

OUR VIEW

Oregon needs open primaries

The Independent Party of Oregon, all 124,777 of them, is giving nonaffiliated voters in the state something the two majors refuse to do. It will allow the 948,697 (as of October) nonaffiliated registered voters a chance to have a say in its primary election.

More power to them.

Oregon's closed primary system, in which voters may cast ballots only in their political party's primary, is about what it was when it was adopted in 1904.

Republicans may vote in the Republican primary, Democrats in the Democratic one and Independents in theirs. Members of smaller parties, too, hold primaries for their voters, and only nonaffiliated voters are left out of primary elections entirely.

Yet nonaffiliated voters make up roughly a third of all registered voters in the state, with more voters than either Democrats or Republicans.

They will have the option to vote in the Independent Party primary in 2020, and the party may nominate candidates from other parties if it chooses.

The Independents are expected to hold their primary in March, two months before Republicans and Democrats hold theirs.

Nonaffiliated voters also can register with parties up to 21 days before an election if they so choose, just as party members may switch parties until then, though that isn't a particularly common practice.

There's a better way to handle the problem.

Oregon's two major parties could decide to make Oregon's primary election open to all comers, no matter what their registration, though the national Democratic Party rules still would prevent outsiders from voting for presidential candidates, according to the Portland Tribune.

No matter how attractive the idea of an open primary is, nonaffiliated voters only will have a couple of choices if they hope to have a say in statewide and presidential primaries next year. They can vote with the Independents. Or, they can join one of the two major parties before the primary and switch back afterwards. Each is better than nothing, but neither is better than a fully open primary would be. In a state that puts so much value on participating in elections that it automatically registers voters when they renew their driver's licenses, that is particularly unfortunate.



MATSON
caglecartoons.com CQ ROLL CALL

The news that's fit to print — and pay for

It didn't take long.

The Observer put up a paywall on its website and the complaint flashed across my computer screen: Why does The Observer use Facebook to post links to articles on the newspaper's website that we can't read because we do not have a subscription?

In short, why isn't The Observer providing its product for free?

It is a good question with an obvious — but not a casual — answer: Our business — our stock and trade — is professionally researching, writing, editing, publishing and delivering news and information. Like any other profession or business, we expect to be remunerated for our labor and products.

Part of the problem is one of perception. The newspaper industry embraced the free content theme online more than 20 years ago. That was a mistake. Once news consumers could get their news for free, they expected it and, in turn, the effort to produce the news lost perceived value.

Generations of newspaper subscribers before the advent of the internet paid for subscriptions. Yes, those newspapers had advertising, but the paper was not free. The easy access the internet provided blinded consumers to



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK
PHIL WRIGHT

those facts.

Producing news isn't easy and it isn't cheap. People — reporters, editors, pressmen, delivery drivers, etc. — do not do their work for free. Just like you, they work to receive a paycheck to pay bills and to live.

Newspaper employees work hard to produce news and unique local content for their reading audience. They work long hours, withstand criticism and, occasionally, bask in the shadows of triumph.

But they don't do it for free. Nor should they. We believe our news product is a good one. We believe it has value. And we believe that value is worth something. It's why we share links to our stories on Facebook and other social media — to draw attention to our work.

To receive the kind of journalism you expect costs money. If you read local news for free on some websites, you get what you pay for: The Observer is the only news source providing in-depth reporting on La Grande's warming station, for example, and covering

breaking news that matters. Because we believe our product has value, we also believe it is worth paying for. If we didn't, we wouldn't be in this business in the first place.

So, the long and short of it is simple: Walmart does not give its products away for free. Small businesses — such as The Observer — here in Union County don't give away their products and services for free, either.

We ask you to pay for our news product because it has value.

If you believe in the concept of local news and deem the body politic must be well-informed, then we hope you will support it by becoming a subscriber to the printed newspaper and/or a digital subscriber. A monthly digital subscription to The Observer is less than the price of Netflix. Getting home delivery of the paper plus everything we can offer online is less than \$12 per month.

That's about the cost of a movie ticket and soda and covers a lot more than a couple hours of entertainment.

By the way, The Observer and our sister paper the Baker City Herald are getting news apps this holiday season. The mobile app is fast, easy to navigate and provides alerts to keep you in the know.

Your views

Simpson: We should thank, not ridicule, those working to address climate crisis

To the Editor:

On Dec. 6, I opened The Observer opinion page. This is often the first page I read when the newspaper arrives in our bright orange newspaper box. I was disgusted to see a huge, color, racist homophobic cartoon rudely ridiculing one of our elected members of Congress.

Really? I am proud that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, often referred to by her initials, AOC, is an American politician and activist serving as the U.S. House of Representatives. We need her vision and her leadership.

And because we adults have not adequately stepped up to the climate crisis, the leadership of children are making headlines. The Guardian reported: "The global wave of school strikes for the climate over the past year has 'achieved nothing,'" (youth activist Greta Thunberg recently told activists at the COP 25 UN Climate Summit in Madrid),

because greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise."

Thank you, AOC, for sponsoring the Green New Deal; thank you, Greta, for challenging all of us to act; and thank you, Eastern Oregon citizens working to address the climate crisis. Join us.

Cheryl K. Simpson
La Grande

Vigil: Trumpers should wear 'Make Russia Great Again' hats

To the Editor:

The impeachment hearings have revealed a gang of cowardly craven apologists for Trump who no longer care about the U.S. Constitution or the criminal conspiracy that is manifest in Trump's behavior, his crime family and his syndicate of cultist followers.

We know Trump solicited help from a foreign government to help his 2020 re-election; we know he attempted to bribe and extort Ukraine to investigate political opponents and promote

cockamamie conspiracy hoaxes; we know he attempted to obstruct the congressional committee in the legitimate performance of its duties by blocking testimony from cronies. If Trump were innocent, he would be encouraging his followers to testify.

Throughout the hearings, Trumpers moved the goalposts: First there was no quid pro quo, then it was a legitimate pursuit of corruption, then it was all hearsay and speculation. The Trump defense by his cult has collapsed like a house of cards as first one then another witness shreds the arguments.

Finally, the entire false narrative that Ukraine was involved in 2016 election misdeeds that serve only Russia has been debunked. The entire Republican Party should now don "Make Russia Great Again" hats.

The once proud Republican Party is left cowering amid Trump's tatters.

Trisha Vigil
Medford

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