

OUR VIEW

Helping shape news coverage of key race

Voters, and Eastern Oregon voters especially, will be able to take advantage of an incredible opportunity to give feedback to media outlets regarding what they want candidates for governor to talk about through 90-minute virtual listening sessions.

The sessions, called "Let's Talk," will be hosted on a Zoom platform and consist of off-the-record input from voters about what they want to know about each candidate. The goal is for news organizations to furnish the public with viable reporting during the run-up to the election in November. Viable reporting means giving readers in-depth and useable information that serves the voters, not the candidates. The Observer will serve as one of the hosts of the events.

To get in on this opportunity, residents can go to "Let's Talk" at www.surveymonkey.com/t/8JV25WF to submit interest. The deadline, though, is Tuesday, Jan. 25. That means those who want to participate need to make sure they get their names in before the close of business Jan. 25.

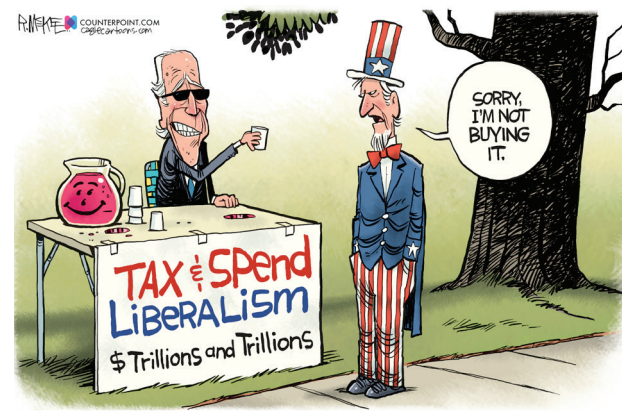
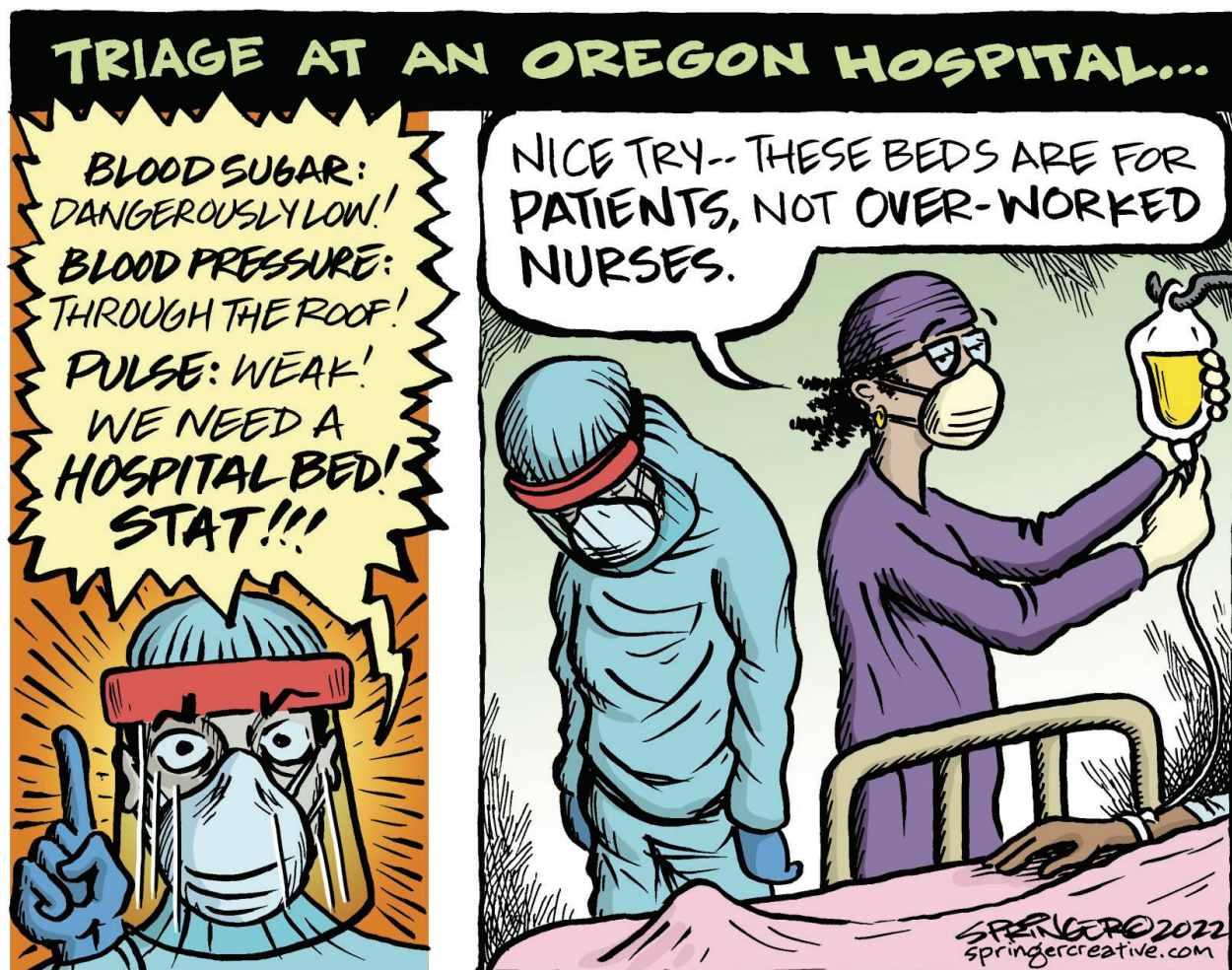
The event is sponsored by Oregon Capital Chronicle, a nonprofit digital news service in Salem, Rural Development Initiatives, a nonprofit, and the Agora Journalism Center, part of the Oregon School of Journalism and Communication in Portland.

The "Let's Talk" initiative is a good one, and we hope that readers will sign up so they can get their opinions aired in a private way that will help all news organizations across the state. We in the news business like to pride ourselves on our ability to know what voters and readers want regarding coverage of events such as a governor's race, but the fact is the more input we can get the better job we can do informing the public.

This new effort will give all of us the needed direction that can help navigate through what issues are important for the voter and what one is not. We can write all the stories in the world but if the key, essential information needed by readers and voters isn't there then we are not going to be successful in our mission to inform the public.

The sessions are good in another way. They will provide a platform for people to voice their opinions and concerns in a low-key, non-confrontational way that will help move our job as journalists forward.

The "Let's Talk" meetings are a good way for the public to get involved and will help the media do a better job on this important matter.



YOUR VIEWS

Voting rights bills will protect our democracy

One year ago, we witnessed an attack on our country: an insurrection by political extremists at the U.S. Capitol.

A mob of violent rioters defaced the Capitol Building and threatened the lives of the elected officials and staff working there — the core of American democracy. This was a pivotal moment for America and our fundamental promise of free and fair elections.

One year out from that horrible day, Congress has yet to secure the right to vote and the integrity of our elections — while state and county governments are passing laws to make it harder to vote. Hours-long lines and oppressive ID requirements are only the beginning, unless Congress acts.

The Senate must pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act; both bills are essential to the survival of the American experiment. The House of Representatives has already passed them. We can't let made-up Senate rules stand in the way of protecting our democracy.

Fighting for our democracy by passing voting rights legislation is one of the most important actions we can take as we commemorate this attack on our country.

Joann Dickson
La Grande

Bentz's claim of fraudulent election is illogical

Oregon's District 2 Rep. Clifford Bentz who represents a grand slice of Oregon is telling us, according reporting by EO Media Group, that the 2020 election was fraudulent. He cites information written in the Federalist that a group of people who had the money to do so donated funds to the Center for Tech and Civic Life.

First, the Center for Tech and Civic Life is an orga-

nization of and for election workers across the country. It offers courses for how to conduct safe and secure elections. Anyone can go into its website and check out the courses it offers for election workers, including the content of the courses. I suggest everyone do so before accepting Mr. Bentz's word that the Center for Tech and Civic Life acted to influence people to vote a certain way or for election workers to swing the election one way or another.

Next, I found an article from another organization that calls itself 2022 Influence Watch that has much information about what the Center for Tech and Civic Life has done. If the information is correct, it is specific as to where funding went to electoral offices around the country. I did not see any proof in the article that proves that the CTCL is in any way partisan. My problem with this article is that it starts out by naming the Center for Tech and Civic Life as a "left-wing" group.

There are several reasons I disagree with Mr. Bentz. One, the Federalist is, and always has been, a mouthpiece for the Republican party. Two, I find it illogical to infer that the Center for Tech and Civic Life turned the election in favor of President Biden. The CTCL provides information to election workers about doing their job fairly and effectively. One would expect that the influence of the CTCL would cause the election to be conducted fairly and effectively. It is not logical to say that President Trump lost just because of the training given. Anyone can check the content of the training to discern whether it favored any candidate.

My conclusions are: Giving a person or group a name such as "left-wing" or "right-wing" does not provide the validity or non-validity of that person or group. "Correlation does not equal causation" is still the case in any logical argument. I would also infer that Mr. Bentz believes that any election is fraudulent in which his candidate is not the victor.

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THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

Phone: 541-963-3161

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)

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

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

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

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