

# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Budget security

Leadership in 31 Oregon counties, including Baker County, should be able to breathe a bit easier in the next few days. A federal budget package has cleared the House of Representatives and should be voted on in the Senate by week's end, and President Trump is expected to sign it.

That means an end to federal government shut-downs at least until September 2020, and, more immediately, a return of federal Secure Rural Schools funds to 31 of Oregon's 36 counties. Baker County will receive some of the money that's supposed to offset federal funds counties used to receive when timber was sold and harvested from federal land.

Oregonians, indeed all northwesterners, have the combined efforts of Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Oregon Democrats, and Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, Idaho Republicans, to thank for that. Oregon's share of the money should amount to about \$80 million a year for two years.

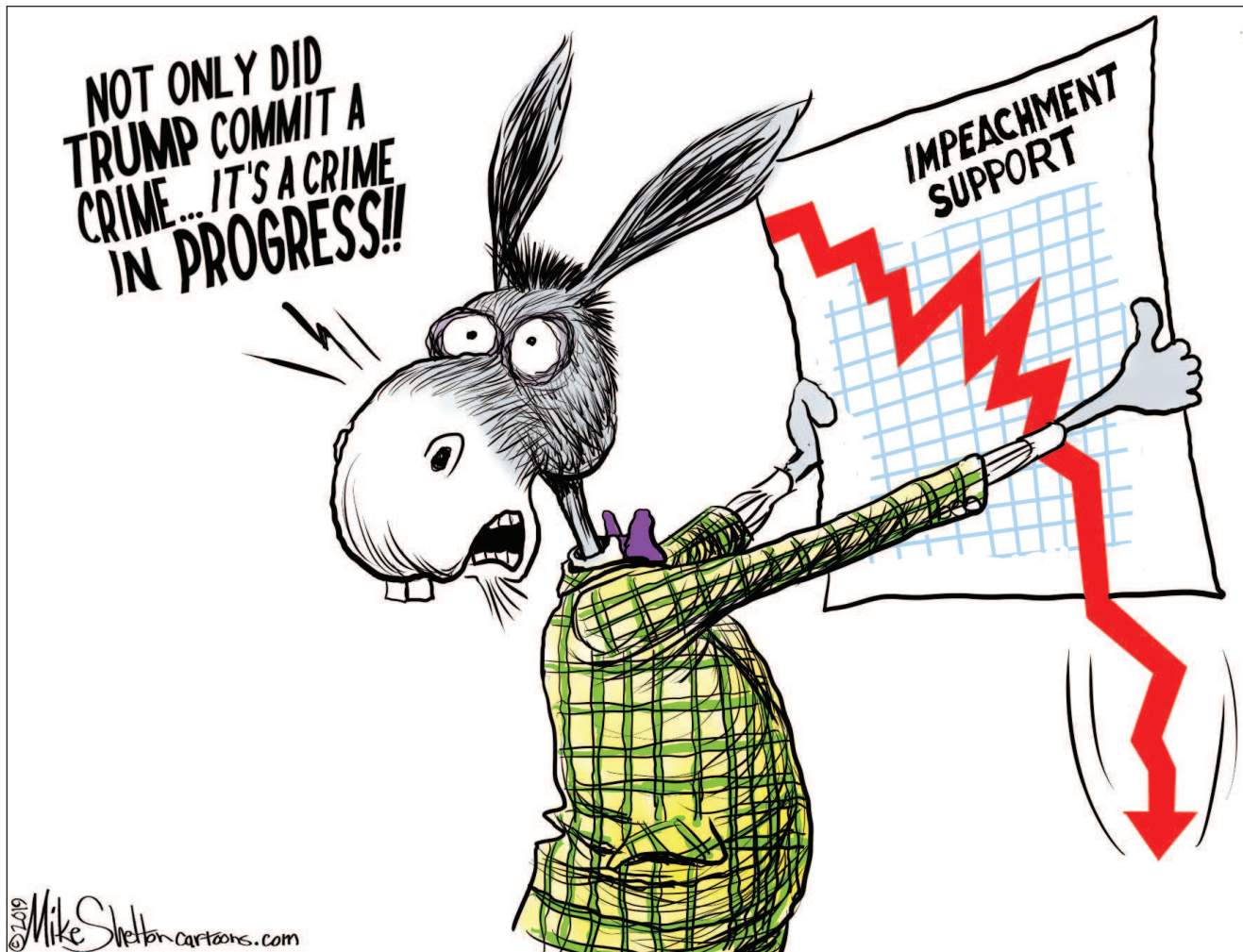
Timber sales used to provide a major chunk of change to most Oregon counties. They received 25% of the timber receipts from U.S. Forest Service land. The money has historically been used to help fund schools and provide money for road maintenance. They've also gone into search and rescue and other essential county services.

As harvests declined, so, too, did timber sales revenue, and in places like Curry County, the result was ugly, at best. While the county has one of the lowest tax rates in the state, it also has one of the oldest populations in Oregon. When timber revenues nosedived, so did county services.

The four Oregon and Idaho senators also continue to work on a measure that would create a permanent fund to finance the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act. The hangup is finding the estimated \$8 billion it would take to make the fund sustainable.

For now, though, Oregon county governments and school districts know help, at least some of it, is on the way.

*Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.*



## Your views

### More cell towers could be beneficial for rural residents

I was recently reading the Dec. 6 paper about the city fathers denying the Verizon cell tower to be built within the city limits. Kind of late to give positive feedback for a cell tower, but living out in the wilds of Baker County, outside the city limits, I happen to live 10 miles out and cell service along the lower limits of the Elkhorn Mountains is just about obsolete. True, a lot of trees can block signals, but with another cell tower somewhere along the lower hills west

of Baker City could just be an improvement, especially in an emergency when landlines may be cut off along with electrical power. So, I understand to not have something big like a metal tree in your backyard is disturbing to your eyesight, but some people need the extra height for safety reasons. We do have a vast amount of large hills surrounding this city, so why not put a tower on top of a couple of them? Driving into Boise, Ontario, or other places along the freeway, there are numerous cell towers all within view of each other, but not around

this valley. I happen to like hunting and exploring the forests and streams of this beautiful area, but cell service is pretty much nonexistent outside the freeway corridor, and since I usually hunt alone, getting hurt and not being able to reach help via the cell phone system means I don't bother to carry one with me, just more weight and space. I would hope this letter can be addressed to the various cell phone operating companies that neglect the people that live in the remote areas.

Phillip Reindl  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

# Trump impeach vote was deserved

### Editorial from New York Daily News

On Dec. 19, 1998, a Republican-controlled House of Representatives voted to impeach Bill Clinton, judging that lying under oath about a consensual affair warranted his removal from office.

In this column the day after, we wrote: "The stain will live for centuries ... That is what Republicans have wrought on the narrowest of party-line votes over some lies about a sexual affair. We damn them today. History will damn them forever."

On Dec. 18, 2019, a Democratic-controlled House voted to impeach Donald Trump, judging that a president's

attempt to coerce a foreign power into announcing an investigation into a domestic political foe, then trying to cover it up, merits his removal from office.

This is the proper judgment, one that the Senate will whistle past but that history will affirm as righteous.

No, it doesn't help that not a single Republican had the spine to break rank and declare it disqualifying when a president invites foreign interference in the next election. Having blinded themselves to severe offenses that clearly qualify as the types of "high crimes and misdemeanors" referenced by the Founders, they then have the gall to blast the

impeachment as unacceptably partisan.

Um, it's only partisan because they themselves mindlessly, reflexively refuse to see what is obvious.

Impeachment is a statement of values. Refusing to impeach would have been its own statement, that the most powerful officeholder in the land can concoct a scheme to distort the will of Congress and strongarm a vulnerable ally to smear an American citizen, essentially to generate an in-kind campaign donation.

That's what Republicans said in unison Wednesday. We conclude as our editorial of 21 years ago concluded: "It cannot be undone."

# Let's raise our eggnog mugs to Cousin Eddie

The greatest character in cinema history is Cousin Eddie from the "Vacation" film franchise.

I'll concede my choice is unorthodox.

But then so is Eddie.

Anyway I refuse to confine my opinions to the conventional, critically endorsed cadre.

"Best Of" lists are clogged with the likes of Humphrey Bogart's Rick Blaine and Marlon Brando's Vito Corleone and Judy Garland's Dorothy Gale and Vivien Leigh's Scarlett O'Hara.

Fine performances all.

But so far as I can tell, none of those actors has ever delivered a line that compares, for sheer piquancy, with Randy Quaid's "You better take a rain check on that, Art — he's got a lip fungus they ain't identified yet."

Or this one: "Only problem is, he's got a little bit of Mississippi leg hound in him. Mood catches him right, he'll grab your leg and just go to town. You don't want him around if you're wearing short pants, if yknow what I mean!"

And as accomplished as those other performers are, I'm convinced that only Quaid could pull off the scene in which he is clad in a ratty bathrobe, chugging a can of Meister Brau and smoking a cigar while emptying the septic tank from his RV into a storm drain.



JAYSON JACOBY

Unfortunately, decorum, and the standards of a family newspaper, preclude me from quoting verbatim Cousin Eddie's infamous statement in that scene. The edited version: "Merry Christmas! (Receptacle for an RV's toilet) was full!"

That scene probably is the best known from "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," one of the three "Vacation" films in which Quaid portrayed Cousin Eddie.

(The character is absent from the second in the series, "European Vacation." I always presumed this was because Eddie was unable to fly due to the plastic plate in his head.)

"Christmas Vacation" was on TV the other evening, as it so often is this time of year. We own a DVD version and I checked the fine print on the back of the case to verify what I thought to be true. Indeed, the movie turns 30 years old this year.

(It was released in U.S. theaters on Dec. 1, 1989, to be specific.)

I was taken aback just a bit by this.

Partly this is a matter of per-

sonal history. I graduated from high school in 1988, and whenever I come across a reference to some cultural event that happened 30 years ago it strikes me as improbable that more three decades have passed since I was handed a diploma.

But "Christmas Vacation" also doesn't seem to me to betray its age as obviously as some films do from that era.

The absence of modern accoutrements such as cellphones isn't especially jarring, since technology — aside from imported Italian twinkle lights, sewage treatment plants, and a nuclear power reactor — doesn't factor into the plot. And because the film is set during that most venerable of holidays, the soundtrack and other potential giveaways to the passage of time are muted.

My family adopted "Christmas Vacation" as our official Christmas movie well over a decade ago. My DVD was a gift from my parents, and one year my three siblings and I also received one of the glass moose mugs — the handles look like moose antlers, an homage to the first "Vacation" movie and to Marty Moose — from which Clark Griswold and Eddie sip egg nog.

(Or gulp it, in Eddie's case.)

Cousin Eddie would rank near the top of my favorite film charac-

ters even if his contributions were limited to his memorable quotes.

But what elevates him to the top is how he interacts with Clark.

Eddie's purpose, or so it seems to me, is to occasionally make Clark, whose disastrous failures to be the ultimate family man define the "Vacation" movies, appear not quite so abnormal by comparison.

Clark falls from ladders, staples his shirt sleeve to fascia boards, plugs 36 appliances into a single outlet and does much else of an idiotic nature.

But he also lives in a nice suburban home rather than a decrepit motor home.

And although Eddie, according to his immensely patient and cheerful wife, Catherine, is "holding out for a management position," Clark already has a white-collar job in a downtown skyscraper where he creates food additives including a non-nutritive cereal varnish, something I suspect actually exists.

(His boss is played by the imitable Brian Doyle Murray, whose slurred pronunciation of "Griswold" sounds suspiciously like "Greaseball.")

While Clark is depending on his Christmas bonus to pay for the swimming pool he has already hired a contractor to build, Eddie is impressed when the bonus turns out to be a one-year subscription in

the Jelly of the Month Club.

"That's the gift that keeps on giving the whole year," Eddie says after Clark opens the envelope.

Indeed it is.

But my favorite scene, and the one that I think best illustrates the dichotomy between the two characters, is the Christmas Eve dinner.

As Clark, the very picture of fatherdom as he sits at the head of the table, prepares to plunge his carving knife into the turkey, Eddie, displaying the leer that is his trademark, utters the immortal line: "Save the neck for me, Clark!"

Later in the meal, after Eddie has proved that he enjoys lime Jell-O regardless of whether it's sprinkled with cat food, Clark announces — to the children — that an airline pilot had spotted Santa's sled.

The kids, of course, are enchanted.

But Eddie pauses in the middle of a mouthful and looks at Clark with a puzzled expression.

My older brother Michael once repeated Eddie's line while we were eating breakfast at a restaurant, perfectly mimicking the deadpan and earnest delivery, and I almost hyperventilated on my pancakes.

"You serious, Clark?"

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.