

OUR VIEW

Earning the trust of readers

A recent study produced by the Knight Foundation and Gallup probably didn't grab the attention of a lot of county residents, but it sure caught our gaze.

The study "State of Public Trust in Local News" carried some good news and some bad news for the print media in America.

One conclusion the study delivered was Americans tend to trust their local reporters more than the national news.

For many of us in the conservative heartland of Eastern Oregon, that probably isn't much of a surprise. But other results of the study were less heartening for reporters and editors striving to work in rural areas like Union County.

One key result from the study: About 45% of Americans have either a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of trust in local news compared with 31% for national news. At first glance that stat may seem cause for celebration, especially in the newspaper industry.

But it isn't.

That's because the statistic means more than half of Americans don't trust their local press. Even fewer, obviously, trust our national counterparts.

Much of that could be put squarely on the shoulders of the current political climate we now inhabit, like it or not, in the United States. Facts tend to be whatever information fits a political outlook. If the "facts" don't fit that political view, then they are bogus.

As depressing as that is, we in the local and regional news industry must do more to earn trust from our readers.

It is simply not just a good idea but, in some ways, it is a crucial act of self-preservation. The good news from the study is 79% of Americans find their local news organizations covering issues that impact their daily lives.

That is heartening.

The overarching issue, though, boils down to creating and building trust to ensure democracy thrives. Residents — voters — can't make informed decisions about important matters if they don't have the information. We at The Observer are the crucial link between voters and their elected leaders regarding information flow. Without the information, members of a democracy are no more than a mob.

Our job, then, is to work hard to be as value-free as possible regarding the presentation of news. Because we are human, that is a tall order. Humans makes mistakes. Humans are fallible.

But readers need to know we will do all we can, always, to deliver balanced information in our stories. We believe it to be critical we earn our readers' trust. And we do that by presenting information in a fair and professional manner.



Your views

Vigil: Looking for a semblance of decency within the Republican Party

To the Editor:

Surely, it's time to stop pussy-footing around the issue. In addition to the obvious array of obscenities perpetrated on the nation, its people and the world by this president, Trump is also behaving consistently as an agent of a foreign adversary. Trump is waging a full-throttle war against our environment by attacking our clean air, clean water, climate and health. By ignoring science time after time, he is risking the very survival of human civilization. All this is undertaken in the interests of short-term profits for the wealthy few.

What is equally obscene is that Republicans from D.C. to Salem are displaying a parallel lack of concern for protecting us from this assault. If only one Republican in Congress were to exhibit some integrity and spine and stand up against the disgusting performance in the White House, we'd have reason to think there remains in that party some semblance of decency.

If only one Republican in Salem were to exhibit an ounce of honesty in addressing climate change in the state instead of promoting the lies and misinformation propounded by industry and the timber barons, we'd have reason to think there remains some semblance of decency within the Oregon Republican Party.

Trisha Vigil
Medford

Slack: Barreto's legislative action invested in workers

To the Editor:

Rep. Greg Barreto deserves appreciation and recognition for taking action during the 2019 legislative session to increase wages for Oregon's Direct Support Professional (DSPs). The need to invest in the professionals was greater than ever, and Rep. Barreto listened and agreed that the time to invest was now.

There are more than 30,000 Oregonians who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities, many

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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).

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thankfully they did. Rep. Greg Barreto recognized the value of the services DSPs perform and supported raising their wages.

New Day Enterprises supports the well-deserved wage increase for DSPs and thanks Rep. Barreto for voting to support our valued workforce. We wish him well in his new endeavors.

Christy Slack
New Day Enterprises, executive director, La Grande

Farnum: Arguments against warming station are baseless, irrelevant

To the Editor:

This letter is directed to the La Grande City Council, residents of La Grande and Union County, concerning the appeal of the permit for the Union County Warming Station. It is my conviction as a citizen and a Christian that any civilized people would have a minimum safety net for their most vulnerable neighbors.

It is a blessing that in our community we have citizen groups working on affordable housing, a warming station and other minimal social needs. The need and my awareness of the need grows every day. Every day this appeal has prevented people from having access to warmth and they have suffered. I believe the appeal should be dismissed and those who filed it should be required to compensate the community for the suffering people experienced by joining effort to provide services and paying a reparation to the Union County Warming Station effort.

Al Adelsberger and Colleen McLeod have shown poor judgment in their arguments, demeaning people suffering from homelessness and blaming the warming station for an already existing problem of homelessness. Their arguments are baseless, irrelevant and inhumane. The consequences are that people are suffering, but some of us in the community continue to try to help those in need.

Skye Farnam
Summerville

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