

OUR VIEW

# No toilets, no tourism

The campaign to secure \$3 million for the upgrade of water and wastewater infrastructure at the Union County Fairgrounds received a big boost recently when the county accepted a \$1 million outlay from the state.

The money pushes the effort for the upgrade almost to the halfway point and should be good news for elected leaders and residents of the county.

The water infrastructure upgrade at the fairgrounds is needed. The facility now has only one set of flushing toilets, and the \$3 million would allow officials to install more permanent restrooms. For now, portable restrooms have to be delivered for events at the fairgrounds. While that is a good stopgap measure it is not a long-term solution.

A long-term solution such as the water infrastructure upgrade is necessary so the fairgrounds can become a viable platform for an array of events.

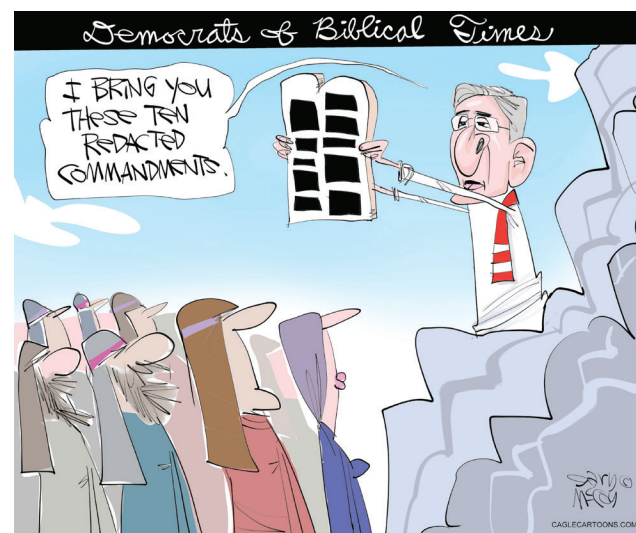
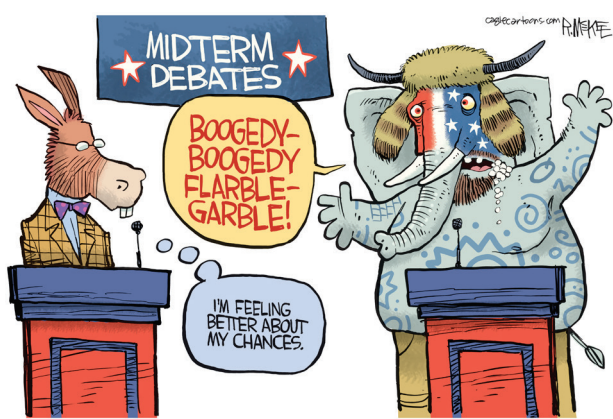
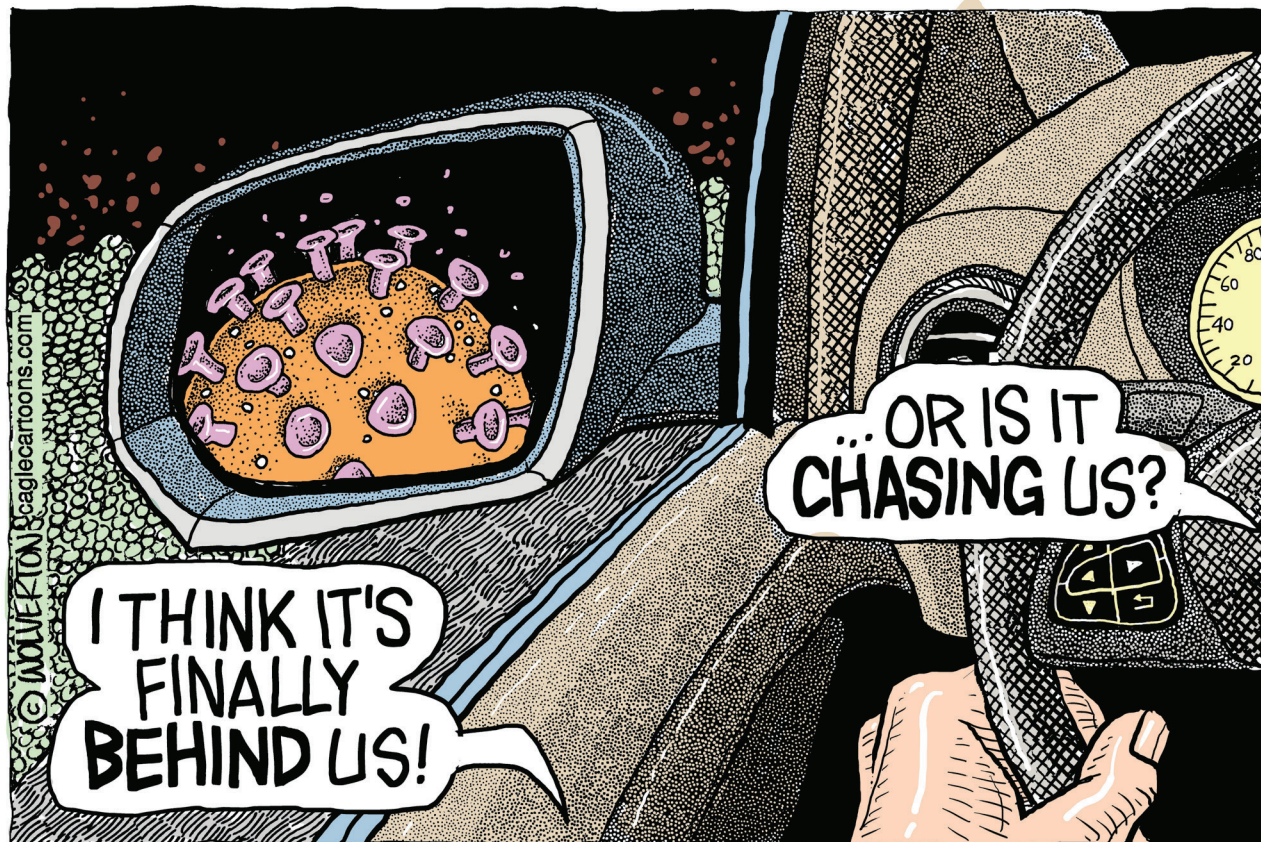
A community fairground should be a showcase for visitors and it should be a place that can attract big-name entertainers and other events. That kind of venue, over time, can become a mainstay for a community and trigger an influx of tourism dollars.

Money generated from tourism is a big deal. In 2018, for example, visitor — or tourism — spending in Eastern Oregon was more than \$300 million and helped fuel more than 6,000 jobs.

The Union County Fairgrounds could join such venues as the Liberty Theatre downtown as a place where tourists want to come. It could be a shining light for the town and county but it won't get there without basic working infrastructure like toilets.

In short, the \$3 million goal needs to be met as soon as possible. Union County Commissioner Matt Scarfo said he will push the Oregon Legislative Emergency Board — which meets next month — for help to find the last portion of funds to reach the \$3 million goal. We hope Scarfo is successful and we urge lawmakers on the Emergency Board to listen carefully to his pitch. We also encourage our representatives in the state Legislature to put a good word in for this necessary upgrade for our fairgrounds.

Working together, as politicians, residents and officials, we can reach the goal and create a prime-time venue at the fairgrounds that will continue to enhance our region into the future.



YOUR VIEWS

### Idaho Power's B2H would create unnecessary problems

"A clever person solves a problem. A wise person avoids it." — Albert Einstein

Idaho Power Corporation's proposed "B2H" power line is outdated and creates problems we'd be wise to avoid.

The B2H power line offers no benefits to Oregonians, only many burdens. We would endure permanent problems: damage and defacement to our hills, views, plants and wildlife. While there are many reasons not to build B2H, the most compelling to me is the increased risk of wildfire. Power lines are a common cause of fires.

At 6 a.m. on Nov. 8, 2018, a power line started the Camp Fire 8 miles from Paradise, California. One hour later, the fire ripped through the town of 26,000 people. That fire killed 86 people, scorched 155,000 acres and destroyed 19,000 buildings. Idaho Power wants to put B2H within a mile or two of La Grande. Did I mention that La Grande is far drier? We get about 18 inches of rain yearly, while Paradise receives 60.

Recent advances in technology, changes in economic factors and concerns about hacking, terrorism and our planet's health make long-distance power lines outdated. Local power production — like OTEC's community solar project — is safer and more secure.

Idaho Power Corporation's cleverness will cause unnecessary

destruction and risks to Eastern Oregonians. Let's be wise and avoid this project. Show your disapproval of this bad idea. Visit [www.stopb2h.org](http://www.stopb2h.org) for more information.

John Winters  
La Grande

### Urbanites unlikely to welcome wolves

I would have to say that reading the recent article on OSU proposing management changes on western federal lands that would ultimately result in more wolves and beavers gave me a chuckle if not a true belly laugh.

There is minimal chance that anybody west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains (actually the I-5 corridor) will sit back while "authorities" place wolves in their backyards. That is why I have personally suggested multiple times that Western Oregon should try that out ... also throw in some bears, cougars and more skunks. Point being some think it is OK for urbanites to force wolves, cougars and bears to overpopulate the rural areas on the east side of the mountains.

Just stop and imagine the cost to everyone to return wolves after years of peace and quiet for us (ruralites). It will take millions of our dollars to place, watch over, pay for damages while it's OK for wolves to eat baby deer and elk or an occasional beef cow. I am hopeful that OSU will consider others points of view and especially confer with Eastern Oregon ruralites who are truly

impacted by such decisions.

Ken Parsons  
La Grande

### As a veteran, I appreciate the VA health care system

I am writing this letter after reading an opinion submitted by another individual regarding health care in the United States. The author of this letter offered some pretty scathing criticism of the VA health care system. The author offered anecdotal scenarios describing horrible outcomes for several VA patients.

As a veteran myself who has accessed VA health care over the decades — I served with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in the Republic of Vietnam in 1969 and early 1970 — I would like to state that while no health care system is perfect, I have received very adequate and very comprehensive care from the VA. The VA caregivers I have encountered have all been very capable and competent clinicians. I have never had a bad experience in the VA health care system.

The waits for VA care are sometimes longer than one would wish here in Northeastern Oregon, but the waits are not as long as one would experience in a non-VA health care clinic.

As a veteran, I appreciate that my country thinks enough of its veterans to provide a pretty darn good health care system for veterans.

Thomas Berry  
La Grande

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