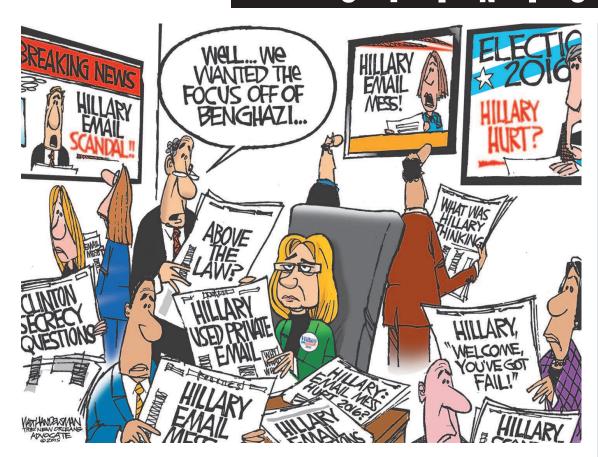
O P I N I O N



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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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:

Yet another letter from Greg Werts regarding the evils of asphalt (as long as you don't take those god-given roads of his away).

I think I've seen just about the full gamut of straw-man arguments raised with respect to the Sisters-to-Black Butte Ranch trail, but gee, here comes yet another pile-on argument that the duly elected county commissioner shouldn't be in favor of improvements for this community either.

I'll say one thing regarding these repetitive attacks on a multi-use trail for everyone but motor vehicles, it sure keeps the issue alive for those that aren't blinded by the continuous claims of impending environmental harm to a young and rapidly growing forest, impacts to wildlife on a trail next to a major high-speed highway (really?), and of course the ultimate

bugaboo of funding something that would be a community asset. Even if you don't like it, dude, it will eventually happen, and Sisters and the surrounding areas will eventually see the benefits and acclaim will rise where now we only hear endless debate and talking points.

And before you start pointing that finger at anyone about lies, keep in mind those other fingers are pointing back directly at you.

And thank you, Commissioner Unger — our second home is in Sisters, but I do so wish our county commissioners and state representative in Polk County were as forward-thinking.

Randy McCall

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Sisters Weather Forecast Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday Monday Chance showers Sunny Chance showers Chance showers Mostly sunny 61/32 65/37 64/38 60/28 57/na 54/35

The Nugget Newspaper, Inc.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to The Nugget Newspaper, P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759. Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon. Publisher - Editor: Kiki Dolson

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

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area. Third-class postage: one year, \$40; six months (or less), \$25. First-class postage: one year, \$85; six months, \$55.

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Robert B. Reich

American Voices

The U.S. economy is picking up steam, but most Americans aren't feeling it. By contrast, most European economies are still in bad shape, but most Europeans are doing relatively well.

American corporations exert far more political influence in the United States than their European counterparts exert in their own countries.

In fact, most Americans have no influence at all. That's the conclusion of professors Martin Gilens of Princeton and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, who analyzed 1,799 policy issues and found that "the preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy."

Instead, American law-makers respond to the demands of wealthy individuals (typically corporate executives and Wall Street moguls) and of big corporations — those with the most lobbying prowess and the deepest pockets to bankroll campaigns.

Most big American corporations have no particular allegiance to America. They don't want Americans to have better wages. Their only allegiance and responsibility is to their shareholders — which often requires lower wages to fuel larger profits and higher share prices.

When General Motors went public again in 2010, it boasted of making 43 percent of its cars in place where labor is less than \$15 an hour, while in North America it could now pay "lower-tiered" wages and benefits for new employees.

As an Apple executive told *The New York Times*, "We don't have an obligation to solve America's problems."

I'm not blaming American corporations. They're in business to make profits and maximize their share prices, not to serve America. It's folly to count on them to create good American jobs, improve American competitiveness or represent the interests of the United States in global commerce.

By contrast, big corporations headquartered in tent Agency, LLC

other rich nations are more responsible for the well-being of the people who live in those nations. That's because labor unions there are typically stronger than they are here — and are able to exert pressure both at the company level and nationally.

Governments in other rich nations often devise laws through tripartite bargains involving big corporations and organized labor. This process further binds corporations to their nations.

Meanwhile, American corporations distribute a smaller share of their earnings to their workers than do European or Canadian corporations. And top U.S. corporate executives make far more money than their counterparts. The typical American worker puts in more hours than Canadians and Europeans, and gets little or no paid vacation or paid family leave. In Europe, the norm is five weeks paid vacation per year and more than three months paid family leave.

And because of the overwhelming clout of American firms on U.S. politics, Americans don't get nearly as good a deal from their governments as do Canadians and Europeans.

Governments there impose higher taxes on the wealthy and redistribute more of it to middle- and lower-income households.

So it shouldn't be surprising that even though U.S. economy is doing better, most Americans are not.

The U.S. middle class is no longer the world's richest. After considering taxes and transfer payments, middle-class incomes in Canada and much of Western Europe are higher than in U.S.

Either we lessen the dominance of big American corporations over American politics, or we increase their allegiance and responsibility to America.

It has to be one or the other. Americans can't thrive within a political system run largely by big American corporations — organized to boost their share prices but not boost America.

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