

OUR VIEW

# Divisions are accentuated when ignorance prevails

The event happened far south of Union County but a recent tour of legislative lawmakers through Malheur County to learn about economic development priorities in that section of our great state should be a prototype for local lawmakers.

The tour was spearheaded by state Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and included state Reps. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, Ken Helm, D-Washington County, along with state Sens. Chris Gorsek, D-Troutdale, Lew Frederick, D-Portland, Bill Hansell, R-Athena, Kate Lieber, D-Beaverton, and Lee Beyer, D-Springfield.

The ultimate goal of the tour was to familiarize lawmakers from different parts of the state with the unique challenges faced by Malheur County because of its location on the Idaho border.

Union County doesn't share a border with Idaho but the general idea Findley used as a base for the tour is the right one and our own elected officials should seriously consider something similar.

The state — and the nation — are politically divided. Those divisions are accentuated when ignorance prevails.

Oregon is a diverse state but the political battle lines often seem to be very wide and deep. Much of rural Oregon often feels cut off and sidelined by the more prosperous parts of the state. There is a growing perception that certain sections of the state — read urban Oregon — make the decisions. Those decisions are often out of touch with the reality on the ground in a place like Union or North Powder. What works in downtown Portland almost always fails in a place such as La Grande.

Added to the mix are a group of lawmakers who do not know the challenges faced in places like Elgin, and often legislation is passed that has unintended consequences for rural parts of the state.

One of the best ways to avoid those unintended consequences is to ensure legislators know and understand the different cultures of the state. Eastern Oregonians may not see problems and solutions the same way a longtime Portland resident does. Neither is wrong in their perception — just different.

Those differences can make us stronger as a state. Yet those who make the decisions with legislation need to understand how their judgments impact voters in every portion of Oregon.

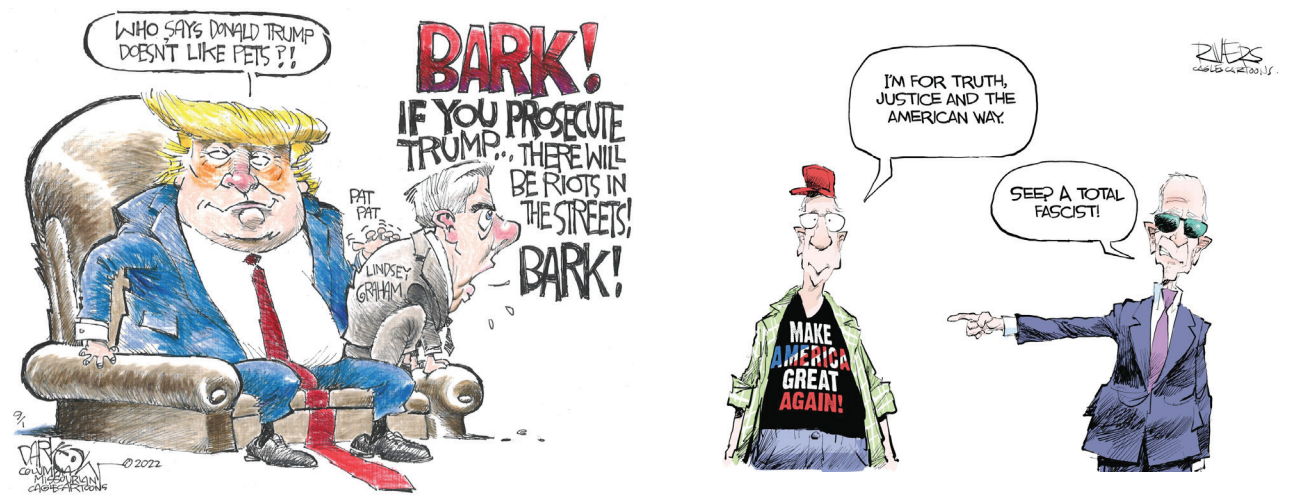
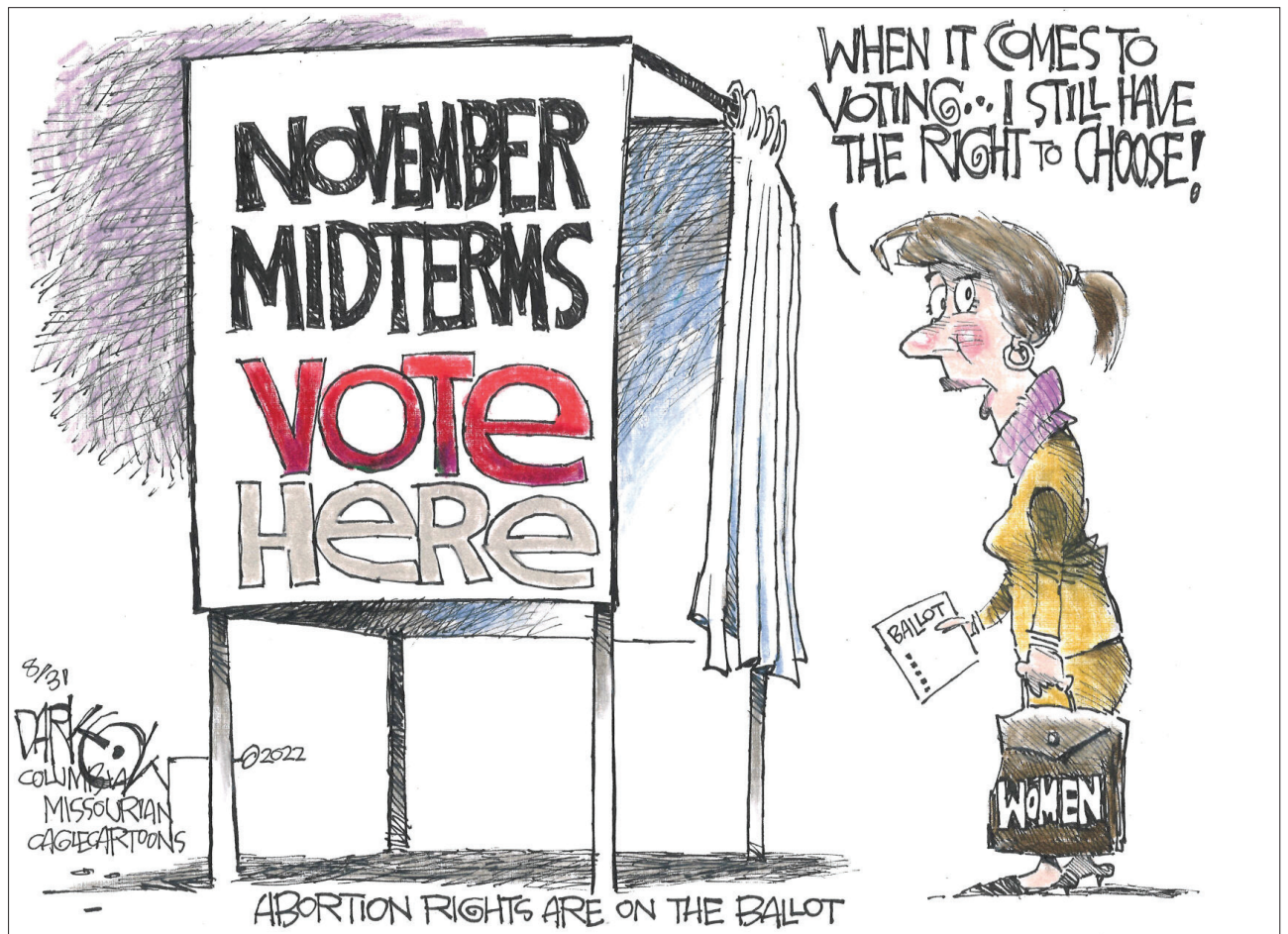
That's why tours such as the one sponsored by Findley make a lot of sense and would go, we believe, a long way toward closing a perception gap that continues to widen.

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## Sports coverage continues to evolve



**ANDREW CUTLER**  
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Turnover in the newspaper business is not a new nor unique element, and The Observer is no stranger to finding a way to overcome a temporary personnel shortfall.

We like to pride ourselves in our ability to effectively plan to avoid problems created when there is turnover and manage a series of competing priorities.

Recently, our news/sports reporter Davis Carbaugh moved on and that left us with a fairly sizable hole in our coverage matrix.

The timing of turnover is never good, no matter the time of year, and with the prep sports season about to begin in earnest, Carbaugh's departure was especially poignant.

We'll miss Carbaugh and wish him the best as he restarts a journey in higher education, but we felt we needed to give prompt attention to the high priority of prep sports coverage.

We were able to fill the news side of Davis' duties with the addition of Isabella Crowley. She's done an admirable job in hitting the ground running, providing timely, inter-

esting news coverage. But filling the sports duties has been a bit of a challenge. As a short-term solution to our prep sports coverage template, we've partnered with EasternOregonSports.com to provide nightly game coverage for our website. No doubt replacing a key employee at this specific time of year appeared to be a formidable challenge, but I think we were able to develop a resourceful, short-term plan.

There is also no doubt that making changes to our existing product — no matter how short term — can be unpleasant. Yet rather than bemoan the fact we faced a difficult obstacle we sought and captured ideas to create a stop-gap solution.

I've mentioned in this space before the effect COVID had on The Observer and our parent company, EO Media Group. It forced our hand on a few fronts and accelerated some timelines into decisions that — at the time — seemed unthinkable, and one of those changes is in our ability to cover sports like we did before the pandemic. Post-pandemic we are doing the best we can with the limited resources we have on staff.

Last year, I made the decision to utilize our website more and that's something that will continue. Our digital news coverage is 24-7, reported as it happens.

Game updates will be reported in real time, by EasternOregonSports.com, giving you your local sports results, hopefully, in the most timely manner. Print reporting will focus more on features and upcoming matches than on game coverage. Our sports pages will be devoted to telling unique stories on the athletes or teams in the area and preview some of the bigger games.

If you're a subscriber and haven't yet taken advantage of activating the digital features included in your print subscription price, call our customer service center at 800-781-3214 and activate your digital access.

These changes to our sports coverage continue to evolve and will take a little getting used to for all of us, but it offers the best of what The Observer provides — timely coverage and unique local stories in print and online.

To be as effective as a news organization as we can, it is important we take action on such issues as soon as possible. Our end goal, as always, is to provide you, the reader, with as good a news — and in this case, sports — package as possible.

■ Andrew Cutler is the interim editor of The Observer and the regional editorial director for the EO Media Group, overseeing The Observer, East Oregonian and four more newspapers in Eastern Oregon.

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