

OUR VIEW

# Getting to know who's running

**B**ud Pierce, a 2022 Republican candidate for governor, visited Eastern Oregon recently with visits in Ontario, John Day and Baker City, and his campaign tour will surely be one of many by the host of candidates vying to become Oregon's chief executive.

Lots of promises are going to be made, wide-sweeping proclamations will fill the air and stories about the candidates will sprawl across social media and newspapers until final election results are tallied in November.

First, though, there will be a primary set for May when the long list of candidates will be pared down. All this political theater is a traditional part of the American process of democracy and we, as voters, should be pleased every few years we get that opportunity to meet those among us who want to be our representatives. Elections are truly the one key piece of our democracy.

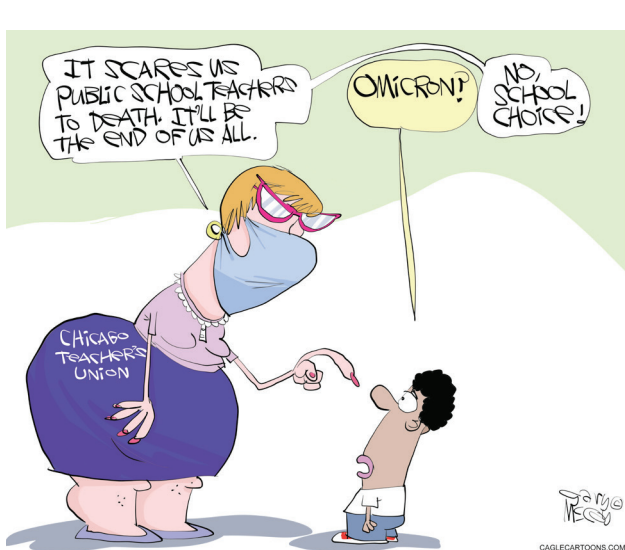
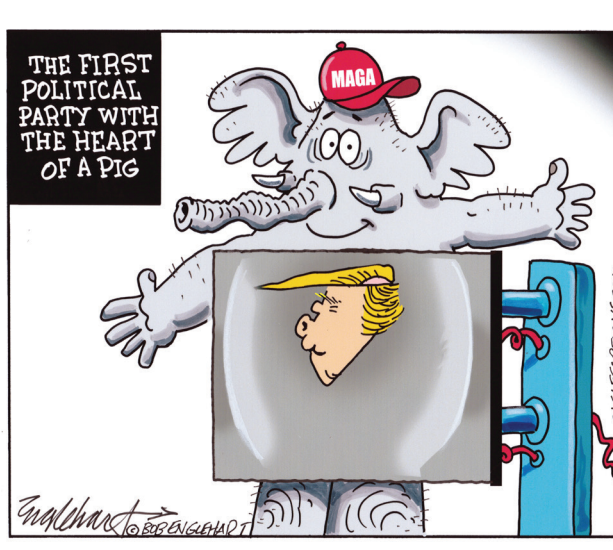
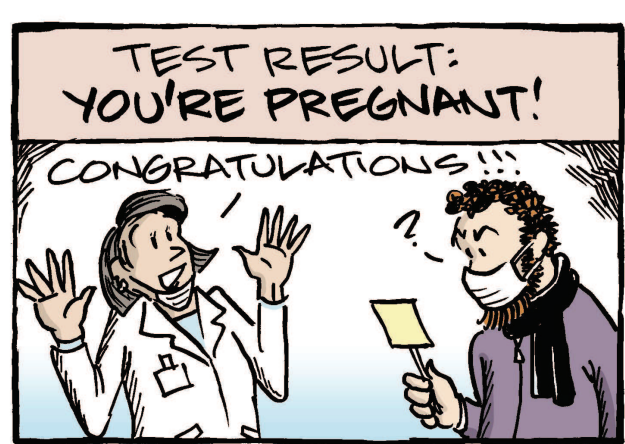
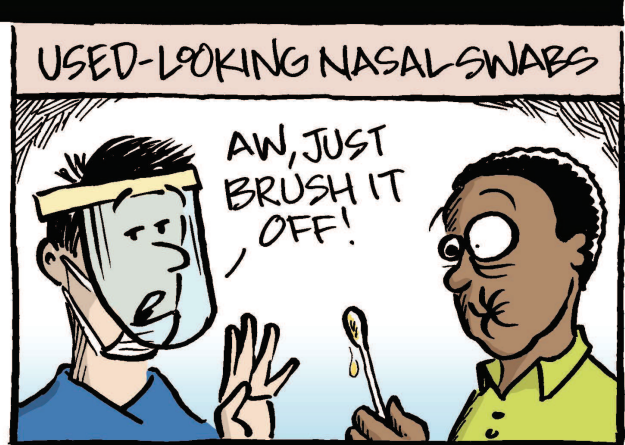
Yet that process, and our democracy, only works if people get out and vote. That has proven to be a real challenge for several years across the country as the number of people voting in an off-year election — a nonpresidential election — appeared to waver or decline.

The problem, while not a new one, is troubling. The founders in many ways designed our democracy carefully so that it could endure. A crucial part of their design was the notion that voters would, well, vote. Without widespread participation in the voting process, our democracy loses. That means residents lose.

Part of the obligation to be a citizen of the United States is to vote. Voters also have another responsibility and that is to carefully do their research on the candidates. Research, typically, doesn't mean what one hears on Fox News or CNN. No, it means actual research. It means studying a candidate's response to key issues, expecting your local news media to ask tough questions. When those tough questions are asked, it means listening very carefully to the response and then evaluating it.

Voting and elections are about democracy, but they are also about participation, both in the voting booth and before the first ballot is cast.

## SIGNS AN OREGON COVID TEST SITE MIGHT BE FAKE...



YOUR VIEWS

### Oregon needs an independent State Housing Ombudsman

If the Philadelphia Housing Authority operates anything like its Northeastern Oregon counterpart, the recent horrific roadhouse inferno was a tragedy waiting to happen. Given the HUD demographic's predilection for numbing substances; and given the non-existence of designated smoking stations; and given our inclement winters; and given the ease of disabling a smoke alarm — you get the picture. Here at our frozen outpost of the HUD Gulag, we've been begging since before Christmas to get our icefield of a parking lot plowed. Alas, our repeated entreaties have fallen on deaf ears, resulting in numerous near-accidents and stranded vehicles. I realize in this heyday of housing inequity, anything more than a tent beneath a freeway underpass is con-

sidered a luxury. One would hope, however, that kinder, gentler Oregon could rise above the lowest common denominator. Appointing a nonpartisan, independent State Housing Ombudsman and a statewide network of tenants' unions would be a good place to start. In the words of Robert Frost: Some say the world will end in fire/ Some say in ice/From what I've tasted of desire/I hold with those who favor fire/But if I had to perish twice/I think I know enough of hate/ To say that for destruction/Ice is also great and would suffice. **Ester Bentz Enterprise**

**La Grande's streets are not bad — they are horrible**

I read in the "La Grande Pride" news what the La Grande School District thinks needs to be improved or replaced and The Observer has reported about the school board

wanting to pass a bond. We have had a new Central Elementary School, beautiful new track, improvements to the high school and other improvements and changes made under the tenure of Mr. George Mendoza, the school district superintendent. We also have a 20-year \$31.5 million bond approved in 2014 that had a recent refinancing. The citizens of La Grande and the La Grande City Council need to give very serious thought to issues that need immediate improvements. I open with the street issue in La Grande. The streets are not bad — they are horrible. We have streets that are heavily traveled and dangerous. Our taxes are such that people are moving to towns surrounding La Grande to escape those taxes, so a bond issue for street improvement is out of the question. What is the answer? What is the priority? **Gary Feasel La Grande**

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