

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

A minor move to local control

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

The Oregon Legislature's approach to the problems with the state's land-use law is simple: Don't fix them. Instead, every so often, lawmakers hand down limited tweaks that help kill momentum for substantive reform.

Senate Bill 2 is an example. The Senate having passed it, the bill is now under consideration by the House. It would give Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Sherman, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler counties a narrow break from the rules. There is even some — dare we say it — local control.

Those counties would be allowed to designate land outside of an urban growth boundary for industrial and employment use. There are a series of constraints. The land can be used only on 50 acres per county, for example, and can't be used to gobble up high-value farmland.

The bill helps overcome one of the flaws in the land-use system. Eastern Oregon is not the Willamette Valley. Bend is not Portland. But the land-use rules are essentially the same across the state.

Senate President Peter Courtney has trumpeted the bill's passage in the Senate. "The residents of Eastern Oregon asked for help growing their communities; we listened, and this is one solution," he said.

But what about affordable or workforce housing across the state? Many cities in Oregon have housing problems related to the land-use system. Why isn't the Legislature listening and giving them more local control so they can look outside their urban growth boundaries to solve them?

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

It's disappointing but not surprising that the Trump administration has stopped trying to negotiate a deal with California to avert a fight over fuel-efficiency standards.

For months, officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board have been meeting, ostensibly, to reach a compromise that would preserve a single national set of rules for how many miles per gallon new cars, SUVs and small trucks must achieve on average. But those talks were pretty much a waste of time. The Trump administration apparently is determined to abandon the improvements in fuel efficiency that the Obama administration had ordered automakers to make by 2025, and instead freeze the mileage standards at 2020 levels.

That means the dispute will continue in court, probably for years. California and 16 other states have already sued, arguing that the EPA acted arbitrarily to overturn the 2025 standards, violating its own rules and the federal Clean Air Act. California is also prepared to fight any attempt by the Trump administration to take away the state's unique authority to set its own vehicle emission mandates.

The Obama administration's mileage rules were a crucial piece of the national effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions. California had agreed to forgo more stringent state standards in favor of national regulations that would have a bigger impact on greenhouse gases. With the Trump reversal, California leaders vowed to pursue tougher standards on their own.

If that happens, automakers — which signed on to Obama's rules, then pushed President Trump to relax the 2025 targets — may have to choose between meeting California's tougher regulations for all their vehicles or building different versions of their models for different parts of the country.

The Trump administration's rollback is especially frustrating and dangerous because cars and trucks are America's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. The United States cannot address climate change in a meaningful way without cleaner cars.

The standards were slated to improve the average fuel economy of new cars and trucks by 50 percent by 2025, to almost 55 miles per gallon. To meet the targets, automakers were expected to develop and sell more hybrid and electric models, gradually cutting smoggy tailpipe pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions in the process.

While the Trump administration rolls back ambitious vehicle standards, many of the world's leading economies are embracing innovative clean-car technology. China, the largest auto market, plans to ban the sale of new vehicles powered by gasoline or diesel in the coming decades. France, Britain, Norway and India have also pledged to phase out fossil fuel vehicles.

With the federal government moving backward on vehicle standards, it's up to California and other states to keep up the fight for cleaner cars and a healthier planet.



Your views

Baker City needs votes for all-abilities playground

The residents of Baker City are voting for an all-abilities playground grant from the Moda Assist Program. We are in the lead!

But we cannot stop there. Our kids need more votes!

Baker City's physically disabled youth are a severely underserved demographic. Children in wheelchairs can not get through wood chips or sand. They have to stand by and watch the other kids play. Giving them a new inclusive playground means they can finally join in! Uneven surfacing can also seem like getting through quicksand when walking with braces or crutches.

But that isn't all...stable swings can provide children with developmental and physical disabilities a chance to swing! My son, for example, a 6-year-old, is not yet able to use a traditional swing. He benefits from a stable seat and he definitely does not fit in those infant seats anymore.

So many possibilities with the chance of an all-abilities playground. Vote here, once a day: Trailblazers.com/assist

Vote every day, so every child can play!

Until March 20 and check your email for a verification. I only had to do this one time.

Vanessa Spriet
Baker City

Coordination law important to protect citizens

I have to agree with Commissioner Bill Harvey, as based on the Baker City Herald's Feb. 15 article, as "coordination" is very much misunderstood. Commissioner Harvey pointed out several times; it is not about the County having planning authority over public lands. It is about government to government authority to prevent adverse impacts to the citizens from land management decisions of federal agencies.

In the Federal Land Policy and Man-

agement Act, "...Land use plans of the Secretary under this section shall be consistent with State and local plans to the maximum extent he finds consistent with federal law and the purposes of this Act". If you notice, this is not a may be "consistent" requirement, as the term "shall be consistent..." which means much more.

Look at the definition of consistent in 43 CFR § 1601.0-5(c) "Consistent means that the Bureau of Land Management plans will adhere to the terms, conditions, and decisions of officially approved and adopted resource related plans, or in their absence, with policies and programs, subject to the qualifications in §1615.2 of this title."

There is similar wording in 16 U.S.C. § 1604(a) for the Forest Service: "[T]he Secretary of Agriculture shall develop, maintain and, as appropriate, revise land and resource management plans for units of the National Forest System, coordinated with the land and resource management planning processes of State and local governments and other Federal agencies."

Further, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that a federal agency prepare a consistency review for any federal agency action calling for an environmental impact statement (EIS). Specifically, CEQ regulations require that EISs "shall discuss any inconsistency of a proposed action with any approved state or local plan and laws (whether or not federally sanctioned). Where an inconsistency exists, the (EIS) should describe the extent to which the agency would reconcile its proposed action with the plan or law."

So this coordination requirement with local governments is not something to be ignored by federal land management agencies, it is absolutely required of them.

There are examples worth mentioning, perhaps in future letters. I would love to participate in exploring further the coordination topic.

Guy Michael
Baker City

All-abilities playground equipment benefits all kids

When we discovered that our son would be born with a birth defect that could mean that he would never walk, our first thought was to re-locate to a larger city with more resources for a disabled child. Both during my pregnancy and after he was born, we received an outpouring of support from our community that persuaded us to stay. Those relationships matter to us.

As time went on and our baby is now closing in on preschool, the decision to leave continues to creep into our minds. Our son cannot easily get into or around many buildings in Baker City, and sadly our parks do not offer equipment that is accessible for a wheelchair user. Augustus, at nearly 3 years old, is unable to stand independently. He relies on wheeled mobility devices or the arms of his parents to navigate the world.

Although the playground at Geiser-Pollman Park has seen recent updates, there is not equipment there that he can fully interact with. Accessible playground equipment, which would be purchased with the Moda Assist program dollars, would allow Augustus to play independently from his parents, and fully engage with his brother and his peers appropriately. Augustus is not the only child in our community who needs this option, and all children will benefit from inclusive play opportunities. Accessible playground equipment is not any less fun for able-bodied children! We have been to playgrounds in Portland and Redmond that offer such equipment and the parks are packed with kids who are all doing the same thing: having fun! The support from our community is overwhelming me once again and reconfirming the decision to continue living in Baker City! Please continue to vote for Baker City to receive this playground grant every day through March 20 at www.trailblazers.com/assist

Karla Macy
Baker City

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the

accuracy of all statements in 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.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do

not include this information cannot be published.

- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.
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