

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Liquor sales in groceries?

If you are a newcomer to Oregon and yearn for booze, you learn quickly that you can only buy hard liquor in state liquor stores.

If you are a newcomer to Oregon, you also learn quickly that Oregonians can't pump their own gas in many parts of the state. (It's a wonder the state lets people plug in their own electric cars!)

Surveys from the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center seem to indicate Oregonians are ready for change — where they can buy liquor and in pumping gas. Polls done in January showed more than 50% of Oregonians support both policy changes.

The restrictions on pumping your own gas already have begun eroding. It's OK to pump your own in much of Eastern Oregon, including Baker County. We think all Oregonians can handle it full time. If you don't want to pump your own gas, we understand. In other states, full-service stations often cater to that desire.

A permanent shift in the rules for booze may soon be coming to a ballot near you. Two possible ballot measures led in part by Lauren Johnson of Newport Market in Bend aim for change. In one, grocers could sell local spirits. In the second, hard liquor just would be for sale at the grocer. It's not clear if the Northwest Grocery Association, which is backing both efforts, will actually focus on one or the other for the 2022 ballot.

A private system with state oversight works OK for pot sales. Grocery stores manage to sell beer and wine just fine. We are sure they could do the same with hard liquor.

There are many questions, though. What happens to the people who have invested in state-controlled liquor stores? Their business model would be in big trouble. And will small producers of craft liquors be better off in this new system or worse?

The bigger worry for some is what happens if it becomes more convenient to get hard liquor. Would problems with addiction and substance abuse rise? Maybe. But if people want booze now, though, they will manage to get it. And we don't see a tidal wave of people in states with more freedom to buy liquor calling to add more restrictions to where liquor can be sold.

There's going to be interest in figuring out what it might do to prices, as well. But until we know for certain what will be on the ballot, it's hard to know what it might do. It's also hard to know if this just will be another in a series of similar measures that never became law.

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OTHER VIEWS

Biden risks poisoning his own infrastructure bargain

Editorial from Dallas Morning News:

Americans have broadly agreed for years that the nation's transportation infrastructure is in desperate need of attention. Across party lines, people want the U.S. to once again be a country with modern and excellent roads, bridges, airports and rail lines.

And Americans want something else — a functional political environment that can deliver these priorities in a way that is fiscally sound and that uses America's credit to fund long-term investments that will pay off for generations and cost less to build in today's dollars than they would in tomorrow's.

That's what we got in Washington last week. Well, almost. President Joe Biden announced an all too rare bipartisan agreement on a \$1 trillion infrastructure package that was

hammered out by five Republicans and five Democrats. If the president signs it, it would not only represent important progress for the restoration of our infrastructure, but it also could signal a turning point in our politics.

We were heartened by the president's words during his announcement of the deal.

"Neither side got everything they wanted in this deal, and that's what it means to compromise. And it reflects something important: It reflects consensus. The heart of democracy requires consensus," Biden said, according to The New York Times.

Most of us who don't work in politics also recognize that as life, or what the kids sometimes call "adulting."

Unfortunately, what the president gave in one moment, he appeared to take away in the next.

"If this is the only thing that comes to me, I'm not signing it," he said.

Biden promised that he wouldn't sign the infrastructure bill unless a far more divisive part of his economic agenda was passed in tandem.

Then, Saturday, June 26, the president gave us another twist, saying he would stay true to the promise to support the infrastructure deal.

"The bottom line is this: I gave my word to support the Infrastructure Plan, and that's what I intend to do. I intend to pursue the passage of that plan, which Democrats and Republicans agreed to on Thursday, with vigor," he said, according to The Wall Street Journal.

We aren't sure what to think now. What we know is that the progressive wing of the Democratic Party won't be happy with just an infrastructure deal. And the president

wants to deliver those progressives the second part of his plan.

That plan would advance any number of progressive causes at a cost of trillions while substantially raising taxes. It's far from certain that Democrats can get the legislation through Congress and onto Biden's desk for a signature. So why tie up a good deal that is constructive in so many ways with one that raises far more political problems? And why confuse the matter further by backtracking?

The answer is probably something we should get accustomed to in this administration. The president has a habit of trying to please moderates of both parties while also trying to satisfy the progressive wing of his party. At some point, that won't wash. We just hope it doesn't wash out this deal.

The president was absolutely right on another point last week. "We're in a race with China and the rest of the world for the 21st century. This agreement signals to the world that we can function, deliver and do significant things," he said.

We can't lose that race. Democracy can't afford it. Why in the world would we put that at risk when, for once it seems, we can all agree on something?

Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.



Prescribed fires take the heat off

It was 102 degrees in Medford on June 1, 2021. Let me say that again just in case it didn't fully sink in — Medford suffered temperatures as high as 102 degrees in spring, making it harder for firefighters battling Southern Oregon's first fires of the year.

Now, I usually like Oregon to be in the record-setting business, but not for hot, dry weather in April and May. Having a 100-degree day while still in springtime should ring alarm bells for Oregonians everywhere.

It was not so long ago that Oregon's fire season was only a few weeks in August and September. The events of Memorial Day weekend only serve as a reminder that the human-caused climate crisis has increased the frequency of fires that threaten lives, businesses and entire communities.

Over the past week, I met with forest managers and first responders in Southern Oregon, Central Oregon and the Willamette Valley to hear their forecasts for the 2021 fire year.

The bottom line is it's long past time for nickel-and-dime solutions to billion-dollar problems caused by wildfire, such



RON WYDEN

as smoke-related health issues, damage to local economies and life-and-death threats to Oregonians.

Our state has a backlog of roughly 2.5 million acres of federal land in dire need of wildfire prevention. And Oregonians don't want 2.5 million excuses about why there aren't more forest health improvements and prescribed fire treatments completed on these 2.5 million acres.

They just want these fire risks reduced as soon as possible.

The science is clear: Controlled burns clear out dead trees and vegetation as well as break down and return nutrients to the soil, creating healthier and more resilient forests. Prescribed burns or fuel reduction treatments can head off wildfires before they have the chance to burn out of control, devastating lives and livelihoods.

I saw this firsthand in Sisters, where a prescribed burn near the Whychus

Creek provided key support in suppressing the 2017 Milli fire before it could overtake Sisters.

To that end, I recently introduced legislation to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fires. The National Prescribed Fire Act has the support of conservation groups as well as leading timber industry voices because its passage would mean healthier forests for timber harvest, forest ecosystems and outdoor recreation alike.

It's going to take all hands on deck to prevent wildfire in the coming dry seasons, so that's why I have introduced bills to harden our power grid by burying power lines, generate thousands of good-paying jobs for young people reducing fire-causing fuels in the woods and meet emissions goals by investing in the clean energy sector.

Smart, science-based forestry policy is smart climate policy. If we treat hazardous, fire-starting fuels now in the cooler, wetter months, we can prevent future fires before they have a chance to spark.

Ron Wyden, a Democrat, represents Oregon in the U.S. Senate.

Your views

Remember the Constitution on the Fourth of July

What does the word "constitution" mean and what does it stand for? In the Webster's New World Dictionary Third College Edition it teaches us that it is the system of fundamental laws and principles of a government, state, society, corporation, etc., written or unwritten. I do not like that word, "unwritten." But our Constitution is a document or set of documents in which these laws and principles are written down. And our forefathers gave up their fortunes and families and their lives to give us our Constitution written down.

For example, the Second Amendment. "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people (did this say government? No) to keep and bear arms

shall not be infringed on" — in other words, fail to observe the terms of. The right to bear arms was one of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights were ratified Dec. 15, 1791.

All the amendments to our Constitution after that are nothing but absolute insanity to me and that is why we have so many lawyers today making fortunes because of so many amendments that we are not meant to understand. Now, there are good lawyers as well as bad. Jesus Christ expressed his thoughts of bad lawyers. Luke 11:46 reads, "Woe unto you also ye lawyers! For your lade men with burdens grievous to be borne." Luke 11:52 reads: "Woe unto you lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: Ye entered not in yourselves and them that

were entering in ye hindered or forbade for entrance to and acquirement of knowledge." Read Malachi 2:1 through 8.

Our Constitution is written by men chosen by God. When I was entering into the United States Marine Corps I swore to defend the Constitution of the people of the USA, period. The moral foundation of the Constitution is in the Declaration of Independence and its principle of equal rights. Under the Constitution, government was to be limited to protecting those rights.

This Fourth of July, buy an American flag and fly it on the front of your house and leave it there until the true Jesus Chris returns with his eternal government.

Gary W. Robinson
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