

EDITORIAL

Baker benefits from a summer of detour signs

Baker City has been festooned with detour signs this summer to an unprecedented level.

Barricades blocking sidewalks at intersections have been pretty conspicuous, too.

But although this months-long project to build or improve curb ramps, which started in the spring and is projected to continue into November, has undoubtedly frustrated many of us at times, the city will be a better place for it.

This \$11.8 million effort, through the Oregon Department of Transportation and contractor Wildish Standard Paving Co. of Eugene, is making several dozen intersections compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. ODOT started the project, which includes 25,000 ramps statewide, after receiving a formal complaint from the Association of Oregon Centers for Independent Living.

State officials agreed to improve ramps along state highways. That includes sections of highway that are also city streets. In Baker City the list includes sections of 10th, Broadway, Main, Campbell and Elm streets, as well as Dewey Avenue.

The project is about two-thirds finished, according to ODOT.

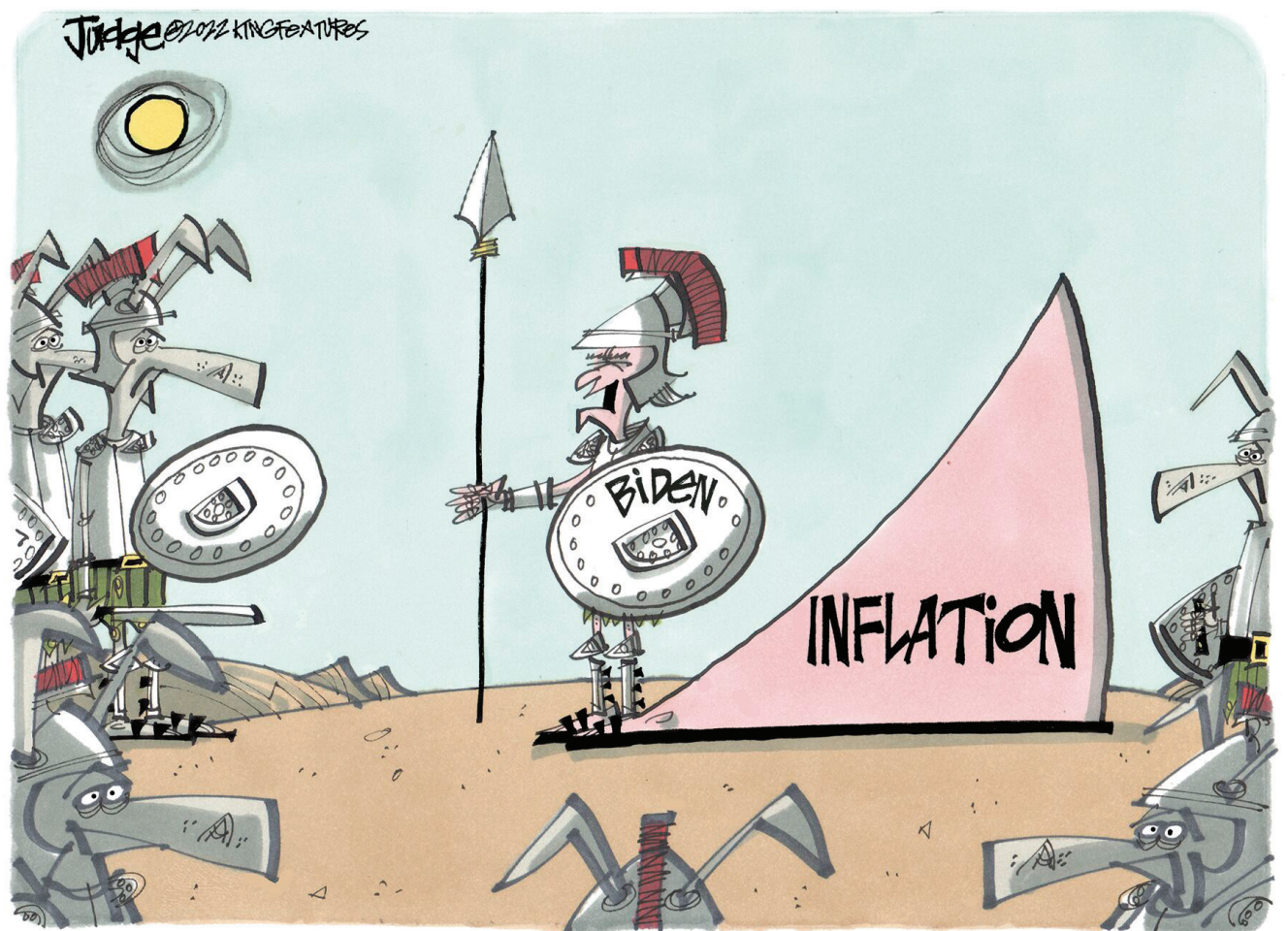
The benefits are obvious. The new or improved curb ramps make it much easier, and in some cases possible for the first time, for people in wheelchairs to navigate sidewalks. The upgrades are a boon to pedestrians as well. The contractor has replaced sections of sidewalk as well as building the ramps.

This is the sort of project the city on its own could never afford to undertake — particularly in a single year.

It's gratifying to see such rapid, and tangible, results from the expenditure of public dollars. Better still, these benefits will continue to enrich the city for decades.

But no one will be sorry to see the detour signs or barricades leave.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



"LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE ACHILLES' HEELS... WHY WORRY ABOUT IT?"

YOUR VIEWS

Everyone should get involved with the Baker Food Co-op

I would like to thank everyone who stepped up to help the Baker Food Co-op in our recent SOS — Shop Our Store campaign. Although we didn't garner as many pledges as we were hoping for, it was reassuring to meet so many positive and enthusiastic members of the community who love and appreciate the Co-op. This summer many visitors from around the country and other parts of the world were happy to include us in their travels, tell us what we already know. What a great resource we are for a town our size. Our Co-op was one of the many food co-ops begun in the seventies that gave birth to and nurtured the market for natural foods. Like most other consumer food co-ops, the Baker Food Co-op began literally with nothing but the energy of people involved. A real homegrown, community owned grocery store serving the community with quality products and honest information.

The world has changed a lot during the 40-plus years that

the Co-op has been around. One thing has not changed, however. That is the beauty of the concept of cooperation, mutual respect, good healthy food and a business based on people. Fast forward to today. I am so grateful to be a part of our small board, hard-working creative staff and generous working members that make things happen here. You are precious, and you prove every day that a group of devoted people with a passion and a vision can still make a difference in a community. Where local isn't just a tagline. It is simply the way we do business. Working together to promote a sustainable economy by supporting organic and sustainable food production. As always, everyone is welcome to be a part of the food co-op movement and hopefully we can continue to be part of a positive social and lifestyle change.

See you there!

Joan Tracy
Baker City

Knights of Columbus grateful for overturn of Roe v. Wade

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court overturned Roe

v. Wade. Prayers to God were answered on this historic day for our country. Many have been waiting for this day, particularly those on the front lines standing for life at abortion centers and others who are working countless hours behind the scenes to save these precious children. This Supreme Court decision basically determined there is no U.S. constitutional right to an abortion. Hopefully many states will make the right decision and ban abortion. Other states, including Oregon, are predicted to increase abortions by accepting out-of-state mothers who want to abort their child.

The Knights of Columbus serve in four different action categories: faith, community, family and life. The Life program includes the ultrasound grants, assistance and support after pregnancy, marches for life, pregnancy center support, and the Novena for life. The Knights are also involved in installing memorials for the unborn, prayer vigils, and special services in honor of the unborn.

The Knights of Columbus ultrasound grant initiative has proven to save innocent lives. This program is helping

women choose life by giving them the opportunity to view their unborn child on ultrasound machines at pro-life pregnancy centers. With this assistance, more than 70% of undecided women choose to have their child after seeing an ultrasound. It has been estimated that one ultrasound machine at a pregnancy care center may save the lives of 1,000 unborn children. Knights in Oregon have provided at least 30 ultrasound machines since 2014, which means our efforts may possibly have saved 30,000 lives.

Now is the time to step up our efforts, for not only voting for pro-life candidates, but also increasing our support and assistance for pregnancy centers and ultrasound installations. Please consider supporting Knights events and assisting other organizations involved in protecting unborn lives.

Tim Delsman
Grand Knight,
Knights of Columbus Baker
City Council
Steve Bogart
Deputy Grand Knight
David Lindley
Hal Huntington
JR Vela
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• We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.

• The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot

verify the accuracy of all statements in letters.

• Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.

• The writer must include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

• Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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COLUMN

Political moderates still run the show in Washington

BY DAVID A. HOPKINS

Last week's enactment of the 2022 budget-reconciliation bill, also known as the Inflation Reduction Act, is being treated by many analysts as a major turning point in Joe Biden's presidency. As recently as last month, when it looked like Congress might not pass reconciliation legislation this year, conventional wisdom in Washington suggested that Biden was a failing president who should even reconsider seeking a second term. But once the IRA unexpectedly secured sufficient support, Biden enjoyed an immediate reputational rebound as a master of legislative achievement; a few hyperbolic responses even compared him to Great Society-era Lyndon Johnson.

This wasn't too surprising. Americans usually regard the president as the gravitational center around which the entire political universe revolves, responsible for almost everything — good and bad — that happens on his watch. But the events of the past few weeks demonstrate how much this view can distort the more complicated truth. What changed between July

and August wasn't Biden's presidential acumen, but rather the behavior of a single key senator: Joe Manchin of West Virginia.

Despite the credit he received for its passage, Biden had little involvement in crafting the bill he happily signed into law on Aug. 16. The policy areas addressed by the IRA reflected Manchin's preferences more than those of the president or any other public official. It was Manchin who compelled Biden to settle for a bill much smaller in scope and cost than the White House originally favored, Manchin whose open skepticism earlier this summer had seemed to sink the prospects of reconciliation legislation passing at all, and Manchin (along with fellow moderate Kyrsten Sinema) who was responsible for many of the specific provisions included in the final product. He even forced a change in the bill's name, pointedly abandoning a previous title that had echoed Biden's "Build Back Better" campaign slogan in favor of a strategic rebranding.

There's nothing unusual about moderates like Manchin using their

pivotal positions in Congress to exert substantial legislative influence. The ideological polarization of American politics over the past several decades has steadily reduced the number of moderate members in both parties. But our current era is also historically distinctive for its remarkable degree of electoral parity. As noted by the political scientist Frances Lee, Democrats and Republicans are now more evenly matched at the national level than at any time since the late 1800s.

The consistently narrow margins of party control in the contemporary Congress ensure that the shrinking number of moderates who can survive both primaries and general elections continue to hold the balance of power between blocs of ideological stalwarts — even during periods when the same party controls the presidency and both congressional chambers. The objection of just three Republican senators permanently blocked President Donald Trump's attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act during the last period of unified party rule in 2017-18. Manchin and Sinema have similarly used a credible

threat of defection from the party line to shape the contents of both the IRA and last year's American Rescue Plan.

When combined with the separation of powers established by the Constitution and a cloture rule in the Senate that requires most bills — including, crucially, annual appropriations legislation — to pass with supermajority support, the enduring clout of moderates explains why widening polarization hasn't produced dramatic swings in policy when the majority shifts from one party to the other. The status quo still holds a systematic advantage over proposals for major change in either ideological direction; most successful congressional action remains incremental and bipartisan; and no session of Congress in the era of polarization has yet matched the transformative productivity of the New Deal, Great Society or Reagan Revolution.

Moderates have not been completely unaffected by polarization, however. Whereas in bygone decades they voted similarly regardless of party — or, like the southern Dixiecrats and northeastern Rockefeller

Republicans of the mid-20th century, even overlapped each other on the ideological spectrum — today the most conservative Democrat in each chamber stands significantly to the left of the most liberal Republican.

Despite the frustration that Manchin and Sinema have provoked among progressive activists over the past two years, both the IRA and American Rescue Plan were more substantively ambitious — and much more responsive to top Democratic Party priorities such as health care and climate change — than any hypothetical product of negotiations with moderate Republican Senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski would've been. So while the dwindling ranks of centrist officeholders continue to play a crucial policy-making role, the question of which party's moderates will be empowered to supply the deciding votes has never been more meaningful.

■ David A. Hopkins is an associate professor of political science at Boston College and the author of "Red Fighting Blue: How Geography and Electoral Rules Polarize American Politics."

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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