

## The Forgotten Oregonian

More than 140 years ago, Yale professor William Graham Sumner wrote about “The Forgotten Man.” His warning could have been written for Oregon today.

Sumner described how reformers and politicians always come up with new schemes to “help” someone. They sound compassionate. They look noble. But the burden always falls on the same person: the quiet, responsible taxpayer who never asked for it.

> “He works, he votes, generally he prays — but he always pays.”

That was the Forgotten Man of 1883. And that is the Forgotten Oregonian of 2025.

### Government Growth vs. Real Prosperity

Since 2011, Oregon’s GDP has grown 75%. Government spending has grown even faster. Federal transfers now make up nearly a third of our state budget. By the charts, we look prosperous.

But ask a working mom in Salem struggling to pay rent. Ask a farmer in Jefferson crushed by red tape and rising taxes. Ask a parent in Gresham whose child can’t read because ideology has replaced education. Ask a family in Roseburg still fighting through bureaucracy to get help for their addicted son.

Do they feel prosperity?

They don’t see progress. They see bills piling up, schools failing, and communities unraveling.

### Progressive Overreach, Same Old Story

Sumner warned against exactly this kind of progressive overreach. He called it the tendency of A and B to decide what C should do for D. It’s the politics of spending other people’s money in the name of compassion.

That’s Oregon today. Politicians dream up new programs, pour billions into them, and call it success — while the Forgotten Oregonian is left paying the bill, ignored and unheard.

### Remembering the Forgotten Oregonian

Real prosperity isn’t measured in GDP charts or state budgets. It’s measured at the kitchen table — whether families can pay their bills, save for the future, and give their kids a better life.

Until the Forgotten Oregonian shares in prosperity, Oregon is not truly prosperous.

It’s time to stop chasing government-driven growth and start building an economy rooted in freedom, responsibility, and opportunity. That was Sumner’s message in 1883. It is just as urgent in Oregon today.