

Tax exemptions for more housing come with a cost

The city of Bend has tried a lot of things to make housing more affordable. And do you know what?

The average listed home value in Bend is about \$750,000. Rent isn't a great deal, either.

The city created a tax on building permits to bring in some money to help affordable housing along. It has exemptions from system development charges. And it has property tax exemptions.

It's now looking at some new property tax exemptions. It started out looking at four. The list has been winnowed to two.

What's exasperating is that the two other tax exemption tools under state law just don't seem good enough. What use is a state tax exemption if governments don't want to use it?

For instance, Bend needs more middle-income housing, as well as low-income housing. And the city thinks the restrictions on the state's middle-income tax exemption are too inflexible. City staff and some members of the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board said Monday they want to lobby the Legislature to change it.

The two exemptions that city staff and members of BEDAB seemed encouraged by were a nonprofit exemption and multi-unit property tax exemption. The nonprofit exemption would help organizations, such as Central Oregon Veterans Outreach in Bend. It has a duplex in Bend that currently doesn't qualify for a property tax exemption. It has too few units. If the exemption was in place, it might save the organization \$3,600 in property taxes this

year on that property. That may not sound like much. It's a big deal to COVO.

The multiunit property tax exemption allows the city a lot of flexibility to create its own requirements. Developments would have to meet multiple public benefits, such as affordability and energy efficiency among other options. Members of BEDAB and the city staff discussed Monday that it may be so attractive to developers it may be overused. They proposed requiring a review of the policy after every 500 units that were approved. They also proposed that a third party do a review of applications to ensure the tax exemption was necessary for the project to succeed.

Property tax exemptions come with tradeoffs. They aren't simply good or bad. They are gray. As much as they promote housing, they will mean reductions in taxes for the city, schools, the library district, the park district and county programs. The nonprofit exemption and the multiunit exemption can also be approved just by say the city and the school district. All the other districts then would have to accept the exemption for the affected properties.

What are the tradeoffs? Schools won't be as badly hurt because they are funded under an averaged state formula. How many sheriff's deputies, firefighters or library books, though, will the exemptions cost the community? And is that worth it? That's the question that will soon be before the Bend City Council.

U.S. companies supporting Russia should pay a price

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat, is taking aim at companies and individuals that pay taxes in Russia or to Belarus, a Russian ally.

"...The United States should not subsidize a single dollar of taxes paid to Russia, which will be used to fund this cruel war," Wyden said in a statement. "If U.S. companies choose to keep paying taxes to Russia—taxes that are funding the bombing of hospitals for women and children—they should do it without a penny of help from American taxpayers."

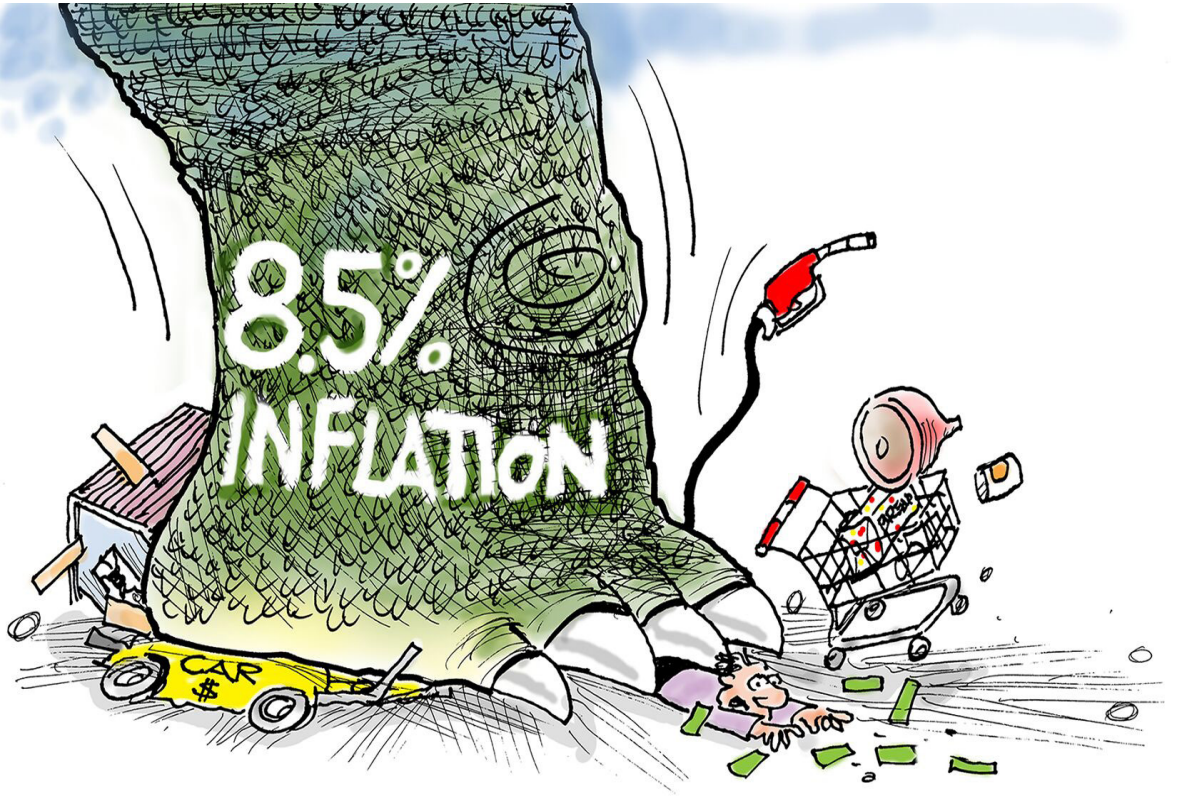
U.S. companies that make money and pay taxes in Russia or Belarus

get tax benefits, a preferential tax rate of 10.5% and a foreign tax credit that offsets U.S. taxes. The tax code already allows those to be stripped for countries that support terrorism or without diplomatic relations with the United States. Wyden proposed to add Russia and Belarus to the list.

Certain individuals could also be targeted with some law changes and lose things like lower tax rates on dividends and interest.

U.S. companies that are continuing to operate in Russia may not want to leave for a variety of reasons. But the U.S. shouldn't in turn help them pay taxes to support the invasion of Ukraine.

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.



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My Nickel's Worth

Don't put growth and tax dollars first

I read with full approval Phyllis Sloan's letter of April 6th. I would argue that it is past time for our elected city and county officials to put welfare, safety and enjoyable living ahead of collecting more and more tax dollars that they will have to spend. As Ms. Sloan states in her letter, Bend is at capacity at the present time.

I have to assume our elected council and planning commission believe in the climate change theory being shoved down our throats, assuming they do, they also must know that less and less water will be available to us in the future. Our wonderful city is disappearing before our eyes. Our infrastructure cannot handle the population we have now. Just try going west on Reed Market Road in the morning and east in the afternoon.

They will soon start construction of a multistory complex at the top of the Reed Market hill above the river. Not only will it be an eyesore, it will add a significant number of automobiles to our hometown not to mention Reed Market Road. What the hell are our leaders thinking? I can tell you: \$.

— Charlie Thomson, Bend

Save the trees

Thanks to Roger Worthington for showing legitimate concern and raising awareness in his recent guest column in The Bulletin titled "Save the Pine Drop ponderosas"; about the West Bend Project where the Deschutes National Forest has sold and is logging and contract selling several

mature ponderosa pines for reasons they call "fire risk reduction" around the Phil's Trail area.

Interesting though while driving or biking around town, especially on the south side at many of the construction sites you can see dozens of large mature ponderosa pine logs 25' or longer and at least 21" in diameter that were once healthy trees cut down months ago and are just lying there wasting away in the mud. Same age and size trees as on Phil's Trail, but no one is claiming or apparently selling these fallen trees. Curious how sometimes large trees are either cut down for profit or just because they are in the way.

Does Bend really uphold and deserve the given title of "Tree City USA"?

— James Duvall, Bend

Speak up for children

Reading the recent Bulletin article about the children in Metolius living in an allegedly abusive and dangerous house with their father made me angry and sad. This is not an isolated incident. The effort to preserve family units has been pursued over the children's need to be in safe and healthy living conditions. Some parents are just not capable of caring for themselves let alone children. Children are sometimes afraid to speak up about their situations. Extended family members may call for help but are not taken seriously enough. I urge any professionals in the community working with children to speak up for the children that need help. It really does take a whole village to raise a child.

— Margaret Wyman, Bend

Pass the carbon dividend

The Bulletin recently had an article about how climate change could impact property values and real estate.

The article raised concerns about how homebuyers may be impacted by extreme weather events — in terms of property value, risk of damage to their homes, as well as the costs of repairing or renovating in order to "climate-proof" their homes.

While it is important for homebuyers to protect themselves in terms of where they choose to live, and through appropriate insurance coverage — we cannot lose sight of the larger issue... climate change. For how long can we try to dodge the impacts of extreme weather events by cleaning up the mess, repairing damage, and relocating? We must confront climate change head-on by reducing our dependency on fossil fuels to slow the warming of the planet.

One solid proposal to combat climate change is the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 2307), a bill in Congress now that would reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and encourage innovation in the clean energy sector. A price on carbon pollution at the federal level such as this is supported by economists, scientists, mayors, businesses, and 3 out of 4 Americans.

Taking steps to keep ourselves safe when the next disaster event hits is our responsibility, as is driving down carbon pollution and bringing climate change under control. An important key step we can all take is to urge our elected officials to pass smart climate policies.

— Daniel Duffy, Bend

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's 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.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
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Fax: 541-385-5804

Bridge the urban-rural divide; support McLeod-Skinner for Congress

BY MARILYNNE KEYSER

My husband and I lived and worked in Clackamas County for 18 years, he as the president of Clackamas Community College and I as deputy secretary of state and senior policy adviser to Gov. Barbara Roberts. After retirement in 2001, we moved to Central Oregon. I have enjoyed our very different lives as both urban and rural residents of Oregon. However, I have been disturbed by how intractable the "urban-rural divide" has been, creating a stumbling block for both of our major political parties.

There is one candidate in the race for the 5th Congressional District that has been effective in bridging this divide. Jamie McLeod-Skinner captured my support during her campaign to represent Congressional District 2 in 2018. Her campaign took her all over Central and Eastern

Oregon where she met with and won the respect of rural voters from both parties. From her early days growing up in small rural towns, Jamie has the knowledge, experience and commitment to listen to everyone's voice in order to serve as an effective leader for both rural and urban Oregonians.

One example is Jamie's understanding of and commitment to tackling climate change. Regardless of where you live in Oregon, your life has probably been affected by the heat, smoke or fires. In Central Oregon, its effects are dramatic. Extended extreme drought and earlier and hotter wildfires should be our number one concern. I believe that Jamie McLeod-Skinner has a keener eye and a deeper commitment to fight these challenges than her primary opponent. I lived in Kurt Schrader's district and knew him

personally. I even voted for him, but never again! Consider just two of his votes related to climate change: In 2018, Schrader voted for a horrifically anti-environmental package of bills that cut funding for clean energy programs, repealed the Clean Water Rule and removed protections for Columbia River Basin salmon and steelhead ("the salmon extinction rider"). This bill was so destructive that the League of Conservation Voters stated that it, "includes dangerous public health and environmental policy riders while also cutting critical investments in our renewable energy future." With Kurt Schrader's help, it passed and was signed into law on 9/21/18. Then just last fall, he voted against

the Clean Electricity Performance Program (CEPP), the cornerstone of Build Back Better's provisions to tackle climate change. This legislation would have required 100% clean electricity by 2035 and a 50% reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Schrader voted against this bill almost exactly one year after wildfires ripped through Oregon, destroying over 1 million acres. We need our leaders to take action on this NOW and not obstruct legislation that, if enacted, would go a long way towards helping to solve this problem. Given these votes, I was not surprised to learn that he is ranked in the bottom four of all House Democrats by the League of Conservation Voters. In contrast, Jamie is deeply committed to addressing the climate crisis and its impacts. She is an engineer

and attorney by training and has decades of experience working on natural resources issues, specifically hydrology. She will fight for reductions in carbon emissions and other protections to our environment. Jamie's also dedicated to rolling up her sleeves and helping Oregonians. Last year she led wildfire recovery efforts in the city of Talent, providing tangible results for those families, including farmworkers and seniors living on fixed incomes who were impacted by the fires. She also was successfully pushing federal agencies to do more, securing millions of dollars in aid and housing. Jamie's integrity, her focus on her community and her demonstrated willingness to put Oregonians (rural or urban) over industry is why I am supporting her for Congressional District 5.

■ Marilynne Keyser lives in Terrebonne.