

OUR VIEW

Glad inquiry is in the past

About the best thing that can be said for the conclusion of an investigation by the Oregon School Activities Association regarding the use of racist remarks at a football playoff game last fall is it is over.

Last month, the OSAA released its findings on an alleged incident that occurred during a La Grande-Gladstone football playoff game in November. The OSAA found the allegations regarding the use of racial slurs by members of the La Grande team against the Gladstone squad could not be confirmed.

Another allegation, that an official identified a Gladstone coach by his ethnicity, was confirmed. The probe, though, found that the official later apologized to the coach during the game.

The OSAA review of the game lasted several months, and a third-party investigator was used to conduct the probe. Players and staff were interviewed.

While the OSAA could not substantiate the evidence of the use of a racial slur, it did recognize “that students, coaches and families were negatively impacted.”

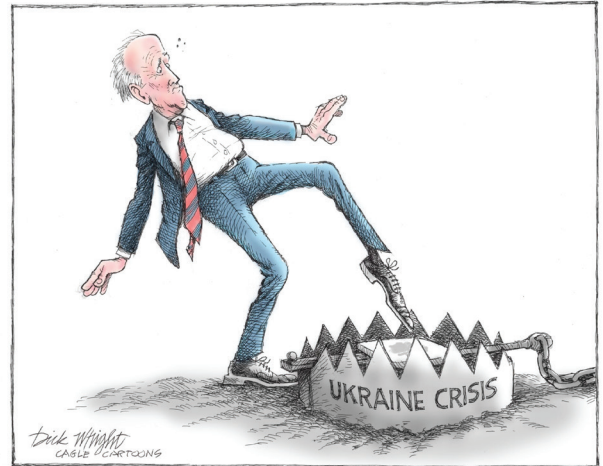
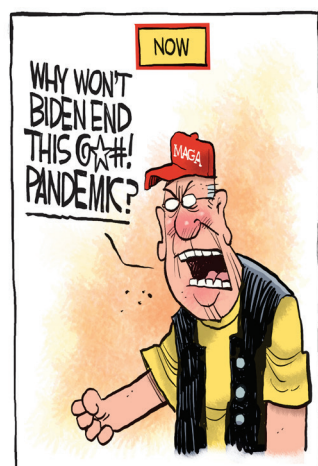
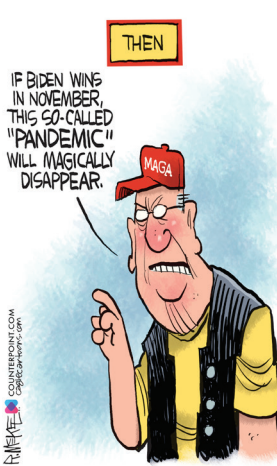
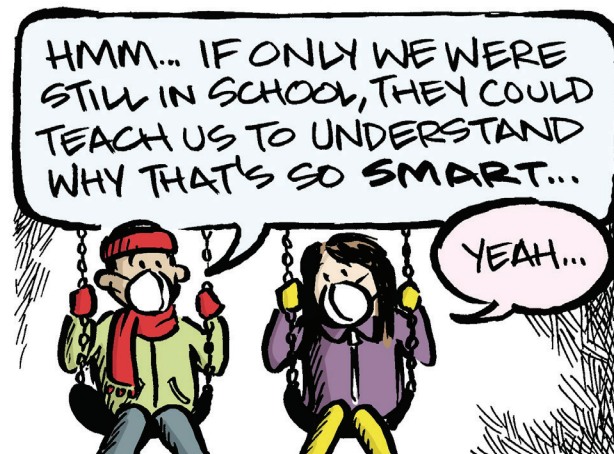
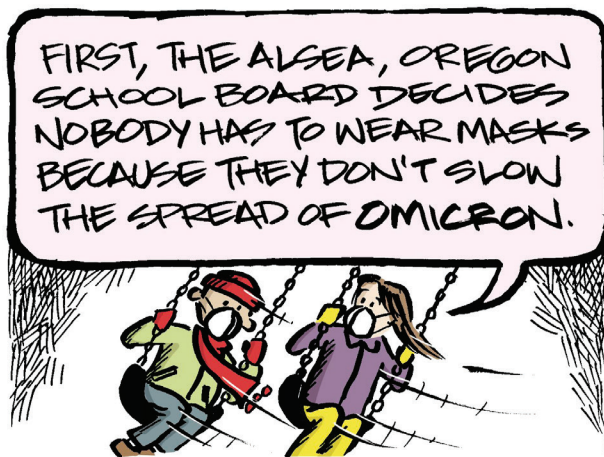
The entire episode was unpleasant but there are some bright spots. For one, it is clear the La Grande and Gladstone school districts worked together to find the truth in this matter. That says a lot about officials in both districts and should be a reminder to everyone that once emotions cool, clearheaded individuals are available to address such issues in a methodical way.

The OSAA should get some credit as well for tackling this controversial issue with professionalism and tact, while also staying focused on finding the truth.

No agency, no school official, eagerly seeks to experience such an episode as what was alleged at that November game. However, when such issues arise, it is gratifying to know that top leaders in state school districts — and the OSAA — will not shy away from investigating and working diligently to discover the truth.

While the investigation and conduct of the school officials in this matter were good, there is no getting around the fact none of this should have occurred in the first place.

That is why a focus on sportsmanship and equality should always be paramount at prep sporting events. We’re glad this incident is now behind us and hope that such episodes do not occur in the future.



YOUR VIEWS

Idaho Power avoids the full story

The headline in the Jan. 22 Observer “Power companies announce deal on B2H” doesn’t tell the full story. It should read: “BPA pulls out of ownership of the B2H; enters into transmission agreement.”

After 16 years of analysis the BPA (Bonneville Power Administration) decided that owning a portion of the B2H was not financially viable for them. Instead, in order to serve their customers in Southeastern Idaho, they will give some un-needed equipment and transmission rights in return for lower wheeling charges (the fee to move energy on other companies’ transmission lines).

In return, Idaho Power must absorb the BPA’s share of 24%, bringing Idaho Power’s total share from 21% to 45%, more than doubling their cost. The public knew the BPA was withdrawing from ownership of the B2H in 2019 when Idaho Power informed the state utility commissions.

In 2021 the Oregon Public Utility Commission told Idaho Power to recalculate B2H’s budget to show PacifiCorp’s 54% ownership and Idaho Power’s 45% ownership, adjusted for inflation. The budget of \$1.2 billion was developed in 2016. It is significantly out-

dated. In Idaho Power’s most recent filing to the OPUC in December, there is still no budget documentation. They say they will provide a Transmission Supplement with a detailed analysis in the first quarter of 2022. They must still be crunching the numbers, attempting to justify their ability to finance almost half the B2H transmission line.

Idaho Power expects us to accept that doubling their financial obligations will still be the least cost/least risk scenario for their customers. Meanwhile they continue plans to pillage the landscape of Eastern Oregon while serving landowners pre-condemnation papers for a project that is still years from approval. I don’t trust them and neither should you!

Jim Kreider
STOP B2H Coalition
La Grande

Wild and unspoiled land becomes more precious every year

In the legal battle over logging state forests, the counties want to cut more timber whether or not it affects “the greatest permanent value of those lands.” In Northeast Oregon we don’t have state forest land so much as private, i.e. Hancock Forest Management. Unfortunately, logging contracts awarded

on Hancock lands are being conducted in an aggressively destructive manner that leaves permanent damage.

Just above Cove, in 2021, the loggers went in and carved deep into the topsoil, uprooted and trashed non-timber species and created a biological desert right above Mill Creek. This was a steep but accessible hillside rich in plants, animals and birds. The destruction is heartbreaking to look at. I cannot imagine human beings willfully destroying so much in the name of harvesting some timber. Yet it seems to be the norm nowadays.

One of the only instruments proposed to mitigate this treatment in the future is the River Democracy Act. We need that to make up for Oregon’s inadequate riparian protection buffer on non-federal forests. The law states a 20-foot buffer is adequate, but in Washington and California it is wider and on national forests it is 200 feet.

Every day we are told about a shortage of workers in every field. Our workforce needs to move on from timber extraction. What little is left of our wild and unspoiled land becomes more precious every year. Lately it is being recognized for its benefit to mental health (which many nature lovers have been saying for centuries).

Mary Cooke
Cove

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