

Your views

Church: Every vote counts

To the Citizens of Union County:
I was asked to provide registration numbers as I did several years ago. I researched those numbers because of all of the people who told me: "My vote doesn't count! The west side of the state controls all of the votes!"

The numbers below reflect registrations as of Oct. 15.
Registered Voters, State of Oregon: 2,755,981
Registered Voters, Multnomah, Lane, Washington & Clackamas counties: 1,439,453
All other counties: 1,316,528
Difference: 122,925

Every ballot that is returned by 8 p.m. on Election Day is counted, as long as you have signed the ballot return envelope and your signature matches. (If you return your ballot in only the secrecy envelope, we cannot record it.)

Your votes do count. Everyone's vote counts. Just remember: If you choose not to vote, don't complain.

*Robin A. Church
Union County Clerk*

Hopkins: 'Mary Poppins' a success

To the Editor:
While ushering at the Elgin Opera House, I had the opportunity to visit with a group from three communities in Washington. Two related to me that this was their third visit to Elgin to see the production of "Mary Poppins." I don't know how they were able to get seats during a play that was extended a week due to sell-out audiences, but they were not the only ones I talked with who had come to see the play three times.

Terry Hale and cast did it again with an outstanding production that would match any Broadway performance. And speaking of Broadway, the Bloodgood kids could probably star in any performance given in that setting. This time Liam Bloodgood showed his numerous talents dancing, singing and acting with the best of professionals. The entire cast was phenomenal in "Mary Poppins." One visitor stated, "The music alone is worth coming for," as Kiel Fauske, Wendy Stein, April Van Tassel and Jeannette Smith lit up the stage with their voices. The two Banks children, Olivia Sturm from Union and Grant Deem from Cove, starred in all of the acts with performances envied by many thespians. In short, everyone on stage did their part to bring credit to the Elgin Opera House, which is earning a reputation throughout the area.

But I want to add, it's not just the cast, but lighting, set designs, costumes, choreography and more that together create the quality.

So, for those who were unable to attend, I would suggest you watch for the April 2019 version of "Mamma Mia." And you had better buy your tickets early, or you might not get a seat.

*Gerald Hopkins
Summerville*

Cooper: Walden considers the rest of us irrelevant

To the Editor:
According to Rep. Greg Walden and his supporters ("Where's Walden? He's Here," The Observer, Oct. 19), it doesn't matter that he no longer holds town hall meetings. Walden meets instead with handpicked audiences at "roundtables," where he can talk to the people he says are the "relevant parties" who can speak to "the issues that are the most important." Apparently, the rest of us are irrelevant.

I guess we should accept that Walden does not meet with most of his constituents; after all, he is busy meeting (behind closed doors) with ranchers and agribusinesses. Yet the most common job groups in Union County are management, business, science and arts, sales and office, and service; farming, fishing and forestry combined represent only 3 percent of the jobs in this county (DataUSA). Why does Walden not bother to meet with the folks who work in other sectors as well?

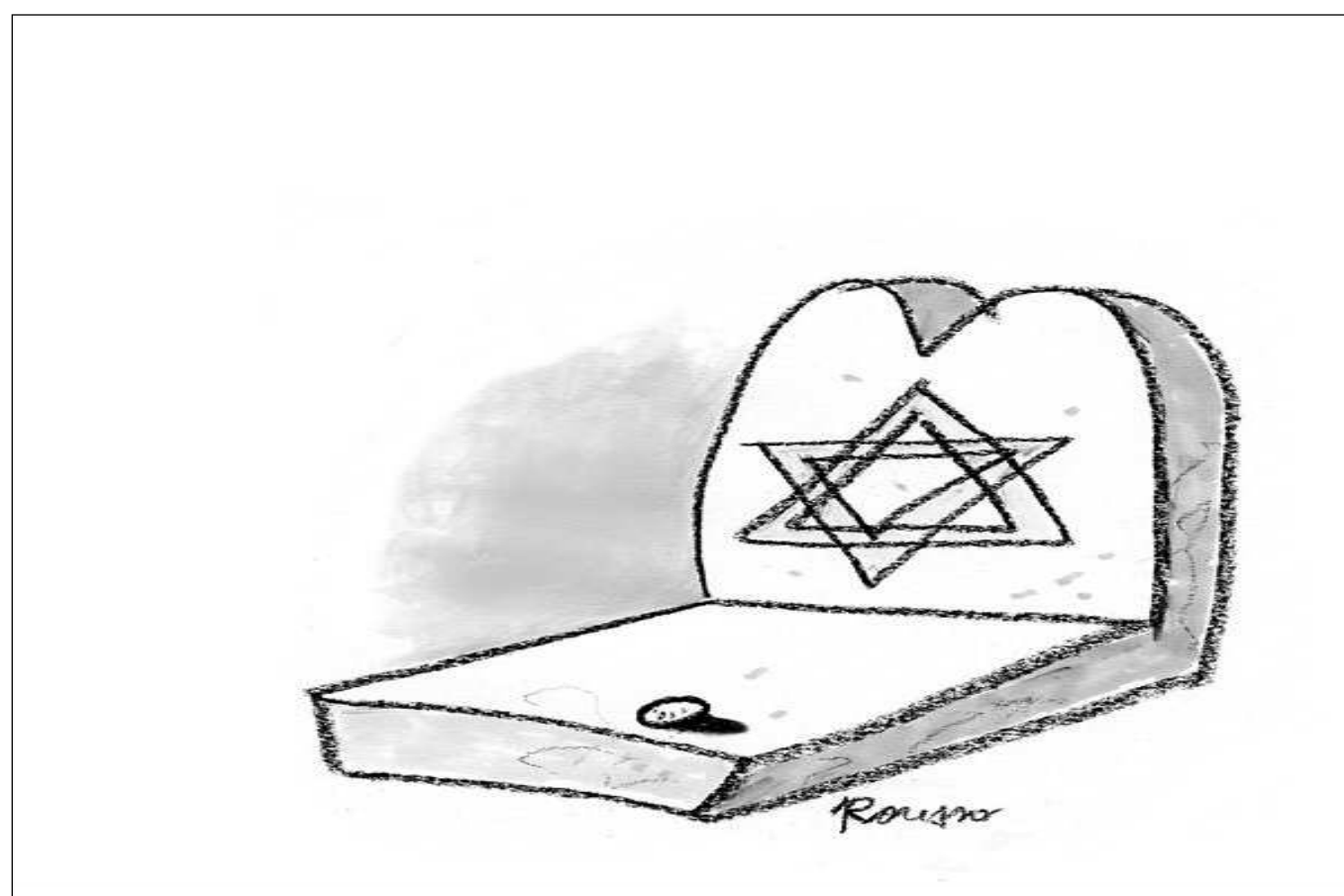
Walden actually implies, with zero evidence, that Eastern Oregonians consulted an online "playbook" on how to disrupt town hall meetings. Walden's D.C. representative says town halls weren't "productive"; perhaps this is because attendees were upset about Walden's vote to gut the Affordable Care Act. If Walden had prevailed, 20 percent of us would have lost access to affordable health care.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to Greg Walden and the status quo. His opponent, Jamie McLeod-Skinner, has driven 40,000 miles meeting with people of all walks of life. McLeod-Skinner is the best candidate to represent all of the people in Congressional District 2, not just the few who Walden considers "relevant."

*Matt Cooper
La Grande*

Andrew: Governing bodies must do all they can to stop B2H

To the Editor:



This letter is addressed to the city and county representatives.

They said the B2H transmission line was simply the cheapest option. For 10 years it has always penciled out as the cheapest option. This was the reply when a La Grande resident asked why Idaho Power didn't build a solar farm in sunny Idaho to meet the 0.9 percent projected increase in demand instead of constructing the B2H transmission line.

The reason B2H is the cheapest option is because they are taking advantage of people. I am one of them. They are not compensating me for changing my view from a beautiful, intact hillside to a line of 200-foot-high buzzing towers. Other's losses are greater, and the losses to our natural resources and cultural heritage are irretrievable. If they gave compensation for the true impact of B2H, that solar farm in Idaho would look like the bargain of the century. As in so many ill-conceived projects, the true costs are not weighed in the calculations.

They have promised mitigation money and tax revenues. You cannot mitigate the impact of these towers no matter how much money you spend. Tax revenues? When I look around our community I see a town vital and engaged. I recently overheard a couple traveling through comment on how good it was to see a vibrant small town, bereft of boarded up storefronts. Our souls long for the balm of unspoiled nature. I cannot help but think the scenic beauty of our valley is an important factor in our current vitality and well-being. We can build tax revenues other ways.

Idaho Power would like us to think this is a done deal. It is not; there is a long journey ahead of them. We can make a difference. City and county governing bodies have standing with the agencies Idaho Power must get approval from. I would not want to be

at the helm not having done the most I could to ensure the bright future La Grande and the Grande Ronde Valley deserves. I would not want to wake up 10 years from now wondering what I could have done to stop the line.

*Kathryn Andrew
La Grande*

Duffey: McLeod-Skinner is best candidate in 50 years

To the Editor:
I have waited for a candidate like Jamie McLeod-Skinner for 50 years. She is smart and compassionate. She cares about the issues I care about — including health care for all, social justice, education, global warming and water quality. Jamie will listen to all sides of arguments and then make balanced and ethical decisions. She believes our democracy can endure only if we engage in respectful dialogue with all members of our diverse society. We cannot do better than elect Jamie McLeod-Skinner to Congress on Nov. 6.

*Pat Duffey
La Grande*

Whitaker: Who is Greg Walden working for?

To the Editor:
The Oct. 22 Lund Report headline caught my attention: "Walden a Top Recipient in Millions Funneled by Pharma to Lawmakers." Greg Walden, the report stated, citing Kaiser Health News, has received contributions from drug-making corporate PACs totaling \$269,800 since January 2017 and \$851,042 since 2007. Who is Greg working for?

Every year, pharmaceutical company political action committees (PACs) contribute millions of dollars to U.S. senators and representatives in a multipronged effort to influence health care

Write to us

LETTERSTOTHE EDITOR

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's address and phone number (for verification purposes only).

We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We will not publish poetry, consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged.

Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks. Email your letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850.

Letters deadline

The Observer does not run endorsements of more than 350 words.

The Observer will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day if necessary. We run the letters on a first come, first served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by noon Friday, Oct. 26. You can email them to news@lagrandeobserver.com, drop them off at our La Grande location, or mail them to The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, 97850.

We will publish our last letters on Friday, Nov. 2. Election Day is Nov. 6.

lawmaking and spending priorities. Pharma money flows to congressional committees with jurisdiction over pharmaceutical issues like drug pricing and FDA approval. Walden has watched his coffers swell with drug-maker PAC money since he became chairman of the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce in early 2017.

With six months to go in the 2018 cycle, Walden had already raised an additional \$71,000 over the 2016 cycle — or 11 times more than drug makers gave him a decade ago.

While PAC contributions to candidates are limited to \$5,000 per primary or general election, a larger donation frequently accompanies individual contributions from the company's executives and other employees. It also sends a clear message to the recipient, campaign finance experts say, one they may remember

when lobbyists come calling: "There's more where that came from." Pharmaceutical companies also wield their political power in ways veiled from the public, giving to "dark money" groups and super PACs — independent groups barred from directly donating to or coordinating with campaigns — bent on swaying lawmaking.

Given the drug makers' money flowing into Walden's coffers, it is unsurprising that he has consistently voted against efforts to control prescription costs.

It's time to free Congress from corporate control. Unfortunately, Greg Walden works for his corporate sponsors — not for his Eastern Oregon constituents. This is why I'm voting for Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Congress.

*Bill Whitaker
La Grande*

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