

OUR VIEW

Should grocery stores have the freedom to sell liquor?

If you are a newcomer to Oregon and yearn for booze, you learn quickly that you can only buy hard liquor in state liquor stores.

If you are a newcomer to Oregon, you also learn quickly that Oregonians can't pump their own gas in many parts of the state. (It's a wonder the state lets people plug in their own electric cars!)

Surveys from the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center seem to indicate Oregonians are ready for change — in where they can buy liquor and in pumping gas. Polls done in January showed more than 50% of Oregonians support both policy changes.

The restrictions on pumping your own gas already have begun eroding. It's OK to pump your own in much of Eastern Oregon. Right now Oregonians can do it because of the heat — until Tuesday evening. We think Oregonians can handle it full time. If you don't want to pump your own gas, we understand. In other states, full-service stations often cater to that desire.

A permanent shift in the rules for booze may soon be coming to a ballot near you. Two possible ballot measures led in part by Lauren Johnson of Newport Market in Bend aim for change. In one, grocers could sell local spirits. In the second, hard liquor just would be for sale at the grocer. It's not clear if the Northwest Grocery Association, which is backing both efforts, will actually focus on one or the other for the 2022 ballot.

A private system with state oversight works OK for pot sales. Grocery stores manage to sell beer and wine just fine. We are sure they could do the same with hard liquor.

There are many questions, though. What happens to the people who have invested in state-controlled liquor stores? Their business model would be in big trouble. And will small producers of craft liquors be better off in this new system or worse?

The bigger worry for some is what happens if it becomes more convenient to get hard liquor. Would problems with addiction and substance abuse rise? Maybe. But if people want booze now, they will manage to get it. And we don't see a tidal wave of people in states with more freedom to buy liquor calling to add more restrictions to where liquor can be sold.

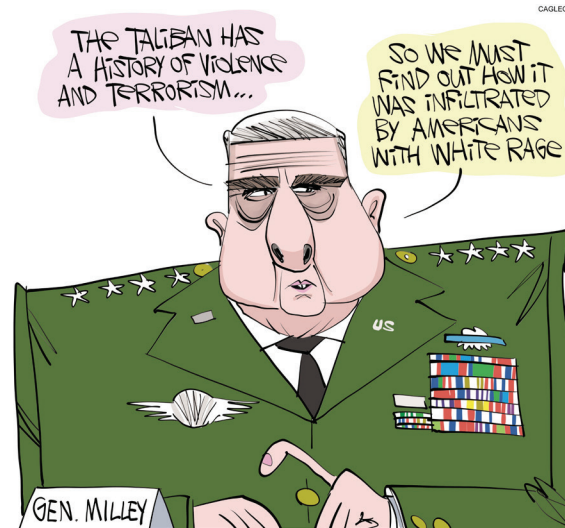
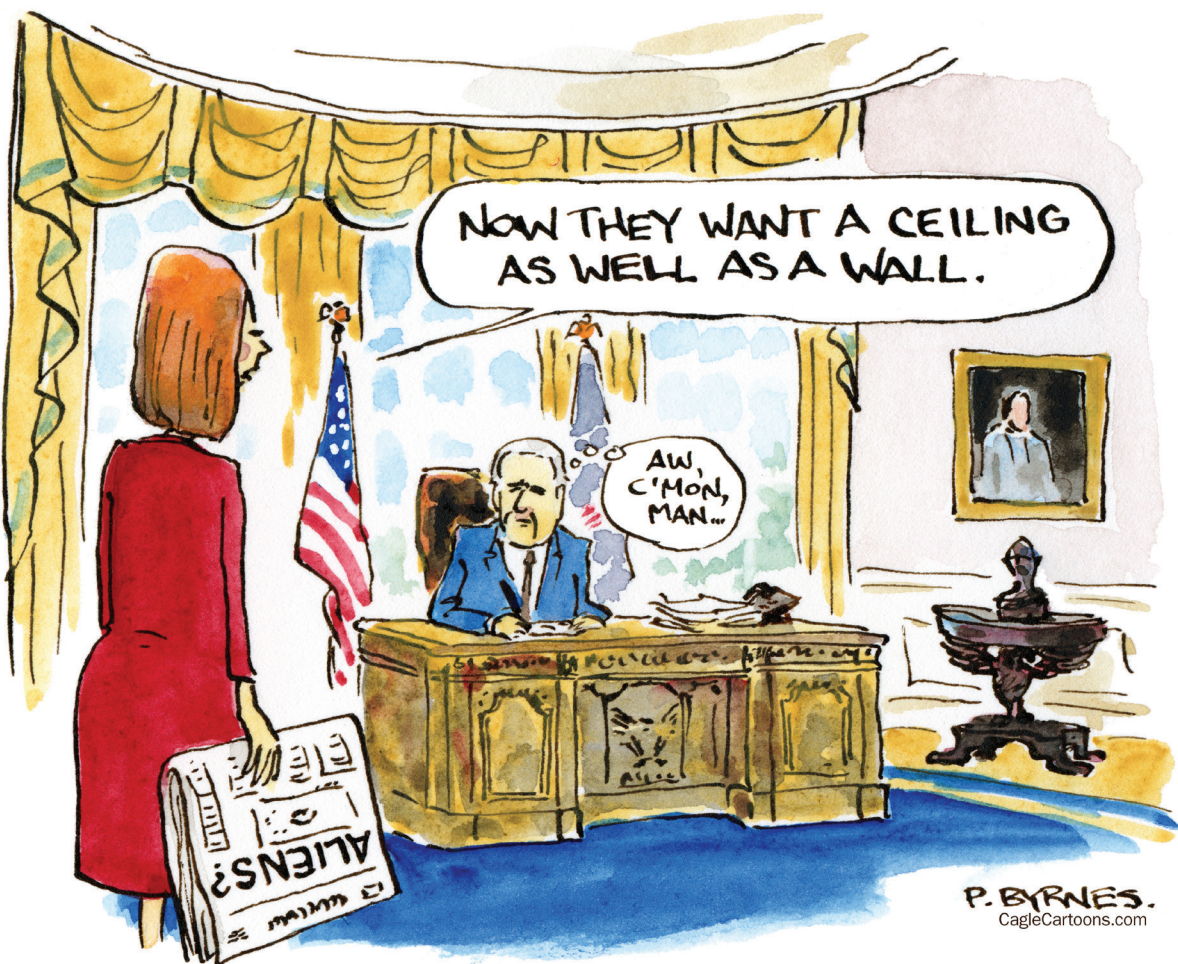
There's going to be interest in figuring out what it might do to prices, as well. But until we know for certain what will be on the ballot, it's hard to know what it might do. It's also hard to know if this just will be another in a series of similar measures that never became law.

EDITORIALS
Unsigned editorials are the opinion of The Observer editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of The Observer.

LETTERS
• The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish consumer complaints against businesses, personal attacks against private individuals or comments that can incite violence. We also discourage thank-you letters.
• Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's name, address and phone number (for verification only). We will not publish

anonymous letters.
• Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.
• Longer community comment columns, such as My Voice, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot and a one-sentence biography. Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Submissions must carry the author's name, address and phone number.
• Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

SEND LETTERS TO:
letters@lagrandeobserver.com or via mail to Editor, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850



The Oregon Legislature honored our Vietnam veterans



STEVE BATES
OTHER VIEWS

The 2021 legislative session started with the hope that the state Legislature would honor our Vietnam veterans by passing a bill to establish a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds.

Senate Bill 319 was introduced by the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness. The bill dedicates a portion of Capitol State Park to a Vietnam War Memorial to be funded and constructed by a qualified nonprofit corporation.

SB319 in its last paragraph declares an emergency. Its preamble states more than 180,000 Oregonians served during the Vietnam War, of which about 100,000 are alive today. The average age of these Oregon Veterans is 70+. Oregon is losing up to eight Vietnam veterans per day. This is based upon data from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. SB319 states: "It is imperative to memorialize the service and sacrifice of all who served during the tumultuous decades of the Vietnam War." This should be done before our Vietnam veterans are gone.

The Senate passed SB319 with a 29-0 vote on March 18. The bill was moved to the House and assigned to the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management with

a subsequent referral to the House Committee on Rules. On May 18, the House Veterans Committee passed the bill unanimously with a "Do Pass" recommendation. On June 16, the House Rules Committee did the same. On Tuesday, June 22, the House of Representatives passed SB319 with a 58-0 vote.

It now awaits Gov. Kate Brown's signature.

In 2017, the Vietnam War Memorial Fund was founded as a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with the sole mission of funding and constructing a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds. For a year and a half, its steering committee met regularly and developed a design for the proposed memorial. The design was also approved by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission on Feb. 25. Subsequently, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Vietnam War Memorial Fund have entered into a memorandum of understanding that outlines each entity's responsibilities going forward.

The approved design includes interpretive panels that will detail historic events and facts of the Vietnam War. This information will be developed later in the process by the steering committee, which is outlined in the memorandum of

understanding. The steering committee will consist of veterans, local and national historians, interpreters, local and state public officials and people representing Oregon's Vietnamese and Southeast Asian communities.

This project has met all local and state requirements with more than a dozen public hearings or forums. As a result, the Oregon Legislature voted to honor our Vietnam veterans by passing SB319 and setting aside space for a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds.

With the governor's signature on Senate Bill 319, the major permissions will be in place to construct a Vietnam War Memorial. While there are state and local requirements to be met, the greatest challenge remaining is raising the \$3 million needed to complete the project.

As we approach the Fourth of July holiday, remember to honor all of our veterans. Freedom is not free! In particular, you can honor our Vietnam veterans with a contribution to the Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds Project.

Steve Bates has resided in Boring for 44 years and is an honorary life member of the Vietnam Veterans of America and is a life member of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. He serves as chair of the Committee on Memorials and Remembrance and president of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50
You can save up to 55% off the single-copy price with home delivery.
Call 800-781-3214 to subscribe.

Subscription rates:

Monthly Autopay\$10.75
13 weeks.....\$37.00
26 weeks.....\$71.00
52 weeks.....\$135.00

THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except postal holidays) by EO Media Group, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

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.

COPYRIGHT © 2021

Phone: 541-963-3161

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

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

POSTMASTER Send address changes to: The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850

STAFF

Regional publisher.....	Karrine Brogotti	Multimedia journalist.....	Alex Wittwer
Regional circulation director.....	Kelli Craft	Home delivery advisor.....	Amanda Fredrick
Interim editor.....	Andrew Cutler	Advertising representative.....	Juli Bloodgood
News clerk.....	Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....	Amy Horn
Reporter.....	Dick Mason	National accounts coordinator.....	Devi Mathson
Reporter.....	Davis Carbaugh	Graphic design.....	Dorothy Kautz
Intern.....	Carlos Fuentes		



A division of