

OUR VIEW

Bill a lofty goal, not much else

Oregon lawmakers are being asked to set a goal for Oregon State Police. Senate Bill 1545 would require the state police to have at least 15 patrol troopers per 100,000 Oregonians. Today, there are just eight troopers per 100,000 residents.

It may be just the right goal, but there’s a flaw in the measure. It sets a standard, but it is mute on where that money will come from. The Legislative Fiscal Office does have an estimate, however. According to its calculations it would cost more than \$146.4 million in addition to current spending and routine spending increases over the next four biennia.

That could be a problem. Currently most funding for the state police comes from the state general fund. That means state police must compete with schools, the Oregon Health Plan and a slew of other programs for operating funds every two years. The increase is almost half again as much as the agency currently receives from the general fund.

The agency hasn’t always been funded this way, to be sure. The state police were among those who got a share of the state’s fuel tax each biennium until Ballot Measure 1 was passed by voters on May 20, 1980. The measure barred the state from spending fuel taxes and vehicle license receipts and fees on anything but highways and rest areas. That meant no more highway funds for state police or for parks and recreation, which had also been getting a cut of the highway funds.

Nearly doubling the state police patrol trooper force to 15 per 100,000 would put Oregon in the middle of the pack, so far as law enforcement per capita is concerned. More important, it would mean that nearly all of Oregon would have round-the-clock police coverage, something that isn’t true today in places like Curry County, on the Oregon Coast, and much of Eastern Oregon. Only Wallowa County would not see round-the-clock police coverage.

While it’s clear the Oregon State Police are unable to provide round-the-clock coverage in much of Oregon, and while that’s a worthy goal, huge questions remain about how that money will be raised, and what other programs will suffer as a result. That may be why a nearly identical measure tanked in 2019, and it doesn’t bode well for the current version.

Write to us

LETTERSTO THE 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.



Your views

We need new leadership in sheriff’s office

Well, it’s that time again when the citizens of Union County get to elect a new county sheriff. This time we have four choices.

Union County needs new leadership in the sheriff’s office, one that can motivate the department, one that will

uphold all laws even if they think they are mundane, like some of the officers may think.

Union County needs equal service in all towns in the county without having to pay extra fees. I call it an extortion fee.

I am asking the voting citizens of Union County to please think long and

hard about who you vote for.

The old way is not working and not safe for Union County. We need better than what we have been getting from the sheriff’s office.

Vote for change.

R. L. Middleton
Union

Eventually, Klobuchar will take the prize

Amy Klobuchar’s results in Nevada, Feb. 22, and South Carolina, Feb. 29, will likely be more modest than her surprisingly strong finishes in New Hampshire and Iowa. Yet, the senior senator from Minnesota might have the best chance of any Democrat in America of becoming president – sooner or later.

How could that be? The Real Clear Politics average of all major polls shows her with under 5% support nationwide. Well, it takes a bit of odds-making, coupled with a dash of wishful thinking for Klobuchar and her staff, but it goes like this:

First, Klobuchar could still emerge from the narrowing field of Democratic contenders and win the nomination in July, especially if none of the front-runners has enough delegates to prevail on the first ballot. A deadlocked convention seems increasingly possible, with Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg dividing the early votes and former Vice President Joe Biden still garnering the most support among African American Democrats, even as his overall campaign slumps badly. Former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, with his massive bank account, must be taken seriously.

Second, if a man is the eventual nominee, he will be compelled to select a woman as his running mate. Both Biden and Buttigieg have pretty much said that, without naming names. The likely choices: Klobuchar, or California Sen. Kamala Harris, who abandoned her own presidential campaign before Iowa. Harris would help Buttigieg with

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

PETER FUNT

black voters, but Biden and Bloomberg wouldn’t need Harris – they’d need help in the Midwest, where Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump in 2016. That elevates Klobuchar, who has never lost an election and has served effectively in the Senate for 12 years.

Third, if Biden were to be elected president he would be 82 at the end of his first term. Bloomberg is nine months older. Although neither will concede during the campaign that they might serve only one term, either man’s vice president would be in an especially attractive position for 2024.

Fourth, should Trump win in November, especially if either Sanders or Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren turns out to be his opponent, Democrats will be devastated but also more level-headed when Trump’s second term expires. No more socialistic pie-in-the-sky. Democrats will want a woman with experience, a veteran of the national campaign circuit, a progressive who will at least attempt to reach across the aisle to repair damage caused by eight years of Trump and his cronies.

Taken together, Amy Klobuchar’s odds are surprisingly high.

Watching her at close range during multiple campaign appearances, she rarely failed to impress voters who didn’t know as much about her as they did her more high-profile rivals. Since Iowa she has been on a roll, combining wit and wisdom to galvanize support

among Democrats who have found it troubling, yet easy, to identify flaws among the front-runners.

Yes, Klobuchar is tough. Reports early in her campaign identified some harshness in dealing with her Senate staff. As I’ve watched her there’s no doubt that she’s demanding and hands-on, but none on her field staff has even hinted that the boss is abusive.

Klobuchar favors repairing the Affordable Care Act and lowering prices of prescription drugs, but stops short of Medicare for All. She acknowledges the need for immigration reform, but doesn’t advocate abolishing I.C.E. as some progressives have. She seeks to aggressively combat climate change, favors automatic voter registration when people turn 18, and demands mandatory background checks and other measures for tighter gun control – even though she comes from a hunting state.

“Hello, America. I’m Amy Klobuchar and I will beat Donald Trump!” When she began her remarks on election night in New Hampshire with that breath of fresh air, I thought of the song lyric, “Once in Love with Amy, always in love with Amy. Ever and ever fascinated by her.”

Politicians often study “paths” to victory. Amy Klobuchar does not necessarily have the best path to the White House. However, among all Democrats seeking the presidency, she has the most paths. That doesn’t make for much of a bumper sticker, but it makes her a candidate worth watching.

— Peter Funt is a nationally syndicated columnist.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50

You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery.

Call 541-963-3161 to subscribe.

Subscription rates per month:

Union & Wallowa Co.\$11.80

By mail, all other U.S.\$15

THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

(USPS 299-260)

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801. Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except Dec. 25) by EO Media Group, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

COPYRIGHT © 2020 THE OBSERVER

The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Fax: 541-963-7804

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com

Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to: The Observer, 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801

STAFF		
Publisher.....	Karrine Brogoitti	Classifieds Devi Mathson
Regional circulation director	Kelli Craft	Home delivery advisor..... Amanda Fredrick
Editor	Phil Wright	Customer service rep Mollie Lynch
News clerk.....	Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative..... Juli Bloodgood
Sports editor.....	Ronald Bond	Advertising representative..... Amy Horn
Reporter.....	Dick Mason	Graphic design supervisor..... Dorothy Kautz
Reporter.....	Sabrina Thompson	Graphic design Cheryl Christian
		IT support Nicole Gilbride

Chris Rush, Regional Publisher

A division of

eoMEDIAgroup

eomediagroup.com