

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, Sen. Jeff Merkley, Gov. Kate Brown Decry GOP Tax Plans

*By Jessica Floum
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Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler took to Twitter Thursday to criticize Republicans' federal tax plans, calling them "needlessly cruel" and wrong for Portland and the country.

Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) in a statement called the tax reforms the "greatest bank heist in American history."

Gov. Kate Brown tweeted that the House plan passed Thursday would hurt public servants like teachers and veterans with no added benefits to them.

Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said the Oregon Democrats are utterly wrong. "Passing this bill is the single biggest thing we can do to grow the economy, to restore opportunity and help those middle-income families who are struggling," Ryan said Thursday.

Wheeler said the plans, one of which passed the House in 227-205 vote Thursday, promotes income inequality and "decimates" key resources Portland has to increase the city's supply of affordable housing. For example, getting rid of the federal low-income tax credit could prevent the development of as many as 600 new affordable housing units in the Portland metropolitan area, the mayor said.

Getting rid of private activity bonds as proposed in the tax plan would limit Portland's ability to help finance affordable housing projects, he said.

Losing the ability for taxpayers to deduct their state and local taxes from their federal tax bill means that around 40 percent of Portlanders would have their income double-taxed, he noted.

The removal of the Mortgage Credit Certificate program means that about 100 Portland families who use this program would no longer be able to get a tax credit to help them with their mortgage interest payments, Wheeler tweeted.

Wheeler also said cutting the historic rehabilitation tax credit could mean losing \$12.5 million in breaks for the seismic retrofitting of five historic buildings.

Wheeler called on Oregon's congressional leaders to vote no on the plan. He also sent a letter Wednesday to Oregon's seven congressional representatives asking them to vote no. All four Oregon Democrats in the House voted no, while Republican Greg Walden voted yes.

Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) called on senators to "raise the alarm."

He noted the potential impact of the Senate bill on healthcare after Republican senators included in the bill a repeal of the Affordable Care Act rule that requires most people have insurance. He said the plan would force billions in cuts to Medicare, cost 13 million Americans health care and raise the premiums for millions more.

"This heist is immoral and wrong on every level," Merkley said. "It's up to grassroots America to stand up and once again fight back, kill this terrible scheme."

"While Americans are busy with the holidays, Republicans want to ram through a plan that raises taxes on many in the middle class and steals trillions from the national treasury to deliver a

massive windfall to wealthy corporations and the richest and most powerful individuals,” Merkley said in a statement.

Gov. Kate Brown tweeted she was "deeply disappointed" that the House passed Thursday's tax reform plan.

"This plan hurts our teachers, our vets (and) the middle class, most of whom will now pay more in taxes (with) no benefit," Brown said.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) has taken to Twitter to keep his constituents informed of the tax plan negotiations happening within the Senate Finance Committee.

The Portland Tribune

Commissioner Eudaly 'Eviscerates' Local Reporter with Apparently False Claim

By Shasta Kearns Moore

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The Oregonian responds to Commissioner Chloe Eudaly complaints against local journalists in posts that she thought were private.

Portland journalists, politicians and government insiders were all atwitter over Veterans Day weekend when freelance journalist Mike Bivins posted screen shots of city Commissioner Chloe Eudaly complaining about local journalists and constituents on Facebook.

At least some of the drama — against the backdrop of a story on a significant boost in spending on communications staff in the Bureau of Development Services— played out in full public view on Twitter. Journalists, politicians and others retweeted and responded with their own accusations and assertions of the propriety of the comments or of posting speech Eudaly thought was private. Eudaly even posted on Facebook behind her privacy settings about the Twitter outrage, which was also screen-captured and posted by Bivins.

The commissioner's personal posts — visible to an unknown number of Facebook friends — appeared to include at least one objectively false statement, in addition to her many opinions about several journalists and their work. (The Tribune and some other Portland news organizations were not mentioned in the posts.)

The Poynter Institute Vice President Kelly McBride is a leading authority on media ethics and said this is more than just a spat between a journalist and a politician: "It's a broader story about this particular political figure's ability to be honest. Politicians that can't tell the truth should be held accountable."

McBride further added that she has seen a national uptick in stories of local politicians being sharply critical of the media.

"Anecdotally, ...it seems like many local politicians have taken up the strategy of attacking the media," she said. McBride added that it would be logical to attribute the increased incidents to President Donald Trump's frequent and candid criticisms of the media, but stressed that she has no scientific evidence to support that claim.

Eudaly is not a fan of Trump. In one of her Facebook posts Bivins posted, she called him and former Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio "trash humans."

Screen shots

Eudaly originally posted the comments so that they are only visible to her friend network.

Bivins, who recently graduated Portland State University and is known in the area for his Twitter coverage of political protests, said he friended Eudaly on Facebook after she followed him on Twitter in February.

"We've never spoken or interacted that I'm aware of," he said. Bivins said he was initially conflicted about whether to post the screen captures, but after visiting her wall and seeing many posts regarding reporters and even some constituents, "I just let my conscience guide me." The thread with about 20 screenshots of various incendiary statements has gotten tens of thousands of views, according to Bivins' Twitter analytics, which he shared with the Tribune.

False claim

It all started on the evening of Nov. 10.

"I click into Facebook and I see this post from Eudaly where she's just eviscerating this Oregonian reporter and I was just like: 'Whoa, this is out of line. This is not acceptable,'" Bivins said.

In Bivins' picture of the post with, at that point, 65 reactions, Eudaly accused The Oregonian's City Hall reporter Jessica Floum of not genuinely wanting to contact her because she reached out "after her deadline, after 5 p.m. at the beginning of a holiday weekend."

Floum said that's not accurate. She talked with BDS Public Information Manager Dave Austin in the morning on Thursday and asked him to let Eudaly know she wanted to talk with her. She provided the Tribune a screenshot that shows she texted the commissioner at 4:05 p.m. that day to follow up. Eudaly responded in the text:

"Yes, Dave let me know about that. (To be honest) it sounds like you have your own slant on it which doesn't make me terribly interested in talking to you about it. How about you email your questions and I'll let you know if it seems worth my while to respond? I'm extremely busy and pretty unimpressed with The Oregonian right now."

Austin defended the commissioner by saying that Floum's report contained major inaccuracies.

There are four corrections at the end of Floum's online story.

"There were some minor errors, which are obviously regrettable," Floum said. "Accuracy is of paramount importance to me and The Oregonian and that's why we issued the corrections."

Floum, a professional reporter since 2014, started at The Oregonian soon after Eudaly was elected to the post last November.

Betsy Hammond is Floum's editor and said she stands by her work "100 percent." Hammond added that accuracy is their top priority and the errors were regrettable.

"Whether those materially affected the lead and the reader takeaway from that article, I think you can see the answer is no," she said.

Eudaly posted on Twitter Nov. 11 that she was still dissatisfied with The Oregonian's correction and reiterated that she was contacted after 5 p.m.