

Other Views

# A time to pause as a nation

This Veterans Day across the nation, for the first time since the holiday was conceived in November 1919, there will be no large ceremonies in big cities and small towns in observance to properly express our gratitude and appreciate of our country's brave men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces.



**KELLY FITZPATRICK**  
DEPT. OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Instead, 2020 will long be remembered as a year of tremendous change and challenge

for our nation. Yet, this year also marks 75 years since the end of another historic global event that united our country: the end of World War II and the subsequent creation of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs in 1945.

One of the most poignant aspects of our Oregon veteran community is it is as diverse and united as the nation we serve.

Whether you are one of the 300,000 Oregon veterans who served in the trenches of Europe, the mountains of Korea, the jungles of Asia, the deserts of the Middle East or anywhere in between; on (or beneath) the world's oceans, or in the skies above; here at home or overseas, in wartime or in peace; you are part of an unbroken chain of patriots who have served this country with honor through the history of our nation.

Every day, even after their military service, our veterans ensure America remains strong. Every day, they employ their hard-earned leadership skills and continue to serve their communities.

Our veterans are moms and dads, teachers and doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs, social workers and community leaders. They are the heroes of a peaceful nation who answered the call and returned to live in the land they defended.

Heroes such as World War II paratrooper Bill Wingett — though he never embraced that distinction.

Private First Class Wingett was one of the original members of Easy Company of the 101st Airborne Division's 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, a unit made famous by the book and HBO miniseries "Band of Brothers."

On June 6, 1944, he was one of 17,000 paratroopers to perform a night jump behind enemy lines five hours before the historic beachhead assault began. Along with other paratroopers from the 101st, he fought his way through to Normandy. He also served with honor in the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Bastogne and other pivotal conflicts until the war ended.

He was awarded the Bronze Star for his bravery during the Battle of Brecourt Manor and earned three Purple Hearts in separate engagements.

Sadly, Bill passed away just a few weeks ago at his home in Lebanon. He was 98.

The veterans of the Greatest Generation, serving nearly eight decades ago, are vanishing at a startling rate, as are the veterans of the Korean War generation. Just five years ago, there were more than 17,000 WWII veterans living in Oregon. Today, there are fewer than 6,000. Their contribution and example must never fade from our awareness. The nation and the world they fought to protect will endure because of their service and deep sacrifices.

We also remember our fellow Americans missing in action, whose fate is still undetermined. We will not rest until we have made the fullest possible accounting for every life given in pursuit of our freedoms and preserving democracy.

We also pause to remember the men and women who did not live to be called "veterans." Many of them rest in the hearts of our national cemeteries.

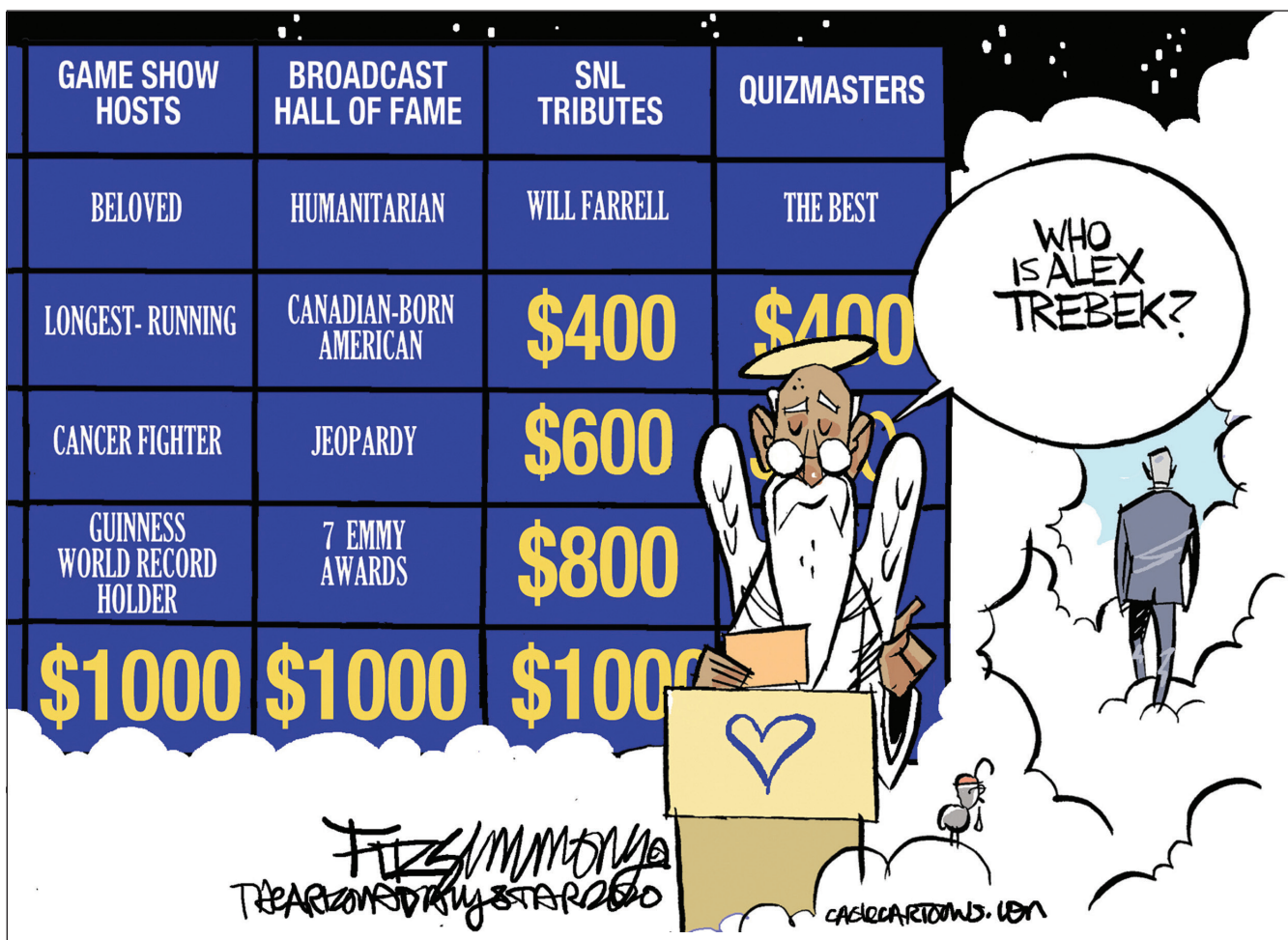
We also honor the families of the lost, who carry a burden of grief that time may lighten, but never lift, as well as all veterans' family members. Their loved ones placed duty and country before their own lives.

America is known as the land of the free and the home of the brave, but this was never a given. This reputation was earned by the blood and sweat of patriots who, generation after generation, dedicate themselves to keeping our nation safe, strong and free.

We mark this Veterans Day with our first-ever virtual Statewide Veterans Day celebration. The event will be streamed on the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs' Facebook page beginning at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 11.

Finally, on behalf of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and a grateful state and nation, on this day and every day, we thank you for your service.

*Kelly Fitzpatrick is the director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and Gov. Kate Brown's policy advisor on veterans' issues. She is a retired Army officer. Her military awards and decorations include multiple awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Army Parachutist Badge.*



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# Veterans have unique skills to offer



**JEREMY FIELD**  
SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

As we approach Veterans Day, it's important to honor the contributions of service members and veterans to our safety and security, and to acknowledge the skills and perspective veteran-owned small businesses bring to the business world.

Nearly 1 in 10 small businesses is owned by a veteran. Collectively, they contribute more than \$1 trillion to our nation's economy. As we navigate through an unprecedented economic environment, the experience veterans bring from their military service greatly benefits our ability to weather the storm and persist.

This is due to the adaptability veteran-owned small business owners bring from their service. Similar to many situations encountered in military service, we are in a rapidly moving and changing environment. In military service, the situation can quickly change, and service members need to immediately access the situation and change course to survive. The same is true for many small business owners who find themselves in a similar unfamiliar environment.

While veterans' ability to adapt serves them well in business, it does not mean they need to go about it alone. The same way that veterans relied on their unit to collectively problem solve and accomplish their mission, veteran-owned small business owners have a network of organizations dedicated to the success of their business.

As a veteran (Steve) who ran busi-



**STEVE WATTS-OELRICH**  
VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTER

nesses without SBA help, I understand the great need for the SBA and its resource partners. I was not as successful in my businesses as I could have been. So I can't begin to tell you how excited I was four years ago when I became employed by the Region X Veterans Business Outreach Center and learned about the training and coaching available to veterans, their spouses and other eligible persons.

Moreover, I was very pleased to learn the Department of Defense upped the transition program since I separated. When I left the service, transition training for exiting service members was almost a full day. Now, it is longer to include various tracks, including the two-day introduction to entrepreneurship course we offer — called Boots to Business — that both service members and spouses can take. In fact, in Fiscal Year 2020 alone, there were more than 21,000 participants in the Boots to Business program, an all-time record.

The U.S. Small Business Administration and Veterans Business Outreach Center team up to support veterans in Oregon at every stage of their business lifecycle. Whether it's one-on-one business advising, webinars on various business topics, access to financing — such as the approximately \$835 million in SBA loans to veterans nationwide during Fiscal Year 2020 — or the two-day Boots to Business program, our organizations work together to empower veterans, active duty service members and military spouses to live the American

Editor's Note

*Do you have a point you'd like to make or an issue you feel strongly about? Submit a letter to the editor or a guest column.*

Dream of business ownership.

Veterans have the drive, passion and dedication needed to run businesses successfully, so long as they build a good team of business coaches and mentors who "have their six."

Instead of trying to reverse course and go back to the way things used to be, small business owners need to be forward thinking. Veteran-owned small businesses are a shining example of how to stay focused on the mission ahead and nimbly pivot to achieve success of that goal.

Veterans know how to adapt to changing times and circumstances, and stand a strong chance of success and survival in these times based on the skills and characteristics learned and possess from serving in the military. These are lessons and attributes we can all learn from veteran-owned small businesses in these changing times.

As we look forward, the SBA and VBOC are proud to serve our state's veteran-owned small businesses toward a successful "mission accomplished."

*Jeremy Field is the regional administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Pacific Northwest Region and Steve Watts-Oelrich is an Air Force veteran and director of the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC).*

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