

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Talking trash bills

Nobody, it hardly needs be said, likes to pay more for a necessary product or service.

Baker Sanitary Service's request to the Baker City Council for an 18.75% boost in collection rates — from \$16 per month to \$19 for a typical residential customer — is hardly cause for celebration.

But it is a reasonable proposal.

A dozen years have passed since the company raised its residential rate. It's unlikely that many of us have other regular bills that have remained the same for so long.

The reasons for the proposed increase, which Baker Sanitary President David Henry listed in a letter to the City Council, are compelling.

Baker Sanitary has no control over China's decision to stop accepting certain recyclable items from the U.S. as of Jan. 1, 2018. That has wreaked havoc in recycling markets nationwide — in Baker Sanitary's case its recycling revenue had dropped by 50 percent.

The company has also had to spend about \$1.7 million to expand its landfill near Baker City. That's a considerable expense, but the alternative — having to haul our trash to a distant landfill — would almost certainly result in even higher rates due to the transportation costs.

Henry also wrote that Baker Sanitary, because of the landfill project, had to postpone replacing garbage trucks and other equipment. But over the past three years, he wrote, the company has spent slightly more than \$1 million to replace the vehicles and other items.

Unlike the China recycling situation, Baker Sanitary had control over those decisions. But had the company chosen to buy the new equipment earlier, when it was also expanding the landfill, it likely would have had to raise rates then rather than waiting until 2019. Those increases probably would have been smaller than the current proposal, but even the most modest rate hike is not going to be popular.

Ultimately, Baker Sanitary remains a relative bargain. Even with the increase to \$19 per month for a 68-gallon rollcart emptied weekly, the company's rate would undercut what La Grande residents pay — \$24.35 per month for a 64-gallon receptacle. Ontario Sanitary charges \$22.10 per month for a 90-gallon container, and Pendleton Sanitary \$29.90 for the same size.

That said, Baker Sanitary's request for a rate increase (the company can unilaterally boost rates by up to 5 percent each year but it needs City Council approval for larger increases) should prompt a wider discussion about the company's slate of services.

The three cities mentioned above all offer something Baker Sanitary does not — curbside recycling. Adding that option would increase the company's costs, to be sure. But it's a worthwhile discussion topic.

La Grande and Ontario also offer lower rates for customers who have their cart emptied every other week. That might be a more useful option in Baker City than Baker Sanitary's yellow bag service for low-volume customers, which costs \$7 per month.

Ultimately, Baker Sanitary has made a strong case for its rate hike request — in no small part because it hadn't made one since George W. Bush was president.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## GUEST EDITORIALS

# Brown's decisive action warranted

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has had enough. After more than a year of criticism of the state's foster care system, she's stepping in, and in a big way. Good for her.

Problems with the system, which is part of the Department of Human Services, became apparent with the release of a secretary of state's audit issued in January 2018. The audit noted that the state lacks enough foster families and social workers to ensure that children DHS oversees are kept safe.

The report was hardly the beginning or the end of the bad news. Foster children with serious mental health

problems are being sent out of state because treatment is unavailable in Oregon. At least one of them, a 9-year-old girl in a treatment program in Montana, had been drugged to calm her down. Nor are children in out-of-state facilities necessarily being visited by outside observers as they should be. Too, children of color are being sent out of state more frequently than their white counterparts.

Though Brown says the changes have been in the works for at least two weeks, the timing of her announcement could hardly have been better. A lawsuit was filed April 16 against DHS by the national nonprofit A Better Childhood, Disability Rights Oregon

and others. The suit alleges the state fails to keep foster children safe.

Brown, a former family lawyer, issued an executive order Thursday creating an oversight board that will meet every other week to direct the agency's reforms. An on-site crisis management team will ensure those reforms are implemented, and one of the governor's senior advisors will work directly at DHS to see that all goes well.

Decisive action is clearly what DHS needs, and Brown's actions are designed to both help shape that action and see that it's put in place. That's good news for Oregon's least fortunate children, the very ones the foster care system is supposed to protect.

# Forget impeachment: Defeat Trump

### Editorial from The San Jose Mercury News:

At any other time in modern history, investigative findings that a foreign power had meddled in our elections and helped elect our president would alarm the nation. And evidence that the president had tried to undermine that investigation would be shocking.

But we're not living in normal times. Donald Trump has lowered the bar for acceptable presidential behavior to an unprecedented level. And the nation's electorate has splintered badly with the two parties talking past each other, often forgetting the political middle that will determine whether Trump hangs on for another four-year term.

Any hope of returning to normalcy requires that members of Congress, especially House Democrats, stay focused on the end game: Restoring dignity to the presidency, regaining the country's standing as a respected world leader and honoring our history as a diverse nation of immigrants that look out for those less fortunate among us.

There's one — and only one — way to do that: Elect a president in 2020 who can lead the nation back onto the moral path from which we strayed 2.5 years ago.

That won't happen if Democrats simply try to run against Trump — if they fail to offer a vision of their own or to recognize that the presidential election will be won in swing states far from California. If Democrats spend the next 16 months obsessed with impeaching

the president, they will lose again.

That's not to dismiss the outrageous findings of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation: Russia meddled in, and tried to subvert, our elections. Individuals associated with the Trump campaign had repeated contacts with people tied to the Russian government.

Trump tried to cover-up the purpose of a meeting between one of his sons and a Russian lawyer, and likely fired James Comey because the FBI director refused to publicly state that the president was not under investigation. Trump called White House counsel Donald McGahn and directed him to have the acting attorney general remove Mueller.

McGahn did not carry out the direction, fearful that it would turn into a replay of Richard Nixon's 1973 Saturday Night Massacre, when that president ordered his attorney general and deputy attorney general to fire Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox. Both resigned, leaving the solicitor general to carry out Nixon's directive. The country was rightly outraged.

Mueller's findings about Trump's conduct should similarly roil our nation to the core. But Americans have grown numb to the president's continuing misbehavior. It's hard to imagine what new evidence could be uncovered that would change the current political calculus.

Nevertheless, the House of Representatives has a duty to investigate — a

duty reinforced by the Mueller report. Mueller refused to answer the question of whether Trump obstructed justice; but he noted that Congress has the power to apply obstruction laws to a president's "corrupt exercise of powers of the office."

Yet, absent shocking new details, House Democrats should abandon the idea of impeachment. Even if there were the votes to proceed to trial, the chances of conviction in the Republican-controlled Senate would be nil.

Meanwhile, Democrats would have lost the opportunity to show the nation its alternative vision — for affordable health care, protecting the environment, fixing our broken immigration system, providing jobs with livable wages, implementing true tax reform, offering a coherent foreign policy and addressing climate change. That's what will help the party's nominee win swing states.

As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi keeps trying to remind her caucus, the party, and its presidential candidate, whoever that might be, must not make Trump — and certainly not a Trump impeachment — their primary focus. Being just the anti-Trump will not suffice. Hillary Clinton's failed campaign demonstrated that.

If the Mueller probe taught Democrats anything, it should be that putting their political eggs in one basket is a risky strategy doomed for failure. It's a risk the party, and the nation, cannot afford to take.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Donald Trump:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to [www.whitehouse.gov/contact](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact).

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

**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: 6182 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).

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**Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum:** Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

**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](mailto: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 Shertliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

**Baker City administration:** 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.