

Oregon's leaders need long-term strategies

In the words of State Economist Mark McMullen, Oregon's economy "is still pretty hunky-dory."

The current period of economic growth is on its way to becoming the longest on record, with little chance of a recession within the next year. As a result, the state is collecting far more in taxes than previously projected.

But if any legislators and other state officials are making plans for spending that extra dough, forget about it. Here are three reasons:

First, the most obvious is Oregon's unique kicker law. It could result in more than \$550 million being returned to taxpayers as rebates on their 2019 personal income taxes.

The kicker remains popular with taxpayers, although a strong argument can be made that voters eventually should funnel that money into government rainy-day reserves instead. Historically, some Oregon recessions came on the heels of big kicker payouts.

Second, we know good economic times cannot last forever, which is why economist McMullen referred to Oregon being in a "pre-crisis" mode.

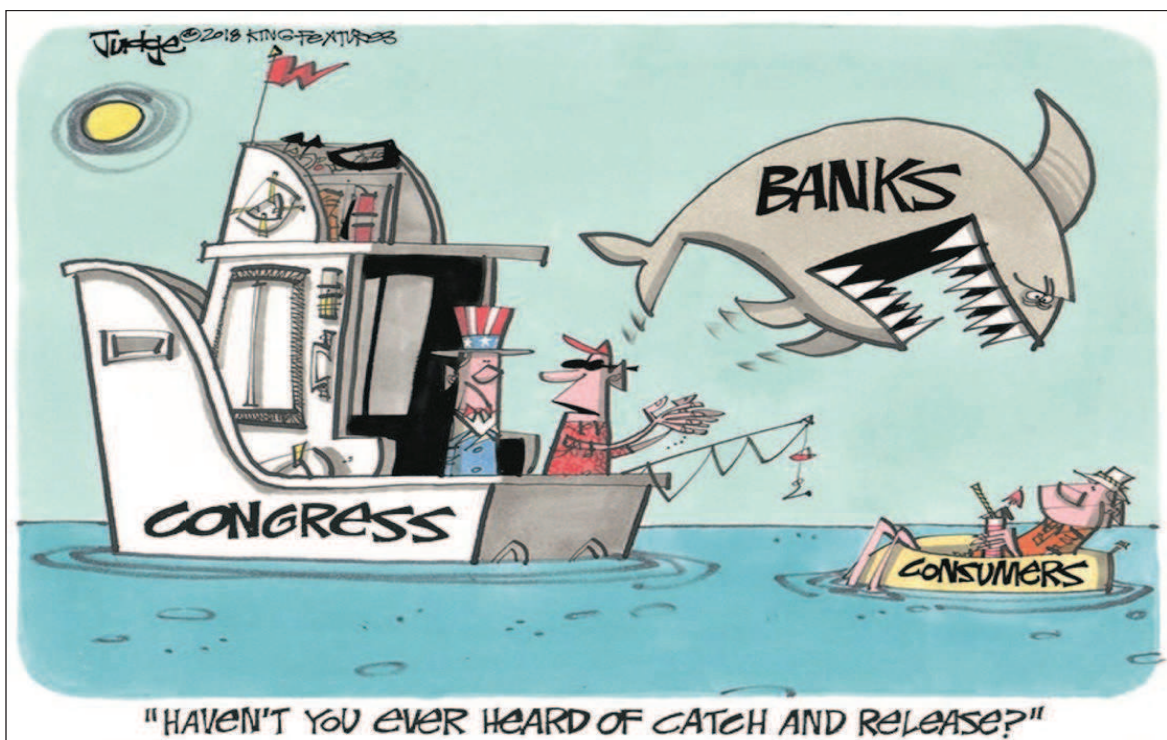
It appears the state will enter the 2019-21 budget period with \$1.2 billion to \$1.8 billion

in reserves, which might be unprecedented. "However," says the Oregon Economic and Revenue Forecast issued this week, "such reserves would barely be sufficient to withstand a typical recession's impact on state revenues, let alone account for the increase in public services and programs during downturns."

Third, our state government still has no overall strategy of economic, educational, environmental, social and related goals; or, how financial decisions — taxing and spending — can most effectively achieve those priorities. Instead, the state budgets incrementally — department by department, program by program, crisis by crisis. What is urgent overwhelms what is most important.

Meanwhile, the global pace of change intensifies each day. Oregon lags in affordable housing; an adequate, timely transportation network; worker retraining in the face of inevitable automation; and other areas. Each of those will have an economic impact, pro or con.

It's long past time for the Legislature, state leadership and the public to set long-term strategies to ensure prosperity for the state and its residents.



FARMER'S FATE

Raining on the Wicked Witch

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

"Eighty-two degrees with a 12 percent chance of rain and 4 mph wind" read the weather forecast.

"Better count on a cold, rainy, windy weekend," I told my husband. He double checked the statistics. "It looks like it'll be nice."

"Well I say it's going to rain — might even have a thunderstorm."

"Look." He held out his phone so I could see the forecast myself. He was right. It looked like lovely weather. But we had cut hay this week, and we had a camping trip coming up. A camping trip that would include tents.

"— and we all know that rain clouds will go hundreds of miles out of their way to drizzle on tent canvas."

My husband rolled his eyes. After all, he was looking right at a lovely weekend weather forecast.

"I know what it says, but we could make a sign that reads, 'Hay cut — check. Hay raked — check. Hay dried — check. Baler ready — check. It's raining.'"

I know that the weather is based upon satellites, weather patterns, barometric pressure and lots of computer models and statistics, but sometimes I think the rheumatism in Granny's bones was almost as accurate.

If I was to create a weather prediction technology, it would take

the information gleaned from the computer, add in some arthritis and maybe a little rheumatism along with the following daily questionnaire:

1. Will you or your neighbor be washing your car or patio today?

2. Will you or your neighbor be cutting hay any time in the next week?

3. Is there a Scout group going camping in the next week?

For each yes answer, calculate an additional 33 percent chance of rain. For each maybe answer, add 15 percent. If you answer yes to all three, then you best test your lightning rods and make sure your hail cannons are working.

We checked the weather periodically as the days got closer. Each time the numbers were a bit lower, but it still wasn't forecasting rain. I was hopeful — but not optimistic. Less than a week before the camping trip, with many acres of hay on the ground, Granny's rheumatism seemed to be acting up. The animals were agitated, and the morning air felt heavy.

The smell of rain drifted off and on throughout the day. By evening, the sky looked a bit dark, and I wasn't surprised to see big rain drops making patterns on the dirty windshield. Then came the thunder and lightning and loss of electricity.

The dog paced back and forth, the hot tub lid went crashing across the yard, the neighbor's sheep shelter went visiting the adjoining pasture, some of the pretty rows of hay also went visiting and what didn't get a good bath. It wasn't a twister by any form of the imagination, but as branches scraped the windows, I couldn't help but think of Kansas' own Dorothy and our upcoming camping trip.

For the first time ever, I felt a touch of sympathy for the Wicked Witch of the West. She probably never experienced the joy of camping: campfires, guitars, hikes, roasted hot dogs and s'mores. Which meant she also never experienced hiking blisters, ticks, aching bones from sleeping on un-level, rocky ground — and, of course, the rain. Rain which causes wet tents, wet sleeping bags, wet dogs and wet socks.

One last glance at the weather forecast showed the highs plunging lower and the precipitation percentages increasing. I looked down at my fingers holding the phone. Did I see just the slightest tint of green? I think I'm coming down with witchitis. It's probably just a matter of time before it covers my whole body!

Perhaps I'll skip the rainy camping trip. I'm feeling the need for a pair of powerful red shoes — something worth melting for!

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** —

(For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov.

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- **Pending Bills:** For information on bills in Congress, Phone: 202-225-1772.

Proud of Grant County Democrats and McLeod-Skinner

To the Editor:

In April I had the pleasure of meeting with Grant County Democrats, a dedicated and growing group of Oregonians working towards positive change in November's elections by building grassroots programs and raising both money and awareness throughout rural Oregon.

Despite being outnumbered, Grant County Democrats are engaged because they believe in Oregon values, where we work together to care for our families and communities. They want government to support economic and educational opportunities for everyone. Sometimes they take issue with urban Democrats, but we share the common belief that people, not corporations, are our most important asset.

These rural Democrats have worked to get access to, and answers from, Congressman Greg Walden, but he for too long has ignored the needs of his constituents. He now sides with corporate interests and the Trump White House — supporting irresponsible tax cuts that now threaten funding for programs like Social Security, pushing trade policies that risk the economic future of our agricultural communities and leading the effort to "repeal and replace" the very law that has helped to build our rural care system. His policies are hurting us all.

Eastern Oregon Democrats have now found a superb candidate to

take him on in Jamie McLeod-Skinner. For the past year, Jamie has traveled tirelessly throughout the district, building a volunteer and supporter network that shows what can be done without expensive media buys. She wears her family's Eastern Oregon roots proudly and speaks to those values on the campaign trail. It's a measure of the respect she has earned that the other primary candidates are now rallied behind her campaign. Your local Democrats are teaching the wider Democratic Party in Oregon lessons in how to stand up for Oregon values and be true to the values of rural communities. I am proud of county parties like in Grant and candidates like Jamie. Expect to see more of us in this pivotal election year.

Jeanne Atkins
Chair, Democratic Party of Oregon

Arming teachers

To the Editor:

The topic of arming of our teachers have varying opinions. However, one is seen as the first line of defense for our children.

Is arming teachers the only solution? No, but it is one part of a more thorough solution.

Many feel that, if a student shows signs of abnormal behavior, he can be treated psychologically. However, that is another part of a more thorough solution.

Another part of the solution would be to set up an avenue of communication for students to advise designated staff of any displays of violent speech or behavior

as well as any comments regarding harming themselves or others.

Access control and physical security are the most important things in keeping an outside attacker from gaining access onto school grounds. During school hours and events, there should only be one way in, one way out and restricted.

Inside school grounds, a resource officer is only as good as his or her training and their location during an incident, and they would be the only line of defense.

If we arm teachers, there would have to be extensive initial training as well as regular training. One concern is funding. Hopefully schools could get grants to cover some or all the costs.

Weapons training is the most important part. They would have to be proficient in the handling, care and firing of the weapon they carry. The weapon does not have to be visible or locked in a safe; it could be strapped to their ankle.

The second most important part of arming teachers is tactics and crowd control. How they approach a shooter alone or with multiple other teachers, i.e. cover and cross-fire, could be a great success or fatal. Also, when to fire if there are students around.

These are just a few things that must be taught and should receive continual training. Adrenaline will be a factor. However, on-duty police officers experience adrenaline in these situations as well.

Keep something in mind; we cannot put a price on the lives of our children.

Charles Bennett Jr.
La Quinta, California



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