

O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

In mid-November we launched our annual donation campaign for the Sisters Park & Recreation District. The campaign is going great so far with donations this year ahead of this time last year, so thank you to all those who have donated. We can't do this without you.

This year's donor campaign is focused on our Community Schools Program, and our Scholarship Program. Both of these programs are almost entirely funded by grants and donations.

The Community Schools Program provides after-school programming for kids in Sisters, and is largely funded by a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation.

As part of this grant, there is a matching component. OCF will match any donations we raise up to \$10,000. Due to generous donations we have currently raised around \$6,000; once the match is applied this will have a

\$12,000 impact on the families we serve in the community. We are really hoping to raise the full \$10,000 so we can take full advantage of the match.

The scholarship program provides financial assistance to kids from low-income families, so that they can take part in any SPRD program. Because the Sisters Park & Recreation District operates on a very low percentage of tax subsidy, program fees are set at a level that covers the full cost of operating the program. Any reduction in fees would result in programs not being able to operate, therefore we must rely on donations to pay the fees for the children who cannot afford to.

On average this requires about \$30,000 to \$40,000 to provide financial assistance for children participating in our programs.

SPRD strives to maintain a philosophy that no child will be turned away because of an inability to pay. The only way we are able

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Patchy fog 50/32	Fog 46/30	Patchy fog 46/33	Mostly cloudy 45/30	Mostly cloudy 43/31	Cloudy 42/na

The Nugget Newspaper, Inc.

Website: www.nuggetnews.com

442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759

Tel: 541-549-9941 | Fax: 541-549-9940 | editor@nuggetnews.com



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News Editor: Jim Cornelius

Production Manager: Leith Williver

Classifieds & Circulation: Teresa Mahnken

Advertising: Lisa Buckley

Graphic Design: Jess Draper

Proofreader: Pete Rathbun

Accounting: Erin Bordonaro



Rachel Marsden

American Voices

“Subversion introduced from the outside.” That’s part of Encyclopedia Britannica’s definition for a Trojan horse, the hollow structure that allowed Greek soldiers to penetrate the city of Troy and win the Trojan War. What if the drop in oil prices currently making everyone cheer at the pumps is exactly that — a Trojan horse?

Subversion theory dictates that in order for an offensive move to be effective, it has to be welcomed. And who in America isn’t psyched about cheap gas right now? Meanwhile, the U.S. government likely feels differently. It was set to reap profits from its shale boom — that is, before Saudi-led OPEC decided to flood the market with massive supply.

To whose ultimate benefit is the price drop? On the face of it, the only real benefactors appear to be global consumers. So then why bother flooding the market? Despite the Saudi oil minister suggesting that his country wouldn’t mind watching oil prices take an even greater plunge, Saudi Arabia is still taking an income cut on its primary source of revenue at a time when it’s projecting a \$39 billion deficit for 2015. Why are the Saudis pretending that a kick in the rear is a gluteal massage?

One theory is that Saudi Arabia and the U.S. are conspiring to weaken the economies of Russia and Iran. The motives would make enough sense. With respect to Iran, Saudi Sunni and Iranian Shiite regimes have long hated each other, while America is perpetually concerned about Iranian nuclear unpredictability. On the Russian front, Saudis and Russians have been at each other’s throats over Saudi funding of Islamic terrorism in Russia’s North Caucasus region and over Russia’s defense of Assad in the interests of maintaining Russian oil interests and of curtailing Islamic terrorism. Meanwhile, the U.S. currently seems intent on squeezing Russia economically.

But as much sense

conspiracy theory might make, there are some significant problems with it. The U.S. chose Russia as a partner over Saudi Arabia and Qatar when faced with that choice in Syria last year. Moreover, Russian and Saudi ministers met in Moscow in November to discuss cooperating on oil to better manage their respective economic interests. That last fact alone flies in the face of any Saudi-U.S. oil price conspiracy theory.

An arguably more plausible theory is that if any nation is colluding with Saudi Arabia, it’s China, the top global net importer of petroleum products and the country that’s most benefiting from the bargain prices at the pump these days. China is also the only player that couldn’t care less about oil revenues. Sitting in 49th place in the world for crude exports, China relies on manufacturing for its revenues. Unlike everyone else in this game, when China lays an oil pipeline in a foreign country, it’s not for profit — it’s just a massive straw delivering the milkshake to the insatiable masses back home.

Saudi Arabia is already China’s top oil supplier, and China doesn’t care about its partners’ ideological preferences. It’s a match made in heaven.

If the Saudis and Chinese are wheeling and dealing on oil prices for rewards to be specified later, then Russia, North America and Europe will eventually all end up sobbing into their alcoholic beverages of preference as their liquid gold drops in value.

And while we consumers may enjoy the price break now, government and industry oil-revenue loss will come back to bite us in the form of job losses and fiscal cutbacks — requiring even more U.S. debt to be bought up by its primary holder: China.

Enjoy the cheap gas, but let’s just hope that it doesn’t end up costing us far more than we could ever have imagined.

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