

OUR VIEW

Working to help those less fortunate

Area food banks and pantries need your help now more than ever. We've made it known many times on this page and in this space how critical we believe it is that area food pantries receive support. That's because we know that the struggle of hunger lingers all through the year.

During the holidays donations to food banks to help those who are less fortunate usually climbs. The season seems to deliver the right kind of sentiments for many of us and we want to help. That's the good news. The bad news is the need doesn't end after Christmas.

Rising prices and inflation are not making what is already a serious situation any better. As the cost of food rises, more people have discovered they need the kind of help they probably never imagined they would.

Many, many people across the state and in Eastern Oregon live on the fringe, between the working poor and the middle class. Those individuals are people you know — they are your neighbors and friends. Most likely not one of them ever believed they would be in a position where they look into the pantry and then glance at the checkbook and see they are going to have a real challenge making ends meet.

Is it unfair? Surely. Yet it is the situation many face across our great region.

Sometimes life intervenes to force people to face some unpleasant realities. Maybe a spouse loses a job or suffers a serious injury and is unable to work. Perhaps both parents are working full time but they still don't make enough to feed their families.

We live in one of the richest nations on earth. We have a bounty of agricultural products available. Every harvest season we can all drive around the valley and view farmers hard at work bringing in wheat, and yet we still deal with a problem of too many people in a food crisis.

The best way to help is to contact your local food bank or pantry and to find out what you as a resident can do. Maybe it is a donation. Maybe it is to deliver some extra food to the pantry.

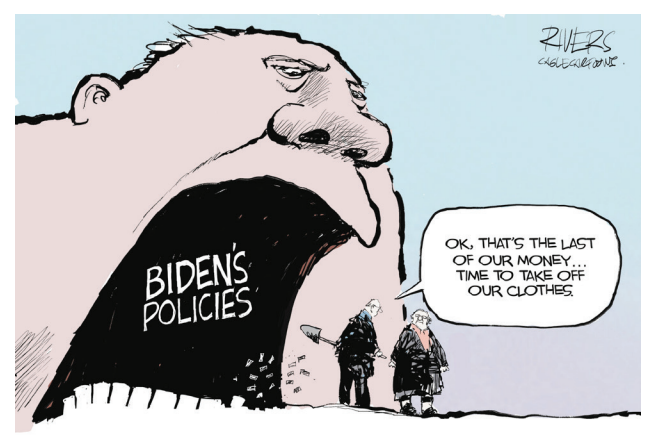
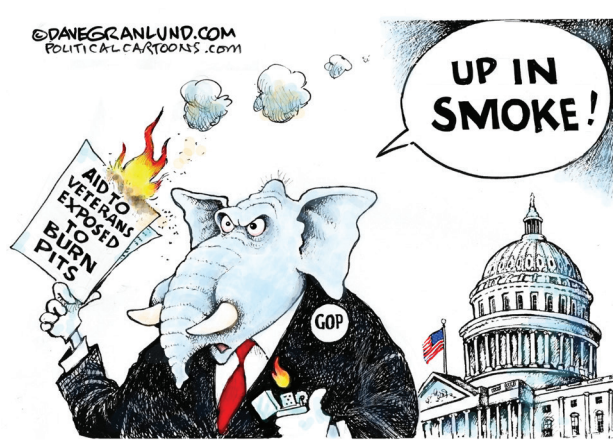
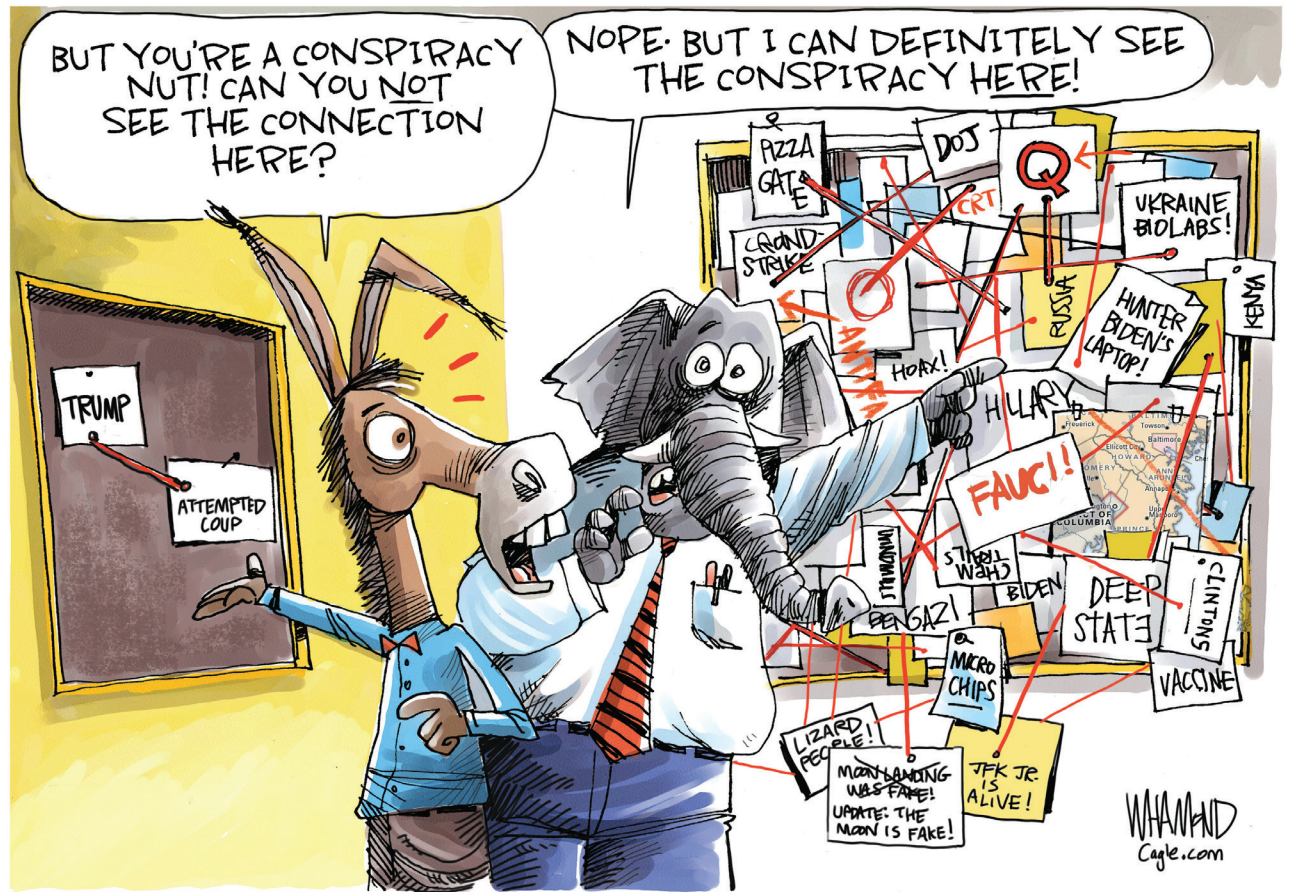
The struggle against hunger doesn't end with the holiday season. It continues through spring and into summer and the fall. So, if you can help out, contact your local food bank or pantry. Working together we can help those who are less fortunate.

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Collaboration is a lousy way to manage our public lands



RICK MEIS
OTHER VIEWS

I was intrigued by the OpEd Mark Webb wrote recently about collaboration. He makes common mistakes in his less-than-accurate description of what a collaborative should be if they are going to be done inclusively and effectively. If Mr. Webb believes what he stated in his opinion piece, he would understand that when it comes to public lands management, a collaborative would be unnecessary.

In practice, collaboration has become a process of playing two sides off against each other in order to create enough guilt in one or more parties that compromise is reached. The primary problem is that it is not based on sound science or best available data, thus eliminating the concept of best management practices and the long-term needs of the resource to maintain the natural values of the landscape into the future.

The use of collaboration has become a cop-out on the part of public land managers to not have to do the work required of them in order to achieve good management decisions. Agency budgets have been slashed repeatedly, making it difficult to do a good job, thus making collaboration a

fall-back tool. Collaboration has become a process that gives validity to those whose activities are either illegal, incompatible, or damaging to public resources. Those types of activity, using sound management principles, should be restricted. The goal of the normal data- and science-driven decision making process of land management agencies is to filter out input that lacks substance and thus should not be incorporated into management decisions.

Public land management decisions should be made using well-established legal and regulatory processes. So-called public interest groups on all sides use it as a way to raise money and their profile. The politically motivated use it to reach another successful failure by achieving the lowest common denominator.

Our public lands are integral to maintaining viable natural ecosystems. The most guilty players in collaborations are the so-called environmental groups who have chosen to defy everything they claim to stand for in order to curry political favor, new donations or something equally shallow. It is unconscionable. These groups should not be selling the future of our natural heritage down the river.

High-impact activities, whether industrial or recreational, have intensified to the point where they're no longer compatible with long-range

goals of agencies to meet their obligations of conserving the resource. A collaboration justifies misuse of the landscape. Best management practices, using science and best available data, should not allow high-impact users the unlimited access they desire, which squanders public land values.

Collaboration can only work if everyone agrees that it is about what is best for the long-term values of the resource. There are infinite examples of those entering into collaborative processes for all the wrong reasons, thus collaborations give bad results.

A retired educator and political science professor wrote that if the future is to be determined by citizen collaborations, then a parallel track should be implemented based on science that would evaluate natural characteristics of the landscape. This track should consider the long-term future of the natural resources and recommend management actions to protect and maintain these values so future generations will experience a natural landscape as we did because of the efforts of those who have gone before. Wait! Isn't that what current laws and regulations already require of land managers? Isn't that what groups involved in collaborations say they believe in?

■ Rick Meis, of Halfway, is a retired business owner who has been actively involved in wildland and wildlife issues in the Northern Rockies since the 1970s.

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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)

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Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214
Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

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

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