

## EDITORIAL

Coming clean  
on gambling

The Oregon Lottery and other state-sanctioned gambling has brought more than \$12 billion in revenues to the state since it began in the 1980s.

Big money. It's right behind the state income tax as one of the state's largest sources of revenue. And there is a thirst for more.

Other states, such as Pennsylvania, allow much more freedom for people to gamble on more things — right from their phone.

Why not Oregon?

A new state committee is going to look at Oregon's gambling regulations and its mix of offerings.

There are the usual issues. The committee should also address transparency. Oregonians deserve to know where the money is coming from and how it is spent. There is, at least, a temporary step back from the Oregon Lottery. More about that in a few paragraphs.

The issues that are sure to get the attention of the committee include: What is the right mix of gambling? How much state-sanctioned gambling is too much? Is Oregon doing enough to battle gambling addiction even as it encourages people to gamble? Should gambling machines be allowed at horse tracks? Are Oregon tribes losing out as the state expands gambling beyond their control?

This past legislative session Senate President Peter Courtney tried to get passed a bill to allow state-sanctioned sports betting on college sports. People already bet on college sports, after all. Why not capture some of the revenue for the state? The proposal was to take the revenue from gambling on college sports and put it into the state's program that provides grants to college students. Legislators balked. It got one hearing and then nothing. Gambling opponents didn't like it. Oregon tribes argued it would eat into their casino revenues.

We hope the committee also firmly backs transparency. For instance, the Oregon Lottery recently became less transparent about its money from sports betting. You used to be able to find on the Oregon Lottery's website monthly reports showing how much was bet on various sports from cricket to chess to surfing to football and the state's margin on each. Here's a link to information for August 2021: [tinyurl.com/ORsportshistorical](https://tinyurl.com/ORsportshistorical).

Now if you want to see that, the website directs people to a public records request. Why the added hassle? We asked the Oregon Lottery. A spokesman wasn't immediately sure. Understandable. "I do know that our agency philosophy with public records is to be as transparent as possible," Patrick Johnson emailed us. "So I will look into this further."

He also swiftly sent us a link to the files. That's here: [tinyurl.com/ORsportsbetting](https://tinyurl.com/ORsportsbetting).

So we got them. But there's less detail in the new reports and that added hassle in getting them. Jess Nelson, public records specialist for the Oregon Lottery, later told us there's less detail, in part, because the lottery is transitioning to a new vendor for sports betting, DraftKings. She said it is not the intent to require a formal public records request for the data. The Oregon Lottery just has not gotten around to putting the link on the webpage, yet, she said.

Right now, the Oregon Lottery is providing less data and more hassle. It's not the biggest deal, but it should be a reminder to the new state committee that any changes to state gambling regulations should not come with less transparency.

■ 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

County Republican Party should  
return donation

On November 29th, 2021, Suzan Ellis Jones, Chair of the Baker County Republican Central Committee (BCRCC), called for and held a central committee meeting wherein the state required law to notify all voting members of the committee of the meeting was violated. At this meeting, the Republican bylaws were suspended, and it was decided for the Baker County Republican Party to endorse Suzan's daughter, Kerry McQuisten, as the county's candidate for Oregon governor. It was then decided to donate \$2,500 of the committee's funds, approximately 70%, to Kerry's campaign.

But there's a problem. None of those items were on the agenda prior to the meeting as they are required. This violates the county Republican bylaws. Badly. Furthermore, per state party bylaws, neither Chair Jones nor the committee were allowed to specifically endorse a candidate from the republican party prior to the primary election on May 17th, as it would not be treating all Republican candidates fairly.

In the March 20th, 2022, edition of this paper, it was reported that Suzan Jones contends that "Baker County Republican bylaws allow members to override chapter bylaws by a vote of the majority of those present, and that in doing so, in the case of the donation to McQuisten's campaign, does not violate the state GOP bylaws."

This is false. The Oregon Republican Party Bylaws state specifically that they may "recruit and financially assist legal qualified Legislative candidates in the Primary Election, after duly consulting with the Executive Committee of the County or Counties affected, provided that in any contested primary, including, but not limited to, legislative races, the Oregon Republican Party shall treat legally qualified candidates equally." (ORP Bylaws, Article 25, Sec A. Amended 10/2/2021)

Furthermore, "County Central Committee shall not adopt bylaws, rules, etc, which conflict with the filed organization documents of the Oregon Republican Party or applicable Oregon Law." (ORP Bylaws, Article 26, Sec D. Amended 10/2/2021)

This means that Suzan Jones and those select committee members at the meeting

need to either get the \$2,500 back from her daughter's campaign, or donate \$2,500 to the other 17 candidates running as Republicans in this same race. That is a grand total of \$45,500. BCRCC does not have this amount to donate.

Kerry McQuisten is not only the candidate who received that donation, but she is also a committee member of the same body that voted to donate the money. ... to her! Again, this was done on suspended bylaws, at a meeting that was improperly noticed, with motions passing that were never on the agenda until after the meeting started! Suzan Jones is the Chair of the committee and was Kerry's campaign manager at the time. Furthermore, Joanna Dixon is the treasurer for BCRCC as well as the treasurer of Kerry's campaign. Conflicts of interest anyone?

The Chair for the Oregon Republican Party sent a letter to Suzan Jones inquiring about these actions. Suzan Jones simply ignored the letter and to this day, refuses to answer.

To Suzan Ellis Jones and her daughter Kerry McQuisten: Please return the \$2,500 to the Baker County Republican Central Committee.

**Jake Brown**  
Baker County Republican Party Central  
Committee Member  
Halfway

It's proper that voters decide on the  
railroad quiet zone

How can the City Council change a previous vote concerning the quiet zone issue? They did it with just one vote, and that vote will snowball into thousands of votes this November 8th. The only "pity" about this issue would have been the public being shut out from having a voice. Four city council members came very close to denying the public the chance to participate in this controversial issue.

Don't be surprised if the vote this fall parallels the voter response 20 years ago in 2002. Some folks try to say that this issue, this year, is different than the measure people were asked to vote on in 2002, it's not. Either you love listening to the train horn or you don't.

The idea that taxpayer dollars are not being used is ridiculous. City staffers have

already drawn up plans for railroad crossing improvements. Their time is taxpayer money that could have been used to deal with ambulance problems, and changing 10th Street, Cedar Street and Hughes Lane access. Even though city staffers are fully funded for this year, I am sure that the general public considers it taxpayer money.

I feel that it is ironic that the 5J school board is allocating \$25,000 to help fund the quiet zone. This is to help improve the safety for the school children. Some people try to convince us that this is external money, but I am sure that the general public knows that those are taxpayer dollars. In 2009 the school board chose to close North Baker Intermediate School because it needed major renovations and kept South Baker School open, next to the railroad tracks. Where was the need for safety for the schoolchildren then? You might say that it cost too much money to do the needed renovations, but several years later the school was reopened to little children as an Early Learning Center. Help me figure out why one segment of little children were denied using this facility while another gets to move in and use it.

While I'm on the subject of the school board, where are they getting all this money to buy historic homes to facilitate foreign exchange students while they attend Baker High School this fall. These are houses that cost twice as much money as some of the homes the local kids live in with their parents. If they already had all this money, why did we need to pass a bond measure last spring for \$4 million?

This whole process about the quiet zone has had some omissions in information being disclosed to the public. Such as, the school board's funding of this project will come from next year's budget. Union Pacific Railroad wants \$45,000 to hire a consultant for this project. There will be no dividers/barriers for the railroad crossing at Pochontas Road.

It does not matter if you are for or against the quiet zone movement, at least you will get a chance to cast a vote come November 8th. I think that a lot of people believe that the train horns do serve a tangible safety purpose.

**Roger LeMaster**  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

## Trading stocks for credibility in Congress

## Editorial from The Sacramento Bee:

Few issues in Congress transcend partisan polarization as reliably and consistently as members' stock portfolios. Americans across the ideological spectrum overwhelmingly agree that their federal representatives should not be buying and selling securities given their obviously advantageous access to information that is not available to most investors. And judging by the persistence of robust market participation on Capitol Hill, members of Congress from both parties broadly concur that they relish leveraging that privilege to enrich themselves.

The post-Watergate Ethics in Government Act and the Obama-era STOCK Act (Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge), which required more frequent disclosure of congressional trading, have served mainly to underscore the extent of the problem without doing much to solve it. A recent review by Insider found that 59 lawmakers had violated the law, which generally incurs a piddling fine. Meanwhile, flurries of remarkably prescient buying and selling by lawmakers have taken place on the cusp of world- and market-shaking events such as the 2008 financial crisis, the 2020 emergence of the novel coronavirus

and this year's Russian invasion of Ukraine, all suggesting senators and representatives were making lucrative use of information gained by virtue of their positions.

An outbreak of pre-pandemic stock-dumping prompted the FBI and the Securities and Exchange Commission to open an investigation of four senators. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., ultimately acknowledged failing to disclose a transaction by her late husband and said she would pay a fine, though she maintained that his trades were unrelated to the emergence of COVID-19 or any information she may have had. Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., who came under more extensive scrutiny based on a broader sell-off by him and a relative, stepped down from the leadership of the Intelligence Committee. And scrutiny of former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., may have helped hand the Senate to Democrats. But the federal government ultimately dropped all the probes without bringing charges.

The husband of another California lawmaker, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is so prolific and successful as an investor as to have inspired a following on social media, where amateur investors follow the speaker's disclosed trades. There's evidence

that the thousands of trades disclosed by members of Congress, and mimicked by those monitoring them, are influencing the broader market. Like Burr, who voted against reform, Pelosi made matters worse by opposing any restriction of such congressional profiteering last year, though she has since changed her position.

The cause of reforming congressional stock trading is almost as popular and bipartisan in theory as members' pursuit of market riches is in practice, with more than a fifth of lawmakers signed onto one of several current reform proposals. As the anemic previous efforts demonstrate, they have little hope of regaining credibility on the subject if they continue to allow members and their immediate families to own and trade individual stocks.

Requiring members of Congress to limit their investments to diversified funds that don't invite self-dealing and conflicts of interest is not a lot to ask given their unfair advantages over the investing public and the power and responsibility with which they're entrusted. The alternative is another reason to distrust a legislature that Americans already hold in unsustainably low esteem.