

OUR VIEW

Small things add up

The recent decision by the city of La Grande to suspend enforcement of the two-hour downtown parking limit is a good example of common sense and holiday spirit.

Elected and appointed officials can often seem to be in the crosshairs of public discontent. For sure that is part of the bargain when someone decides to run for office to take a high-profile appointed position. We live in a democracy, after all, and part of that system of government is an often freewheeling interaction between voters and those who do the public's business.

Yet, we must remember that our elected and appointed leaders, for the most part, are hardworking people who want to do a good job. Usually, they do do a good job.

The suspension of the downtown parking enforcement — through Christmas — is designed to make it easier for people to do their shopping downtown. It may seem, within the bigger picture, to be a small item but it isn't.

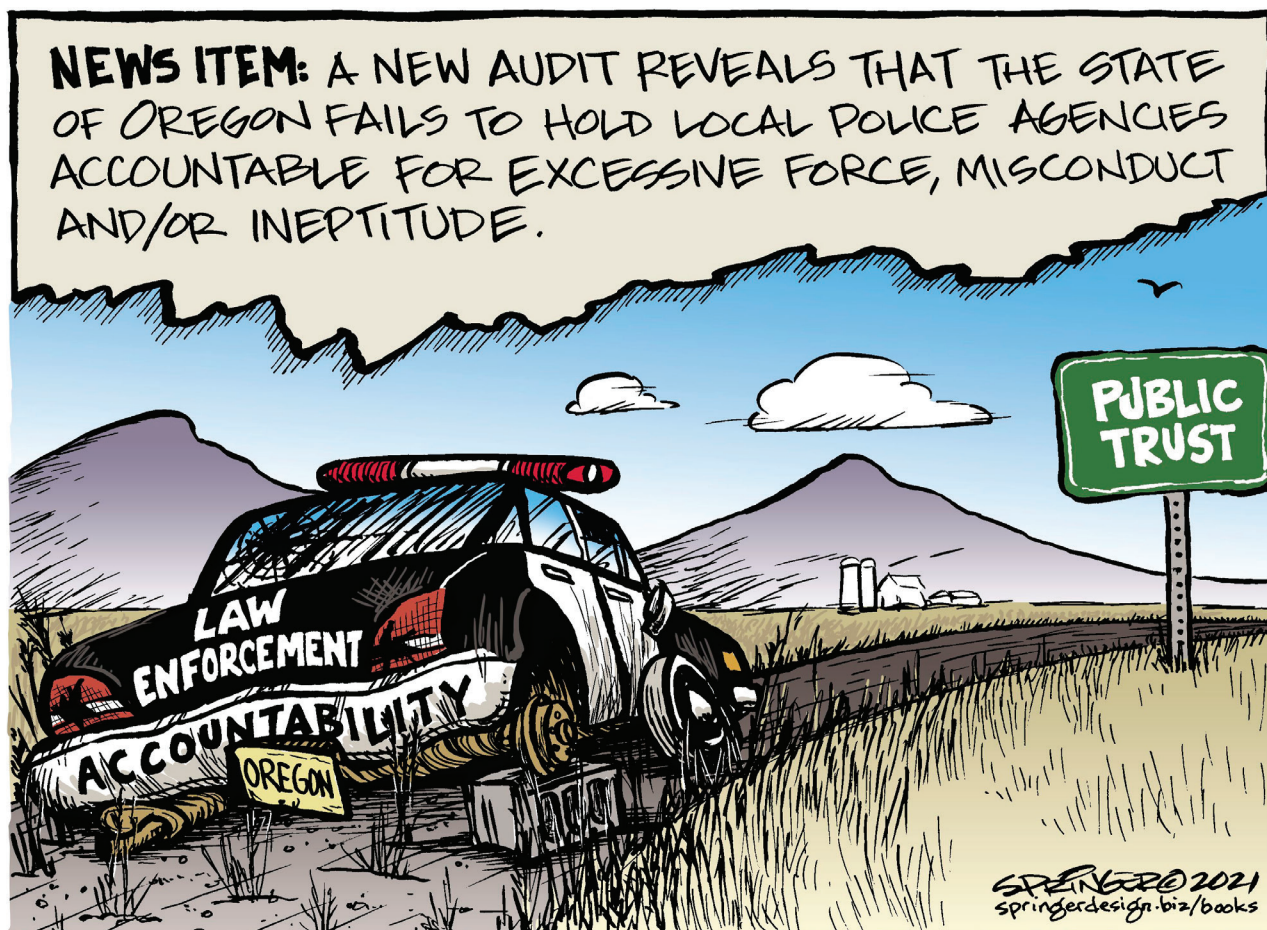
That's because officials could have easily decided against such a move and potentially made it more difficult for shoppers to get to their favorite local store.

And we need people to shop local. The community needs people flocking to downtown businesses to do their holiday shopping. Shopping local is a proven way to enhance the local economy. The dollars spent while shopping local turn over many times within the city.

Small things do add up and the suspension of the parking enforcement mandate, while small, is big in terms of helping boost the local economy at a time when the nation faces a potential recession and every dollar we make is critical.

Our elected and appointed leaders should be criticized when they make bad decisions. They should also be lauded when they decide to do something that helps the entire community at a critical time.

The move by the city to suspend the parking enforcement downtown until after Christmas is a good idea and we applaud the officials who made it a priority.



Memory of Pearl Harbor should never fade



ANDREW CUTLER
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Tragic events seem to become collective milestones in our lives.

Think of the deadly Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and it is easy to look at that date as a dividing line between what once was and how we live now.

For millions of Americans, the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, delivered the same type of feeling. The attacks by the Imperial Japanese Navy sank four battleships and damaged four others. The day pushed America into World War II and set the stage for a long, bloody ordeal in the Pacific that ended only when atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities in 1945.

The attack on Pearl Harbor held a prominent place in the American collective consciousness for decades. More than 2,000 Americans were killed in the attack, a butcher's bill that would not be replicated until 9/11.

The day symbolized so much for so many for so long across the nation but, 80 years later, its significance and impact has faded. Most of the people who fought that day and survived have passed on. The generation that lived through the attack is also depleted by death, and with their passing the meaning of the day — the sacrifice, the bravery — has faded as well.

Now, as a nation, the 9/11 attacks are the most recent national tragedy, and we remember that terrible day with respect and honor each year — as we should.

I hope, though, that somehow Dec. 7, 1941, doesn't become just another date. It shouldn't. That's because the day illustrates the American quality of resilience, of being able to respond to adversity.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor caught the United States unprepared for war. The attack shoved the nation out of the Great Depression and put it on a path to war and, after the guns went silent, to decades of economic growth.

The nation rebounded from the attack, went on the offensive and emerged from World War II triumphant.

What I hope we don't forget, though, are the brave acts of the men on that fateful day. Many of them died. For their sake, and really for the sake of our country at large, their sacrifice should not be allowed to fade away into the pages of history.

Andrew Cutler is the interim editor of The Observer and the regional editorial director for the EO Media Group, overseeing The Observer, East Oregonian and four more newspapers in Eastern Oregon.

YOUR VIEWS

Maxwell's subjective judgment of LHS football team lacks facts

In Anna Maxwell's screed to the La Grande School District, her confirmation bias is hard to ignore ("An open letter to the La Grande School District," Nov. 23).

Fact-finding should be independent of our personal belief system. A principled investigation should be objective and based solely on facts, gathering a number of testimonies to make the best determination possible to address a disputed incident.

Ms. Maxwell stated that there is "little to investigate," so she has constructed a pseudo-event scenario to inform everyone involved what really happened on the night of the football competition between Gladstone and La Grande and most likely was not in attendance.

She has subjectively decided — without factual information — that Gladstone, its players, coaches and parents would not fabricate a story about being on the receiving end of racial epithets. She has labeled La Grande's athletic team, its coaches and referees as white supremacists, pointing the finger of judgment of guilt without qualification.

Having taken a definite side, she has not only implicated the La Grande team and its officials, but has decided the parents are racist as well. A detailed punishment and reeducation plan has been outlined by her. There is no mention about the possibility of poor sportsmanship or an exaggeration of events concerning the Gladstone team who suffered defeat.

Her letter has convinced me that the mindset of prejudice will never be remedied and is a cogent example of ideology interfering with sound reason. I do not believe racism is a growing problem, except for those who promote themselves using racism.

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