

OUR VIEW

# Where has Rep. Greg Smith been?

Last week a conservative, national organization released a report that showed Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, has missed more votes — 240 out of 825 — than any other member of the Oregon House of Representatives during the last Legislative session.

The Club for Growth Foundation, a 501c organization with a focus on cutting taxes and other economic issues, issued a scorecard evaluating how many times lawmakers — in both the House and Senate — were available to vote on the array of bills that come up during a legislative session.

The data collected by the group showed in the Oregon House, the average member missed 8% of the 825 total votes. Republican House members missed, on aver-

age, 10% of all floor votes and Democratic members missed an average of 7% of all floor votes. Rep. Smith missed 29% of votes in 2021.

The voting record of a lawmaker is important. How many times an elected leader votes are one clear way for constituents to gauge how involved they are and whether they are truly doing the people's business.

Voters don't elect men and women to the Legislature to do nothing. Voters should expect their lawmaker will be actively engaged and responsive.

To be fair, lawmakers can miss votes for a host of reasons. Sickiness, family matters and, at least in the past few years, COVID-

19. No doubt, the coronavirus pandemic created new and complex problems for lawmakers.

Still, to be singled out as the one lawmaker who missed more than 200 votes, as Smith was, is surely not a good sign for area voters.

In fact, it is troubling and raises a host of questions that, so far, are unanswered. That's because Smith did not respond when he was asked by the Club for Growth why he missed so many votes. Other lawmakers who missed many votes did respond to the organization.

Some cited other legislative responsibilities — such as caucus efforts — or mentioned COVID-19 restrictions or a desire to

avoid the infection.

There could very well be good reasons why Smith missed so many votes but absent an explanation what it looks like is he is not doing a good job representing his constituents.

His voting record is even more mystifying because he was first elected to the House in 2000. He is a veteran lawmaker who should know better.

Smith's voting record deserves a closer look by his constituents. Because on the face of it, it doesn't look like Mr. Smith is spending the amount of time he needs to attend to business at the Legislature.

SCHOOL DAYS

## Healthy habits help students cope with challenges

The holidays are most often a time of joyful celebration for children and families. Even with adjustments to some of the usual school traditions like concerts and class parties, there is still a lot of cheer to be found in our classrooms and in our community.

But for some students, this season is the most difficult time of the year. A study from the National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that 64% of people with mental illness say their conditions worsen during the holidays. This is true for adults and children alike.

Children are like sponges, soaking up everything around them — joy, gratitude, stress, and anxiety alike. What they experience at home, at school, and with friends shapes the way they process and manage their emotions and mental health.

We've all been living through a historically traumatic time, and the accumulation of that anxiety takes a toll.

Teachers and staff in the Hermiston School District pay close attention to the social and emotional needs of students. Their mental and physical well-being is every bit as important

as their academic growth. They are intrinsically linked.

It's even more important that parents have the tools to help their children develop healthy coping skills and positive mental health. The five areas we pay attention to, and ask parents to help cultivate, are:

- **Self-Management** — How well students manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.
- **Social Awareness** — How well students consider the perspectives of others and empathize with them.
- **Grit** — How well students persevere through setbacks to achieve long-term goals.
- **Growth Mindset** — How students perceive the potential to change factors central to their performance in school.
- **Emotion Regulation** — How well students regulate their emotions.

It starts in the home, and when students enter kindergarten we begin by talking about how to listen to what their feelings and bodies are telling them. We teach students how to calm themselves when they are over-

whelmed and how to name what they are experiencing.

As they move through elementary school we begin to work with students on their grit and how to develop a growth mindset. They learn that challenges are learning opportunities, and how to build supportive relationships with others.

In secondary grades we focus on interpersonal skills and respect for themselves and others, which are both important parts of creating a safe environment. They also learn how to set goals for themselves and follow through. Using these skills they are better prepared to handle the stress and anxiety life can throw at them.

We can always remember that the holidays aren't a time for joy for everyone, and that expressing sadness and depression is the healthiest way to deal with them. It can be difficult when it feels like everyone else is feeling festive, but you are not alone.

We do hope you and your family have a wonderful holiday season and come back refreshed for a new year and new opportunities in 2022.

*Tricia Mooney, doctor of education, is the superintendent of the Hermiston School District.*



Tricia Mooney

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Poisonings an attack on all wildlife

The loss of eight Eastern Oregon wolves to poisoning over the last year is an assault on all things living. It represents an indiscriminate attack on all our wildlife. All wildlife, avian and mammalian, carnivores and scavengers, are put at risk by these selfish acts.

These animals represent important pieces of a healthy, naturally-functioning ecosystem. Their short sighted and illegal extermination threatens the balance and function of that ecosystem.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation supports a balanced approach to wolf recovery and carnivore management. Health, human safety and protection of our local economies is an important part of that balance, as is the maintenance of healthy big-game populations through a transparent, thoughtful and professional management approach. The vilification of wildlife species and these vigilante attacks undermines this management approach.

Wolves and other carni-

vores serve an important role in maintenance of the health and vitality of our big game populations, as well as the many small carnivores and scavengers that make up our collective wildlife heritage. In addition to playing a role in ecology, predators have long been respected in tribal culture. They are prominent in our stories, coyote being the most famous, but wolves and others play a part in some of those stories handed down for many generations to provide teachings and lessons as examples.

Predators are esteemed as hunters, and often used in tribal members' Indian names and tribal place names. They are prominent features in our regalia, including sacred eagle feathers, talons, and for some, even the hides and claws of mammalian predators are worn. All of these predators are threatened by indiscriminate acts like poisoning.

We hope the responsible parties are caught and held accountable for their actions and encourage any others contemplating such measures to please reconsider.

**Kat Brigham**  
CTUIR Board of Trustees chair

EDUCATION CORNER

## Teaching our children how to deal with disappointment

Quickly babies learn that if they are hungry, with a bit of crying, someone will provide nutrition.

As they grow and develop, they promptly refine what response they need to give to resolve what is causing their unhappiness. The child is beginning to create conflict resolution skills. Yet when they reach a certain point, we as adults often step in and "fix" situations so our children don't become frustrated and have a meltdown causing us possible embarrassment. Our problem-solving skills of avoiding a temper tantrum stop the child from developing this life skill of self-evaluation and resolution.

Everyone being a winner does not help our children succeed in dealing with life disappointments independently. It does teach them that adults will fix things, so they are happy. The older the child gets,

the harder it becomes to change those behaviors. Starting young and teaching them how to deal with disappointments and evaluating how they might avoid the situation next time will serve them the rest of their lives.

Taking the time to teach your children how to deal with loss or failure and not blame is a complex skill they will continue to refine all their life. At some point, you or they will have to deal with failure or loss. Sooner is better than later. Stepping back and helping them evaluate why they lost or failed is that life-impacting teaching moment. Asking them, "What could you do next time?" teaches them what they need to do to have success. It is much more challenging than it seems, but the results will have rewards beyond belief. It's a process and takes multiple situations to refine the understand-

ing that failure or loss is actually learning.

As adults, how we deal with the failure of a situation models how our children respond when they experience a loss or failure. Most of us have gone to a school's science fair and observed the students' projects. The student who learns the most often is the one with the sad-looking cardboard box with notebook paper notes and drawing taped on the box, if handled correctly. This child was placed into the natural process of evaluating their project against others. Therefore, learning to see what others did, they understand adjustments they might try their next project. This student now learns the process of assessing a situation to better the result next time. The more often we allow a child to experience this process, the more their abilities will be enhanced, and they will use these abilities daily.

Timing can be crucial. The night of the science fair when they see no ribbon is the best time to evaluate things. There is a natural process of learning when dealing with loss or failure. The absolute worst thing you can do is push the loss or failure onto someone else or something else. Later, spend time to reassure your child that you are proud of them and ask them what they noticed about other science projects and what they might do differently next time.

Life-learning occurs when we allow the child to evaluate a situation and make life adjustments to prevent replaying the previous experience. Life-learning also happens when participating in sports — asking, "What might you try next time to make things better?" cause the child to start the thinking process. It's easy to blame others when things don't go as planned. The skill of self-evaluation over what the child might change next

time activates the thinking process in the child. However, blame won't increase the child's ability to evaluate and improve their skills or change the result.

Looking for ways to acknowledge our children's frustration and learn how to deal with loss or failure is accomplished through questioning as a way of evaluation. Asking questions such as: "What do you think happened?" "What should we do differently next time?" helps build their understanding of evaluating and taking charge of situations in a healthy way.

Loss and failure are a part of life, yet we can control how we deal with it and make things better for ourselves and others.

*Scott Smith, doctor of education, is a 40-plus year Umatilla County educator and serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.*



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Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

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