repeatedly failed to end prison-based gerrymandering. It can't afford to wait another year.

When the Legislature draws congressional and state legislative districts every 10 years, it relies on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The census counts prisoners as living where they are incarcerated, not where they came from. That leads to voting power differentials.

After the 2010 Census, each Oregon House district was supposed to have about 63,000 residents to ensure equal representation, that being the population of the state divided by 60, the number of House districts.

In District 60, which includes Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur and parts of Lake counties, the Snake River prison's 3,000 inmates pad the population figures. Those prisoners can't vote. They can't participate in local government. Rep. Lynn Findley has never held a town hall at the prison (though at least he understands the prison, having served an advisory role there in the past).

Those 3,000 "residents" are nothing of the sort, and 60,000 actual residents count the same as 63,000 in Eugene's House District 13. Put another way, 95 residents of Baker County count the same as 100 residents of Lane County.

This situation isn't unique to Oregon or to House District 60. It happens anywhere there are large prisons. Mostly rural areas wind up benefiting politically from having a prison in their backyard. A large portion of the prisoners might come from urban areas that tend to vote Democratic, but because of where they are incarcerated, they wind up bolstering conservative rural politicians.

Oregon's other large prisons are in Wilsonville, Pendleton, Umatilla and Salem, and each of those places gets disproportionate representation.

The effect is even more extreme in local races. In Pendleton, prisoners were 28 percent of one city ward after the 2010 census.

This system breaks the principle of one-person, one-vote, and other states are fixing it. California, for example, will count prisoners where they came from after the 2020

census. A few other states simply disregard inmates when drawing political lines.

Oregon has considered ending prison-based gerrymandering in the past, but legislation failed to gain traction. A 2015 bill that included Springfield Sen. Lee Beyer among its bipartisan sponsors, died in committee. House Speaker Tina Kotek backed a bill in 2010.

With a Democratic supermajority in both chambers and strong urban representation, this should not be a heavy lift.

When lawmakers get to work this week, ending prison-based gerrymandering should be a priority. The next census and redistricting are right around the corner, and corrections officials will need time to develop and test a system that provides accurate data. If it doesn't happen this year, Oregon will likely have to wait another decade.



# Hydropower vital for region

Recently, including in a column in this paper, some have asserted that purchasing power from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is an "outmoded" model that should be jettisoned in favor of other sources. In fact, BPA and its utility customers are evolving with the dynamic electricity industry, and it is the local utilities like Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative that are best able to determine the precise mix of power for future needs. With respect to the federal hydropower system, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the demise of this flexible and renewable source of electricity have been greatly exaggerated.

BPA offers some of the cleanest and lowest priced power in the country. But, in order to retain this enviable position it will need to continue to address the challenge of increasing costs and reduced revenue. This is not an issue unique to BPA or even to the Northwest. Low natural gas prices, and an influx of other generation have reduced market prices for selling surplus power. At the same time, an onslaught of regulatory costs, including fish and wildlife mitigation, physical security, cyber security, and the need to maintain aging infrastructure have taken their toll.

Just as during a similar threat from a dip in market prices in the 1990s, BPA



**SCOTT CORWIN**

and agencies that own the generation assets are implementing a strategy to strengthen financial health through cost and debt management. Part of this plan is to modernize to meet industry change and better provide competitive power and transmission services.

Some assertions about a failing federal power system appear to be motivated by long-held advocacy positions against dams. These arguments are misguided in their presumption that the needs of fish (impacted by many factors) should mean dismantling dams through which the fish already see 96 to 98 percent survival rates. There has even been fear mongering about sediment buildup, ignoring that the Army Corps of Engineers very effectively provides any needed dredging in the river.

These claims also tend to ignore the enormous value and unique aspects of power from BPA that is safe, reliable, flexible, and 95-percent emission free. Including the market purchases that could contain coal or gas generation, BPA's power still enjoys a level of 27 pounds of carbon for each megawatt hour

of electricity, compared to the national rate of 998 pounds. Studies showed that to replace just one-eighth of BPA's power with highly efficient gas generation would increase CO2 emissions by over two million metric tons each year, the equivalent of adding more than 400,000 cars to the roads.

In addition, hydropower's flexible capacity enables more use of generation from wind and solar. With large, cost-effective battery storage not yet available, intermittent renewable sources have the added operational need and cost of being integrated into the grid using other generation such as hydropower that can ramp to meet immediate demand.

The regional power planning entity, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, stated, "the federal hydropower system has been, and continues to be, the foundation of the Northwest's economy." As BPA and its utility customers evolve to meet future needs, this valuable federal power system is a far cry from being outmoded.

*Scott Corwin is the executive director of the Public Power Council, a not-for-profit association that represents consumer-owned electric utilities in the Pacific Northwest with respect to power and transmission from the Federal Columbia River Power System.*

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

**U.S. Rep. Greg Walden** (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La

Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.gov).

**State Sen. Cliff Bentz** (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

**State Rep. Lynn Findley** (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

**Baker City Hall:** 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Lynette Perry, Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

**Baker City administration:** 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr.,

city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

**Baker County Commission:** Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

**Baker County departments:** 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shircliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Cindy Carpenter, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

**Baker School District:** 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Wittly. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m., Baker School District 5J office boardroom; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.