

OUR VIEW

Ballot security will be the issue

More than 400 Oregonians, all of them living overseas, will have the opportunity to take part in a voting experiment this November. They're legal residents of Jackson and Umatilla counties, and they'll be able to use their smartphones to vote back home.

Theirs is the latest in a series of experiments in mobile voting financed, at least in part, by Tusk Philanthropies. Tusk officials believe mobile voting can improve voter participation and improve election security in the process.

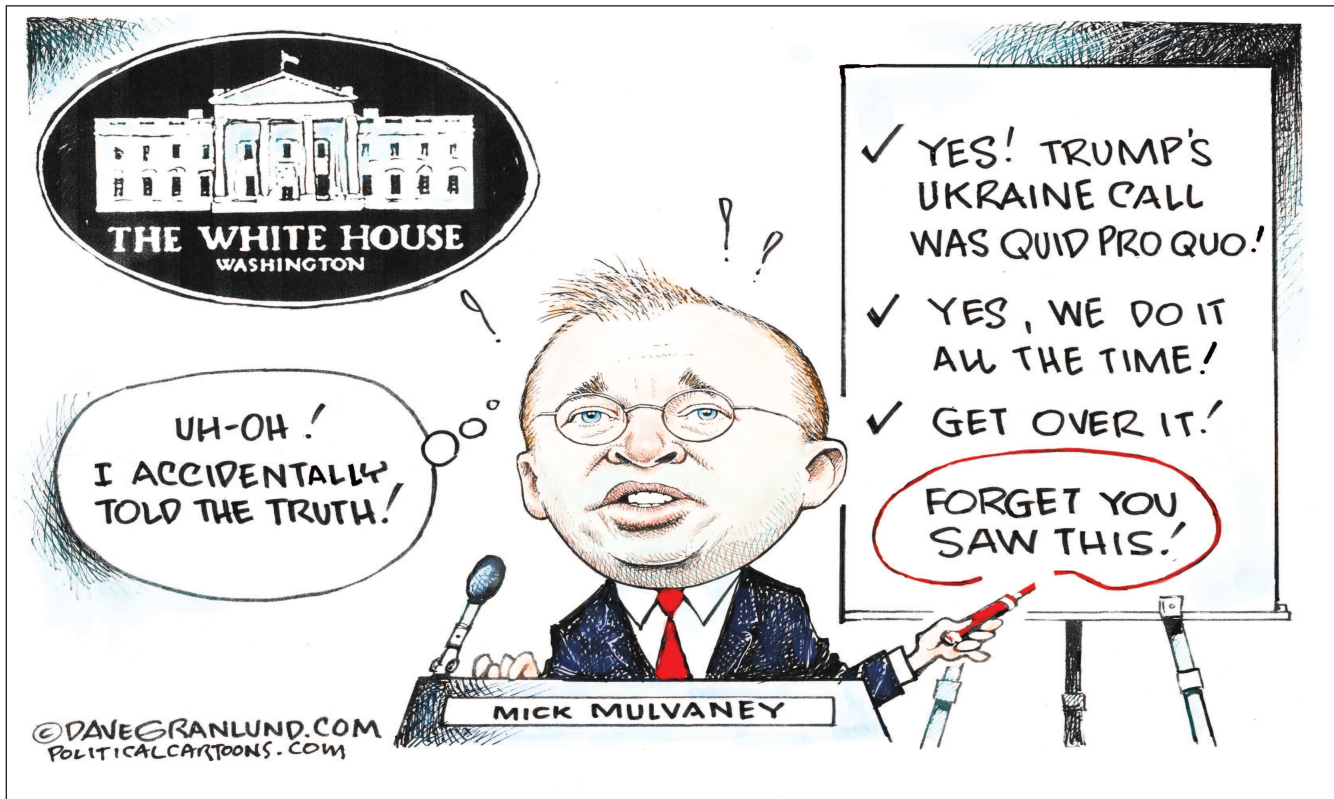
Notices about the smartphone system have been sent to about 400 voters with legal residence in southern Oregon's Jackson County and another 63 with residence in Eastern Oregon's Umatilla County. All are registered voters living overseas.

Participation will be voluntary, and those who opt out will be mailed absentee ballots as usual.

If, however, they choose to take part, they'll download an application called Voatz that uses encryption and blockchain technology to keep ballots secure. The system works only on relatively new smartphones, which include a variety of enhanced security features, including biometric features. It's the latest in a series of pilot projects Tusk and Voatz have collaborated on.

Ballot security is, naturally, a major question about the process. Blockchain is a decentralized system in terms of security and storage that makes election tampering difficult to impossible. In some ways, it works like Google's documents program that allows the individual who creates a document to decide who can see it. The creator can see whatever changes anyone else has made.

Clearly, smartphone voting won't be for everyone. That said, it may well persuade young adults to vote in ways going to the polls or even mailing in ballots have not, and that's not a bad thing. The key to its success, however, remains in the hands of those charged with keeping the process secure.



MY VOICE

What progressives really 'exalt' in

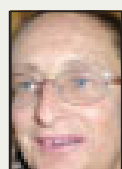
Chris Woodworth responded to my challenges to his On the Fence (The Observer, Aug. 23) defining a "fair and just" society with a My Voice (The Observer, Sept 4). His male chauvinism is glaringly apparent by his frequent references to me as "Mary" rather than "McCracken." What better window into Woodworth's disrespect for women?

Woodworth insinuates I misinterpreted him regarding American babies lacking unequal opportunity at birth. He says, "of course some are born smarter, more athletically gifted, more musically inclined..." But my examples of inequality at birth were based on economics, gender and race, which Woodworth doesn't touch. Woodworth can't admit that by being born a white male into a nuclear family of means paved the way to his outcome as a trauma surgeon. In his first article, he notes that women are underrepresented as surgeons, insinuating that females inherently possess lesser merit. In his time, acceptance into medical school was strongly gender-biased not merit-based.

Yet Woodworth claims that merit should be the sole basis for opportunities leading to successful outcomes.

In his My Voice piece, Woodworth changed the issue from "equal opportunity vs. outcome" to "equal justice vs. outcome" and says everyone in America is treated with equal justice and thus everyone is responsible for their own outcomes. However, he believes a child born to a low-income single mother

About the author



Mary McCracken is a resident of Island City. My Voice columns should be 500 -700 words. Submissions

should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those published elsewhere. Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to news@lagrandeobserver.com.

does not warrant governmental help because of his mother's "mistake." How does that jive with equal value of life at conception? How about equal opportunity? U.S. mass incarceration accounts for more than \$81 billion per year, which is more than \$250 per U.S family. Now let's examine America's equal justice under the law.

Look at our prison system. Our per capita incarceration far exceeds all other countries on earth. Don't blame the prisoners. It's systemic. Most prisoners end up in jail because they are poor, dark skinned, poorly educated, raised with little guidance or can't make bail and

are awaiting trial. That population gets jailed for petty nonviolent crimes of little threat to society. Meanwhile, powerful criminals avoid jail for bringing down entire economies, waging illegal wars, polluting the planet, extracting public natural resources for private gain and assassinating political enemies. Additionally, our prisons are mostly for profit. Profit for the wealthy. Equal justice?

Woodworth's overarching labeling and stereotyping of people attests to his disrespect for those whose ideas differ from his. He starts by broadly slamming progressives under the guise of complimenting me. Later he accuses progressives of "exalting sexual freedom over personal responsibility." In reality, progressives are folks who believe everyone deserves a fair shot at a decent, fulfilling and economically secure life. They believe that everyone should do his or her fair share to build this life through education and hard work and through active participation in public life and that everyone should play by the same set of rules.

The central progressive message is one of fairness and equality with no special privileges for the well-connected or wealthy.

A local progressive group meets the last Thursday of every month in the basement of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 1001 O Ave., La Grande, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Socializing and enjoying snacks begins at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited to see what progressives really "exalt" in.

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