

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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Clean water for Warm Springs needs to be in American Jobs package

Repair crumbling roads and bridges. Provide resiliency to prevent blackouts like happened in Texas. Ensure everyone has access to broadband. Don't let America fall behind China.

Those are all reasons that have been advanced by the Biden administration for its American Jobs Plan, the big multitrillion dollar infrastructure package.

We wondered what might be in it for Oregon and even more parochial — Central Oregon. Our No. 1 priority: Can we finally get the basic delivery of clean water secured for the Warm Springs Reservation?

If specific money for that isn't in the final package, there is something seriously wrong. If clean water for the reservation isn't considered important enough, Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley and Rep. Cliff Bentz should be ashamed to vote for the bill, no matter what else is in there.

We should note Merkley's office did send us a general breakdown of Oregon's needs and how the American Jobs Plan attempts to meet them, including in drinking water. It didn't get so specific as to mention the recurring boil water notices at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Also, Wyden and Merkley have not been ignoring the problem. They have been pushing for funding for years. Where's the money?

When people dream, there are plenty of other big-ticket infrastructure projects that they dream about for Central Oregon. For instance, millions upon millions would be needed to complete irrigation piping projects in the Deschutes Basin. It's not mentioned in the Oregon breakout. Some people have wished for rerouting the main route of the

railroad around Bend. It probably doesn't come as a surprise that is not mentioned, either, in the Oregon breakout.

There are two areas that we would like to single out where Central Oregon and Oregon as a state could significantly benefit: child care and affordable housing. Both are part of the American Jobs Plan. Some may wonder why child care or affordable housing is wrapped up in an "infrastructure" bill. We can think of few things more vital for a family to thrive than having access to affordable housing and affordable and excellent child care. It's not roads and bridges. It's no less a needed basic investment for families.

Child care and affordable housing are issues across the country. There are good reasons to believe the problems are more acute here, at least according to some analyses. The key will be in the funding formula. Will Congress allocate any child care and affordable housing money based on population? Or will they try to do it based on need?

We're not sure what will become of the American Jobs Plan. It would seem wiser to us to have more targeted bills addressing more specific needs. That way members of Congress would have to vote on the value of discrete initiatives, rather than a comprehensive package where more compromises and dealing is done. Either way, this Congress should ensure Warm Springs has access to secure, clean drinking water. It's ridiculous that in 2021 that continues to be an issue.

Pass Jack Zika's bill on child care obstacles

Oregon has more child care issues than can be solved in a bill. But state Rep. Jack Zika's bill, House Bill 3109 takes a good step forward. And it may pass this session.

Zika, a Republican from Redmond, proposed to limit some of the obstacles that prevent child care facilities from operating. His bill prohibits local governments from enacting regulations and fees that make it harder to use a home for child care. It also requires child care centers to be permitted even in commercial and industrial zones. The bill does not do anything to eliminate regulations intended to keep children safe

and well cared for.

Katy Brooks, the president and CEO of the Bend Chamber of Commerce, submitted testimony in favor of the bill. One aspect of this bill Brooks singled out is that it allows child care facilities potentially to be located closer to areas where people work. That's an important consideration for families.

Alan Unger, the former mayor of Redmond and a former Deschutes County commissioner, recounted how land use rules made child care in a home difficult to site. This bill would clear that up.

The Legislature should pass Zika's bill.



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GUEST COLUMN

Reasons to oppose the Right to Rest Act

BY SCOTT T. ERWIN

I am writing this in response to The Bulletin editorial, "Bill could end many sweeps of homeless camps", dated April 10, regarding House Bill 2367.

I absolutely oppose the proposed legislation named "The Right To Rest Act." Here is some of the opening text of the proposed bill:

SECTION 3. (1) The Legislative Assembly finds that:
(a) Many persons in Oregon have experienced homelessness as a result of economic hardship, a shortage of safe and affordable housing, the inability to obtain gainful employment and a disintegrating social safety net system; and
(b) Decriminalization of rest allows local governments to redirect resources from local law enforcement activities to activities that address the root causes of homelessness and poverty.

Yes, some of the reasons for homelessness are stated above, but it blames the system for the homeless problems and completely ignores the drug addiction, alcoholism, criminal activity, mental illness, lack of desire, personal choice, lack of ability to conform to social norms, etc., AKA "everyone is a victim" mentality.

While COVID has been an economic hardship for many, this is not the reason most of the homeless are in their situation. The economy is pretty good. Companies are hiring. Restaurants and grocery stores, for example,

can't find enough employees. Disintegrating social safety net programs? The federal, state and local governments have never spent so much on homeless services. Why would someone move to an unaffordable area? Common sense says to live where rents are less expensive. Moving to Bend and complaining about the price of housing is like moving next to the airport and then complaining about the noise.

Here is the part of the legislation that really bothers me. Under Section 5, the homeless have the right (e) to occupy a motor vehicle or a recreational vehicle provided that the vehicle is legally parked on public property (our streets) or on private property with the permission of the private property owner. Translation: Anyone can park/camp/sleep in front of your home and sleep there overnight. Our neighborhoods will be filled with junky cars and motor homes occupied by the homeless. Homeowners should not have to contend with these ghettos on wheels in front of their homes, homes that they have sacrificed for, and pay property taxes for. It's beyond absurd.

Going back to the first paragraph, "Decriminalization of rest allows local governments to redirect resources from local law enforcement activities to activities that address the root causes of homelessness and poverty" — i.e., defund the police. So the local cities are now suppose to take funds from the police and solve the root

problems of homelessness! I say to let the police continue to do the job for which they were hired. The sponsors of this bill should be ashamed of themselves and then voted out of office. This would be another giant setback for the state of Oregon.

What we really do need are designated areas to camp/park/sleep so we can abide by the Boise Ruling that says you can't make the homeless "move along" unless you have a place for them to go, a place with supervised basic services. I would support a large fenced area with basic services provided, like bathrooms, showers, counseling, etc. I'd be happy to pay for this as a part of my taxes so we can take our public property back. We know the homeless need some level of support and supervision, for whatever the cause, and this would solve a great deal of these problems. The churches and nonprofits can supplement these services as well.

We do need to provide basic services for people that don't have the ability to care for themselves or don't have the desire to make positive changes in their lives. What we don't need are special privileges for the homeless giving them the ability to live in front of our homes and businesses, albeit temporary. While the government has a duty to protect all citizens, it should not done at the expense of our neighborhoods, public lands and businesses, and at the same time superseding the parking laws / ordinances of our cities.

■ Scott T. Erwin lives in Redmond.



Erwin

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

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Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

President Biden offers false hope to sell his Afghanistan surrender

BY ELI LAKE
Bloomberg

President Joe Biden has chosen to finish what his predecessor started in Afghanistan and surrender to the Taliban. Unlike former President Donald Trump, however, Biden may not even have the so-called peace process in Afghanistan to point to as an excuse for abandoning an elected Afghan government made possible by American blood and treasure.

A day before word of Biden's decision to withdraw by Sept. 11 leaked to the press, the Taliban announced it will not participate in peace talks in Turkey. That means the U.S. will be leaving Afghanistan's government to fend for itself in the midst of a civil war.

This is an ideal opportunity for a hobbled al-Qaida to rebuild. The Biden administration doesn't see it that way. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, a senior administration official said the U.S. will still fight al-Qaida even after its forces have left Afghanistan. "We believe that we retain

substantial military and intelligence capabilities to disrupt the broader capacity of al-Qaida to successfully reconstitute the sustained homeland threat to the United States," the official said.

In practice, that means the Biden administration expects to base an arsenal of drones, sensors and counterterrorism personnel in Pakistan, from where it can launch strikes on al-Qaida in Afghanistan.

This plan depends on a Pakistani government that has spent most of the Afghanistan war harboring and funding the Taliban. This is the same government that imprisoned the brave doctor who assisted the CIA in locating Osama bin Laden in 2011.

Another problem with this strategy is that the U.S. will lose the human assets necessary to track al-Qaida and other jihadists in Afghanistan. What chances are there that Afghans who oppose al-Qaida will risk their own lives to aid a superpower that has left the country to fend for itself against the Taliban? Fred Kagan, a senior



Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan.

fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, who has conducted numerous in-depth military studies of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan since the 2000s, told me: "The U.S. cannot conduct meaningful counterterrorism operations from hundreds of miles

away over the sovereign territory of Pakistan against al-Qaida groups."

The happy talk about being able to counter al-Qaida once the U.S. leaves is not the only reality-challenged promise Biden will make to sell his Afghanistan surrender. There is also the fate of Afghan women. A recent virtual conference on women in Afghanistan featured some of the activists included in the Kabul government's negotiation team. They warned that a withdrawal now would risk two decades of gains for Afghan women.

It's easy to see why. If the Taliban takes over the rest of the country, it will turn back the clock to the time before the U.S. invasion. Women will not be allowed to participate in most aspects of public life. Girls will not be allowed to attend schools. Violators of these dictates will risk prison or worse. The Biden administration knows this. The senior official who briefed reporters said that in the last 20 years, the number of children in school has gone from fewer than 900,000 in 2001, almost all of them

boys, to 9.2 million today, 3.7 million of them girls.

Unfortunately the Biden administration's plan to protect those gains relies on sanctions and censure. For example, the U.S. will withhold diplomatic recognition of the Taliban government if it chooses to rule Afghanistan the way it runs its shadow state. It will continue to apply sanctions on Taliban officials that abuse human rights. That might work against an adversary that cared about international recognition or economic growth. But the Taliban is a violent cult that cares only about imposing Islamic rule at any cost.

For more than a decade, the U.S. has faced a terrible choice in Afghanistan: Continue to fight the Taliban to a stalemate, or leave and watch the collapse of the elected government in Kabul. Trump tried to end the Afghanistan war but never did. The only question for Biden is whether he understands that his decision amounts to surrender.

■ Eli Lake is a Bloomberg columnist.