

OUR VIEW

Swift decision will help

An investigation regarding allegations of racism during a high school football playoff game in early November needs to be wrapped up as soon as possible.

Most readers are probably already aware of the episode that blew up after the La Grande playoff game against Gladstone on Nov. 5. La Grande won the game, 34-12, but on Nov. 11 a player and parent from the Gladstone football team commented in *The Oregonian* and made assertions of racial slurs being delivered by members of the Tiger football team throughout the entire contest.

Near the end of the game, a verbal dispute between the Gladstone sideline and players on the field also erupted.

The accusations kicked off an investigation by the Oregon School Activities Association, which includes an independent investigator. La Grande Superintendent George Mendoza fully cooperated with the probe. Mendoza said recently the OSAA is working toward a final decision on the matter. OSAA Executive Director Peter Weber said the independent investigator is closing in on the final touches of the investigation.

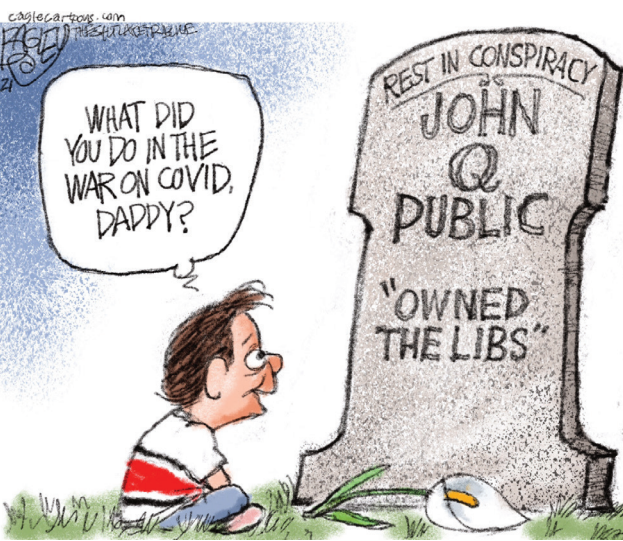
While there should be no rush to judgment, the sooner the investigation can be closed and a final report issued, the better. That's because, in the meantime, both the Gladstone and La Grande school districts will linger in a kind of limbo. Alongside them will be parents and players.

If it is confirmed that racial slurs of any kind were made during the game, then punishment should be swift and effective and send a clear message that such behavior will not be tolerated. There isn't any wiggle room on the issue. There should be absolute certainty that racial slurs will not be tolerated.

Yet accusations are not proof. They are simply that — accusations. Sifting through the smoke on this particular brushup is clearly a difficult task, but a final answer will be the first step toward putting the incident behind both school districts and their respective communities.

School officials and the OSAA have a duty to investigate as far as they can to determine if there is any validity to the allegations of racist language and behavior.

A decision reached through methodical and careful investigation will help both communities.



YOUR VIEWS

Build Back Better bill is cruelly mislabeled

Using the opening gambit of excessive wasteful spending in our nation — supposedly \$8.5 billion for political campaigns in 2020, and another \$13.9 billion for Super Bowl bucks — Union County Progressive Lois Barry laments misguided priorities, how lacking is our society compared to forward-looking torchbearers like Norway and Lithuania (Nov. 4, 2021, *The Observer*, "Who's keeping track of the spending?").

Then her focus turns to Sen. Joe Manchin, West Virginia, supposedly the chief beneficiary of big oil and gas donations. (Also, one of two Democratic senators who are resisting passing an enormous new green social spending bill cruelly mislabeled as Build Back Better.) Oil and gas. Let's see, just one year ago, under Trump, the United States was energy independent. Then with the stroke of a pen, Biden, with the support of millionaire senators Wyden and Merkley, started the attack on our most vital industries. Tens of thousands of well-paying blue-collar jobs were eliminated within weeks. Weeks.

Predictably, the cost of gas began to rise — it's now more than 50% higher than a year ago. Every family that drives to work, to school, to grocery stores feels the pain of that inflation. And every railroad and every trucking concern, for which we rely on for essentials every day, the cost of their diesel fuel has exploded. Not surprisingly, toilet paper, appliances, school clothes, meat, milk and heating oil, if even

available, have shot up in price. And this is only the beginning.

Still, Oregon's two senators have not spoken out with one word of concern as this cruelest of all taxes has put the screws to family budgets, and to fixed-income seniors all across Oregon. But if BBB is passed with the votes of Wyden and Merkley, we can expect our present pain of inflation to morph into a budget-eating monster on steroids.

Rather than condemn Sen. Joe Manchin, I salute him (and Sen. Kristin Sinema) for doing basic math, and for standing up for their constituents and for the entire citizenry of our nation.

Lyle Schwarz
La Grande

Republicans only now care about the national debt

Well, here we are again: a battle over the debt ceiling and funding to keep the federal government operating that will bring us to the brink of a government shutdown, or over the edge into a full-blown catastrophe. After four years of profligate spending and tax breaks for extremely wealthy individuals and big corporations, suddenly Republicans are horrified by the size of the national debt. Here are some facts, as outlined in a *Pro Publica* piece recently:

The national debt rose by almost \$7.8 trillion during Trump's time in office. That's nearly twice as much as what Americans owe on student loans, car loans, credit cards and every other type of debt other than mortgages. Candidate Trump promised to pay down the national debt

in eight years. Instead, he presided over a 40% rise in just four years.

The growth in the annual deficit under Trump ranks as the third-biggest increase, relative to the size of the economy, of any U.S. presidential administration, according to a calculation by Eugene Steuerle, co-founder of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. Two other presidents, George W. Bush and Abraham Lincoln, had larger growth rates, both due to war spending. Trump? He just shoveled money out of our pockets (by "our" we mean residents of this county) into the pockets of hedge fund managers, CEOs of financial institutions and insurance companies.

Arguing over the debt limit legislation will bring Medicare payments, Social Security payments and infrastructure spending to a grinding halt. Of course, that's their objective. Here's the thing: If the Republicans retake Congress in 2022, be prepared for whiplash as these same spending hawks pass bills cutting taxes even more for those least in need. It won't help the national debt any, but it will surely gut the Build Back Better Act, with good things like protection for families with children, affordable day care, help with their hearing for Medicare recipients, paid family leave, and addressing the climate needs (many times greater than the help included in the Build Back Better Act, but it's a beginning). So have at it, newly-minted deficit hawks. Just keep fiddling while the USA — and the entire earth — burns.

Dan and Jan Blair
Joseph

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