

# Opinion

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Tax plan leaves out necessary PERS reform

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Gov. Kate Brown wants to give schools an additional \$2 billion, but, as things now stand, she and lawmakers must find a new pot of money to fund her dream.

Now an alliance of businesses (Nike, a real estate developer and the Oregon Health Care Association) and public employee unions have joined forces to push for a tax. The one they like best is a gross receipts tax on business. It differs in some respects from the similar proposal in Measure 97, which Oregonians defeated by nearly 20 percentage points in November 2016.

There are still big problems with the idea.

Gross receipts taxes pyramid on top of each other, growing with every new step from raw materials to final sales. That drives up prices, and that, in turn, cuts job growth. From the Legislature's standpoint, however, only two factors are likely to matter. Gross receipts taxes bring in a boatload of money, and they tend not to fluctuate much with economic ups and downs.

Lawmakers are working to reduce that problem, perhaps through something called "sales minus input," in which a business can deduct some of its costs before calculating what's owed.

That presumably would make the tax less onerous for businesses with narrow profit margins, notably grocery stores. Grocery stores could even be exempted from the new tax. But there are plenty of other Oregon businesses that have low profit margins, too.

Finally, there's this: Without PERS reform, a major chunk of what's raised by a gross receipts tax will go to keep the retirement fund afloat. To make her \$2 billion a real increase, Brown is estimated to need to add in another \$3 billion just to keep up with projected PERS increases through 2021.

Where are Brown's proposals to match increasing taxes with substantial reform to PERS? Oregon businesses shouldn't be taxed any more without those reforms.



## Your views

### Carbon limit legislation would cost a lot, do little

The cap and trade legislation efforts to reduce carbon dioxide in our atmosphere is a major mistake.

If you were able to marshal all of man's work on the planet to this cause, the result would be minimal compared to what nature does every year. For example, the volcano in Iceland has put out more pollution in four days than we have been able to reduce in five years. It is still spewing. A few years back a mountain in the Philippines called Mount Pinatubo spewed out more pollution than all the human race has in all its years on earth.

Just think, there are about 200 volcanoes spewing lava, ash or fumes somewhere on Earth at any time.

If that isn't enough, think about the forest fires that rage around the Earth. Some calculations were made a couple years ago that the fires in Australia and the U.S. put out more carbon dioxide than all your efforts to reduce for more than three years.

Let's stop this nonsense. It will cost everyone a lot of money, and will change the situation very little.

**Ken Anderson**  
Baker City

### Chronic nuisance ordinance an unfair attack on the poor

Every decade or so, a few anti-poor, intolerant citizens, work themselves into a hate-filled frenzy in order to get a new property maintenance type ordinance passed that hurts the most vulnerable in our community. They are doing it again.

Many of them these days are new folks coming to our town. They write letters to the editor telling the homeless to move along or suggest we try some medieval enforcement technique that violates a person's most basic rights. They want ordinances to put the neighbor they moved in next to out of their home.

A person can live here for 35 or more years, but some folks that have recently moved in with their retirement money and highfalutin values can form a lynch mob and get Council to write a law to put the fellow out of his home. They can do it by misleading the Council and all of Baker on unproven testimony that has never been carefully examined because the accused can't afford a lawyer. In a recent case, items of value were taken from a property without compensation.

The Chronic Neighborhood Nuisance Ordinance:

- appears to be excessively punitive and intrusive
- will affect the lives of people who don't have the capacity to comply (disabled, indigent, elderly, troubled, etc.)
- will increase the number of homeless
- requires proof of "adequate" services without "adequate" being defined and prior to any problem being identified
- will make many feel like they live in the old Soviet Union,
- and is probably unconstitutional as it appears to violate the due process and equal protection rights of citizens.

The Oregon legal community recently published "Barriers to Justice," which shows that 84 percent of people with civil legal problems didn't "receive legal help of any kind." That includes most low-income people in Baker. When Council writes laws that can put you out of your home, lack of access to a lawyer is just wrong, and you could be next.

Baker is better than that.

**Christopher Christie**  
Baker City

### Letters to the editor

• We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be

printed.

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

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# Glad to know rescuers are always ready to go

My imagination is not especially vivid but I have on occasion realized that by making a single minor mistake, something as innocuous as stepping in the wrong spot, I could put my life in immediate peril.

Invariably these epiphanies explode into my consciousness while I'm hiking alone.

I do this often.

My trips are hardly expeditions, though, and my exploits decidedly modest.

I neither scale precipices nor swim whitewater rivers nor brave arctic gales.

(Well, sometimes it's difficult around here to avoid the latter and still get some exercise outdoors. But I'm no Byrd or Shackleton, to be sure.)

Because I have neither a surplus of time or of ability — most particularly the latter — I rarely venture more than a couple miles from a road.

Indeed quite often I never penetrate far enough into the hinterlands to get beyond the range of the soft rumble of distant traffic or the piercing whistle of a passing freight.

(The train horn, especially, can push some of its considerable decibels into lonely folds in the



**JAYSON JACOBY**

topography that otherwise can feel as remote as the Outback.)

Yet I understand — albeit, as I mentioned, generally at a subconscious level — that were I so unfortunate as to slip on a rime-encrusted log and snap an ankle or dash my skull against a stone, I could be in mortal danger even if I could still hear an occasional diesel truck accelerate on the nearest highway.

Or I could get lost in a fog and end up stranded in the chilly woods for a night. That ought not prove fatal in anything but the most frigid of conditions, certainly, but nature cares nothing about your core body temperature. People have died in less than a day, and in circumstances that don't, in retrospect, seem particularly perilous.

Yet there is a corollary to these occasional fits of morbidity that overtake me while I'm negotiating a mildly challenging section of terrain, or when a storm slinks in and slashes the visibility to the range of a thrown rock.

This is the knowledge that whatever nasty fate might befall me, there are, at that very instant, people not far away who will put their own lives on hold — and potentially at risk — to spare me a potentially gruesome ordeal.

(I have no interest in sampling the piquancy of my own urine, for instance.)

Quite a lot of people, in fact.

I was reminded of this earlier in the week while talking with Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash about the effort last weekend to rescue two Washington snowmobilers, Scott Weaver and Michael Webb, who were benighted in a canyon north of Halfway.

Although Baker County has an official search and rescue organization, one with an admirable record, this episode started in a rather less formal way.

Ash phoned Taylor Kerns, an experienced snowmobile rider. Kerns in turn called another accomplished rider, Clay McCarty.

It was going on 10 o'clock on a Friday night, but both men agreed to spearhead the initial search.

This is no small thing.

Or, rather, it is no small thing to ride a snowmobile, long after dark, into terrain where more than 6 feet of snow has fallen over the

past month or so.

But they went.

Kerns and McCarty didn't find Weaver and Webb Friday night, as the GPS location that Weaver had texted apparently wasn't quite accurate (possibly because they were in a canyon with dense timber).

But while the pair were searching, Ash and Undersheriff Jef Van Arsdall were arranging for about a dozen snowmobile riders from the Pine Valley club to assist in the search when the sun rose Saturday morning.

Baker Aircraft also volunteered the use of one of its helicopters, and the North Powder Fire District had equipment en route.

Ash said Brent Kerns, the Baker County Justice of the Peace, had rounded up five or six skiers who were also ready to head into the mountains if the snowmobilers couldn't reach Weaver and Webb.

The snowmobile searchers found the two men before 10 a.m. Saturday, and were able to escort the pair, with their snowmobiles, back to Halfway.

Weaver conceded that it was an unpleasant experience — at one point he contemplated setting fire to his snowmobile to ward off temperatures that dipped to just above zero.

He was of course ecstatic to hear the staccato snarl of the rescuers' snowmobiles approach.

But Weaver said he was also impressed not only by the selflessness of the searchers, but also by the well-orchestrated operation.

I am too.

I feel that's the reason, whenever I find that twinge of discomfort about what might happen were I to tumble down a rock-strewn slope, I immediately remind myself that a literal lifeline is ready to be tossed my way.

This of course depends on someone knowing where I am.

Which is why my wife invariably asks where I'm going when I grab the keys from their wooden knob in the kitchen.

The thought that people will come for me, if I get into the sort of trouble that's beyond my ability to deal with, warms my heart.

As for my hands, I'm intrigued by Weaver's story about his snowmobile.

I've never been stuck out overnight, but I think I understand how someone might consider torching an expensive machine if necessary to ward off frostbitten fingers.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.