

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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 10 a.m. Monday.

Appreciation to SPRD

To the Editor:

My term on the board of directors of Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) will end June 30. Before leaving I wanted to share my experience on this board with the Sisters community. I have served on other boards where they mostly rubber stamp whatever the Executive Director presents to them; not so on the SPRD Board.

Jennifer Holland, our SPRD director, prepares a board packet for each meeting, which

the board reviews before they meet — voluminous pages of budget spreadsheets and decisions to be made! At the board sessions, questions are asked, and, if needed, Jennifer is asked to procure more information.

Most importantly, SPRD involves the community when formulating their strategic plan. SPRD's commitment to the community is evident through their programs and events. Check it out! New programs will be rolling out soon — for kiddos and adults.

See **LETTERS** on page 8

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday

Mostly Sunny

89/56



Thursday

Mostly Sunny

90/56



Friday

Mostly Sunny

93/64



Saturday

Sunny

98/66



Sunday

Sunny

101/68



Monday

Mostly Sunny

101/66



Tuesday

Mostly Sunny

98/61



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

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



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Proofreader: Kit Tosello
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A wrecking ball

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

Hyper-partisanship and political tribalism distills into a caustic cocktail that is burning holes in American culture and dissolving the social fabric. Anything that dilutes that bitter acid is welcome — and a bid to make the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners nonpartisan offers just such a tonic. (*See related story, page 1.*)

There is no reason for local issues to be engaged through a red or blue lens. There is no reason for party apparatus to be brought to bear to secure positions on local commissions, councils, and school boards. The more local institutions become corrupted by hyper-partisanship, the less people will trust them or wish to engage with them.

Trust in all manner of institutions has plummeted, and many of those institutions — from government to education to the media — have no one but themselves to blame. When the public perceives that an institution is committed more to advancing a partisan agenda than to serving its constituents, an erosion of trust is inevitable — and deserved.

Journalist Matt Taibbi recently delivered a scorching column on Substack, noting that the media in recent years became so obsessed with whether or not an issue helped or hurt Donald Trump that many lost sight of their real mission: to seek truth and inform the public.

Taibbi decries the resulting “countless stupidities over the course of the last five years, with no better example than the latest uproar over the ‘lab leak hypothesis’ about the origins of COVID-19.”

Taibbi writes: “Without taking any position on whether or not the theory is true, it’s undeniable that media professionals denounced the possibility for over a year largely because Donald Trump happened to believe it. Now that conventional wisdom has shifted gears on this story ... we have people like ABC’s Jon Karl coming out and saying things like, ‘Some things may be true even if Donald Trump said them.’ The way Karl announced that the concept was now discussable was particularly hilarious: ‘Now, *serious people* are saying it needs a serious inquiry.’

“Karl’s statement was meant to be profound and bold, but it’s actually a damning admission of incompetence on the part of a press corps that spent years turning hundreds of non-Trump

questions into referenda on Trump.”

Gazing at the world through a partisan lens colors and distorts what we see. Insisting that our lens is the only correct lens deforms understanding, and insistence on conformity of view and the suppression of dissent will ultimately mangle the Republic beyond repair. For the Republic is founded upon classical liberalism, which is breaking down in the face of a variety of forms of totalitarian thought. It may be “soft” totalitarianism — for now — but it is nevertheless a deadly toxin.

Many Americans of varying political stripes (or none) are fed up with it.

As Taibbi notes, “The traditional liberal approach to the search for truth, which stresses skepticism and free-flowing debate, is giving way to a reactionary movement that Plato himself would have loved, one that believes knowledge is too dangerous for the rabble and must be tightly regulated by a priesthood of ‘experts.’ It’s anti-democratic, un-American, and naturally unites the residents of even the most extreme opposite ends of our national political spectrum.”

A reckoning may be at hand.

The controversy around the Wuhan lab leak hypothesis may turn out to be a wrecking ball when it comes to faith in experts and institutions, as Thomas Franks of *The Guardian* points out:

“If it does indeed turn out that the lab-leak hypothesis is the right explanation for how it began — that the common people of the world have been forced into a real-life lab experiment, at tremendous cost — there is a moral earthquake on the way.

“Because if the hypothesis is right, it will soon start to dawn on people that our mistake was not insufficient reverence for scientists, or inadequate respect for expertise, or not enough censorship on Facebook. *It was a failure to think critically about all of the above*, to understand that there is no such thing as absolute expertise.”

Hyper-partisanship breaks down the ability to think critically, leads “experts” into the temptation to be “players” and lend their credibility to an agenda, and makes “winning” a zero-sum game more important than seeking truth. If there is a moral earthquake on the way, maybe it’ll shake us hard enough to spill out the bile of hyper-partisanship and hurl us back onto common American ground.

Let it begin here.

Extra! Extra!



Sisters Dance Academy dancers hit the stage at Sisters High School Auditorium in a long-anticipated live performance. *See story, page 4.*

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK