

EDITORIAL

Tax kicker economics

Oregon income taxpayers are in line to receive the biggest refund next year due to the state’s unique tax “kicker” law. State officials said this week that tax revenue exceeded by \$2.6 billion the state’s projection from 2017. Under the kicker law, the state returns taxes, in the form of credits, when revenue surpasses projections by at least 2%.

Some state lawmakers and officials — Democrats, mainly — probably will try to divert at least some of this money. They might propose to pay down the state’s public employee retirement system shortfall or bolster the rainy day fund as a hedge against a future recession.

But another announcement this week, this one from the federal government, highlights the economic benefits of keeping money in Americans’ wallets rather than in government coffers.

Reports show that although the national economy slowed this spring, with the gross domestic product growing by 2%, down from 3.1% in the first quarter, an increase in consumer spending to the highest level in nearly five years partially offset that slowdown.

This is vital because consumer spending is responsible for about 70% of economic growth.

Oregon’s reserve funds already are at an all-time high of \$3.7 billion. Making sure residents receive their full kicker credits — the average is estimated at \$739 — would stimulate the economy and, potentially, reduce the need to dip into that reserve.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

OUR VIEW

We remember when we found out that our favorite chocolate chip cookies weren’t made by elves in a hollow tree.

Had we not been 8 at the time, we might have hired a lawyer and taken the folks at Keebler to court for falsely suggesting it was elven magic that made the cookies and other snacks so good. Such a case would have been thrown out of court.

But that lawsuit would have had more merit than one filed last week against the Tillamook Creamery Association by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, which is even more without merit.

The dairy cooperative is accused in the lawsuit of unjustly enriching itself and violating Oregon trade practices law by touting small family farms with pasture-raised cows when most of its milk is sourced from the “most industrialized dairy factory farm in the country.”

About two-thirds of the creamery’s milk comes from 32,000 dairy cows raised at Threemile Canyon Farms’ facility in Boardman, “where cows are continuously confined, milked by robotic carousels, and afflicted with painful udder infections,” the lawsuit alleges.

The complaint claims that while the company advertises its dairy products as being produced in Tillamook County with “small-scale traditional farming methods,” it’s heavily reliant on a distant “mega-dairy” that’s large enough to be “visible from space.”

Tillamook is a farmer-owned cooperative. The sale of cheese, butter and ice cream on a national scale benefits those farmers.

Unlike Keebler, which specifically claimed its products were made in a hollow tree by elves, Tillamook has never claimed that all its products are made in Tillamook or all the milk is sourced from its members.

That Tillamook sources milk from Threemile Canyon Farms and other large dairies outside Tillamook County has never been a secret. It has been reported widely for nearly 20 years, not only in the East Oregonian but other statewide media such as Oregon Public Broadcasting and The Oregonian/Oregonlive.com.

We’re not sure what “traditional farming methods” consumers imagine are utilized by co-op members who have appeared in Tillamook advertising. With the exception of scale, many of their methods are similar to those employed at Threemile Canyon.

Milking carousels — robotic or otherwise — are common on the dairies of farmer-owners in Tillamook County. No commercial-scale dairy milks by hand.

“Painful udder infections” occur on small family farms too, even on organic dairies. Beef cows get them, too. Dairy producers

take great care to prevent the infections and to treat them once they appear.

In 2012 PETA sued the California Milk Advisory Board claiming its popular “happy cow” promotion was false advertising. A judge threw that case out, ruling PETA couldn’t back up its claims.

An Oregon judge should do the same with this case.

(In the interest of full disclosure and to avoid litigation, we admit to leading readers on a bit. We thought Chips Ahoy were a lot better than the Keebler cookies, but the Nabisco advertising campaign didn’t fit our narrative.)

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Crater Lake always lives up to its reputation

I underestimated Crater Lake.

Which is not an easy thing to do with a lake that’s almost 2,000 feet deep and clogs the collapsed throat of a volcano that until very recently, geologically speaking, was taller than Mount Hood.

Perhaps I’ve been jaded by recent visits to better-known phenomenon of both the natural variety — the Tetons and Death Valley, for instance — and the unnatural — Mount Rushmore.

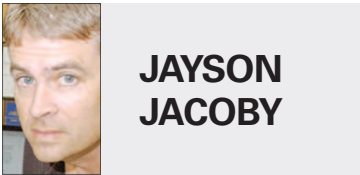
All three of those places lure more visitors than does Crater Lake, which is Oregon’s lone national park.

Considerably more in the case of Grand Teton National Park (3.5 million visits in 2018), Mount Rushmore (2.3 million) and Death Valley National Park (1.7 million). Crater Lake’s visitor count last year was 720,000, which barely put it in the top 100 (97th) among 378 sites managed by the National Park Service.

I think it’s more likely, though, that I simply took Crater Lake for granted.

I have been there several times, for one thing.

And because I don’t even need



JAYSON JACOBY

to leave my native state to see the lake, it seems to me that I don’t afford the place the same cachet of exoticism I reserve for other states whose sights and ways I am not so familiar with.

I suspect I am similarly dismissing, however unconsciously, of other Oregon attractions, such as the Cascade volcanoes, the coast and Multnomah Falls, that undoubtedly leave residents of less amply endowed states in awe.

(I’m thinking here of, say, Kansas or Iowa, states where the highest point for miles around might well be a grain silo rather than a basalt butte.)

But my complacency disappeared immediately on the afternoon of Aug. 18 when we rounded a corner on the Rim Drive and had our first glimpse of Crater Lake.

I very nearly had to pull over to the shoulder and gather myself. The scene was so singular, so

fantastically strange, that I could scarcely resist the urge to stare at the lake rather than make sure I didn’t crash into an oncoming car or careen off a cliff.

(And there is no scarcity of cliffs at Crater Lake. Nor of oncoming cars, at least on an August weekend, no matter the park’s comparatively meager visitor tally.)

At any other time I would insist that no body of water could impress me as much as a mountain. I suppose it’s because I spend most of my time on land rather than in water, but when I look upon a craggy peak I can imagine what it would be like to stand atop a fin of stone, or to try to ascend a nearly sheer slope.

Water doesn’t have the same effect on me.

Except Crater Lake is different. Its color is its most compelling attribute — a shade of blue that’s unique. I think it’s a fool’s errand to try to describe the lake through the conventional means of comparison. The water’s hue is so distinct from the blue of the sky or the sea or a gemstone to make such analogs not merely irrelevant but indeed misleading.

I abhor and so normally eschew

clichés, but one is perfectly appropriate with regard to Crater Lake.

You truly must see it to believe it.

And even when you see Crater Lake the scene is so jarring in its novelty that it can seem, however briefly, to be the product of something other than nature.

Went for a bike ride Sunday, in the velvet light that previews dusk, and I felt on my cheeks the breath of autumn on the August breeze.

This was not the genuine article, to be sure.

But waning August can sometimes put on a pretty fair approximation of the season to come, can make the shelter of a light jacket feel cozy for the first time since May (or June, what with our obstinate climate).

At the risk of veering into matters more mystical than scientific, this feeling that the fulcrum between seasons has begun to tilt to a discernible degree can’t always be gauged with precision by a thermometer.

The temperature during the bike ride was perhaps a few degrees

lower than what it was around twilight a couple weeks earlier.

Yet the quality of the air was decidedly different, the delineation between the light and the dark more abrupt and somehow harsh.

It was still perfectly pleasant, lacking the true chill of October. There were even a couple of sorties by mosquito, a symbol of summer as certain as the s’more.

But it was obvious too that this wasn’t the apotheosis of a summer evening, when dusk falls but the temperature barely does, and you know that even at dawn the air will remain oppressive.

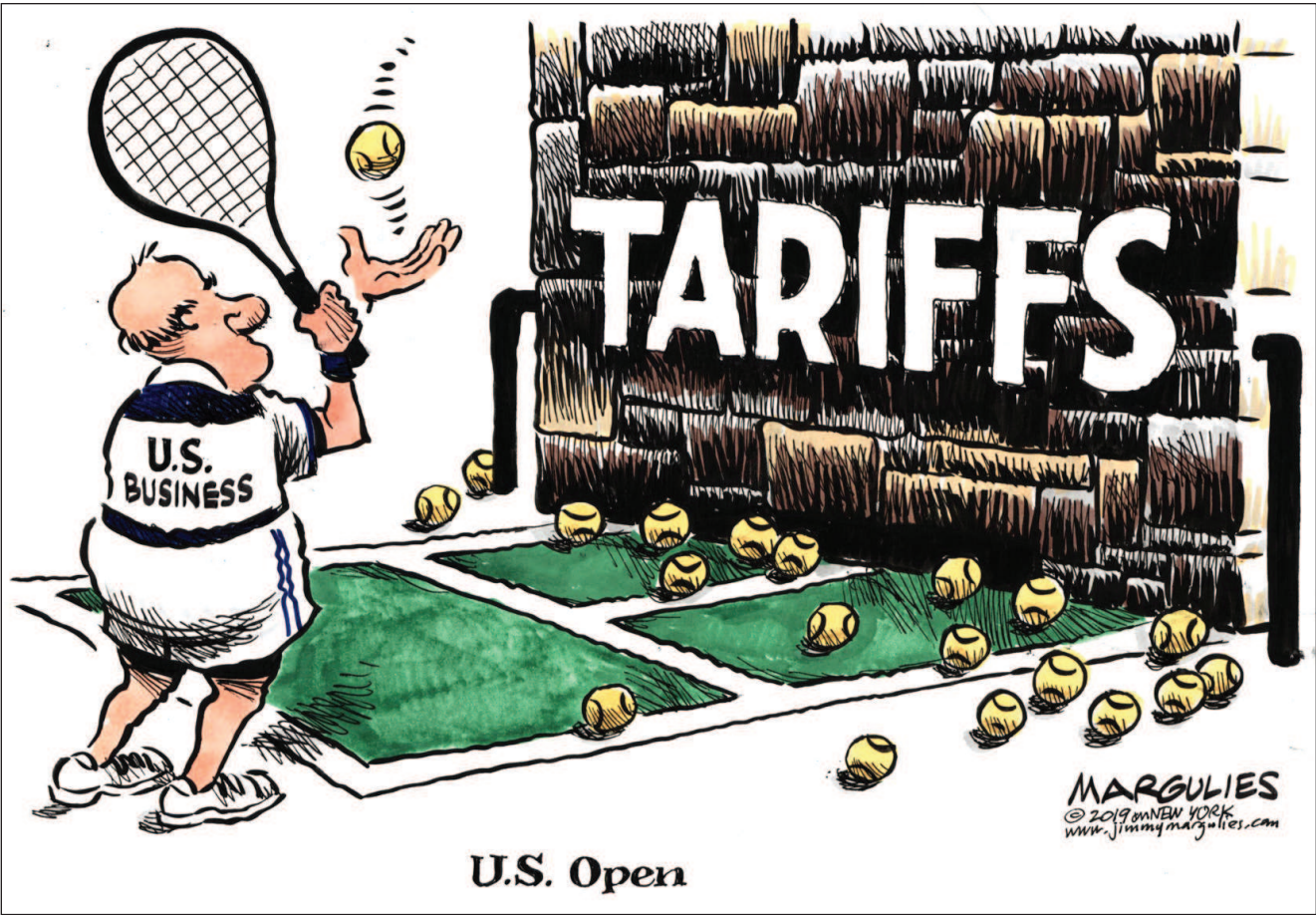
Summery temperatures will likely persist for at least a few more weeks, of course.

Indeed, just a few days after the bike ride the afternoon sun was as scorching as in late July.

But a milestone had passed just the same, as it does every year.

And for me that threshold moment happened while I was pedaling, the silhouette of the Elkhorns etched on the western skyline, and the frost, the inevitable ice, not far beyond.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.



Your views

Congress needs to act to improve elections security

Our elections are still under threat from hacking, and Congress has not acted to keep our elections safe. However, the U.S. House has passed a bill to allocate \$600 million for election security in states and municipalities. Security would involve paper ballots and adults rather than voting by machines which can be tampered with.

Now it is up to the Senate to join with the House of Representatives to pass legislation to ensure safe elections. So contact your senators and request action on safeguarding our elections. Ask Senator McConnell to move forward on election security.

Election security should be a bipartisan effort and we need some positive

action from our leaders so that we can vote with confidence, knowing that our votes will be accurately counted. Incidentally, Rep. Greg Walden voted against HR 2722, Securing America’s Federal Elections Act.

Bruce Raffety
Baker City

Baker City could use a clock/thermometer downtown

Kinda quiet in the letters to the editor department. What better way to spend a late summer afternoon than musing about what I see around us?

It would be nice if we had a working thermometer downtown. When you live in a land of such extremes, it’s a handy thing to have. And you can take pictures of it to record its historical value with

the town in the background.

None of the clocks downtown are worth a hill of beans. Too small to be legible from a distance. It would be nice to have one that sits on a vintage pedestal or something. In theme with the buildings of the period.

Another thing concerns this very paper. Small town papers are slowly dying out for a number of reasons. Printing and distribution are darn expensive now and everybody is moving their publications online. The writing is on the wall ...

It breaks my heart that a town of this size no longer has a radio station. There’s such a need. I’m hoping some adventurous person will bring that back someday.

Dan Collins
Baker City