

OPINION

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YOUR VOICE

Good bye and gratitude

I am a Licensed Acupuncturist, small business owner and employer. I founded and operated Cascade Acupuncture Center, LLC (CAC), with clinics in Hood River and The Dalles from August 2005 until November 2020, when I sold it to a new owner. Since the sale, I have not been involved in any management, marketing or the CAC newsletter, but have been working as the clinical director. The sale was announced in *Columbia Gorge News* on April 28.

Over the last 16 years, I have served many roles with CAC and my final role over the past six months has been to provide the best transition I can to the new management team. I chose to sell and leave the company to have more private time and pursue other professional endeavors.

I am deeply honored to have been part of so many people's lives who have trusted me with their healthcare. It has been amazing to witness the many positive health improvements over the years and those memories are a big part of my life! I have fond memories of interacting with business owners at many chamber events facilitated by all Gorge Chambers. What an incredible local business community! Thanks to the chamber staff and business owners for all you do to serve the Gorge community.

CAC sponsored many local farmers markets over the years. I participated by having a booth and enjoyed speaking with people about acupuncture, purchasing local products from the farmers and becoming part of their community. I highly respect the work our local farmers do, thank you!

Finally, I wanted to thank the local medical providers who have placed trust in Acupuncture, the CAC clinics and referred many clients. It was an honor to co-serve these clients to reach their health goals.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with CAC and the wonderful staff who remain with the company. I am certain they will continue to serve the local community well with their healthcare needs. In gratitude,

Carola Stepper, LAc
Hood River

Don't ignore global interconnections

Last weekend, the meatpacking company JBS, which processes almost a quarter of U.S. cattle, was the victim of a ransomware attack. Preparing the U.S. ag industry to defend against cyberattacks means one more burden for already-beleaguered ag producers. Unfortunately, the costs of not doing so are too high: Higher prices, possible food



A western bluebird flies from a nest box in Lyle.

Gary Elkinton photo

shortages and tainted food supplies, and more.

As a high school social studies and electives teacher with classes in both agriculture and cybersecurity, I've been privileged to see the writing on the wall: These two topics will and now are colliding. I recognize the urge of many conservatives to emphasize personal freedom and the desire to go back to a simpler time with less government red tape, and maybe less concern about global events. However, important interconnected global realities now stare us in the face: Climate change (more droughts, early-snowmelt floods, and wildfires in Eastern/Southern Oregon), economic trends, worldwide internet and thus cyber-threats, and, of course, the pandemic. None of these respect national boundaries, let alone state and county ones.

Since I also teach a national security course, I'm especially hopeful people in rural Eastern and Southern Oregon will rise to the challenges before us by learning to better plan for, adapt to, and minimize these interconnected threats.

The world is moving — if not

forward, at least along. Protecting ourselves and our communities from climate change/extreme weather, economic downturns, pandemics, and cyberattacks takes courage; practice in seeing how aspects of our lives are interlinked, and humbleness in continued learning. Luckily, we have a rural Oregon “can-do” attitude to help.

Raz Mason
The Dalles

Raz (“Roz”) Mason is a high school teacher, interfaith chaplain, and climate consultant who lives in The Dalles.

Partnership worthwhile

The city-county partnership to build middle and low income housing off Rand Road in Hood River is an extraordinarily worthwhile project. Although I, too, am worried about the extreme density being discussed, we all know it is sorely needed.

Funding is sure to be an issue, and I have a suggestion: I know many people have some money set aside to invest in buying a house,

but there are no affordable houses available in Hood River.

Supposing these people could invest now and secure a future house for themselves, while also helping to jump start the funding issue? This might encourage loans and state and federal grants for the project, and hopefully speed up the building of these needed houses.

Alison McDonald
Hood River

Voting is a privilege

I just saw a headline “Fourteen States Have enacted 22 New Laws Making It Harder to Vote.” My first response is: “I certainly hope so!”

The freedom to vote is a privilege, and I fear that although we scream that from the rooftops, our actions betray us.

Mail-in voting? How much effort does it take to seal an envelope? Is this the extent of the civic duty we are instilling in our kids?

I propose returning to in-person voting. Voting should take effort, voting should require some sense of obligation, and maybe even a hint of accomplishment. Voting in-person involves a conscious decision

to show-up, interact with others, and respect our country for all the opportunities it provides to us.

In our nation of abundance, there is no reason that for one day, businesses cannot shut down or show some flexibility so that people young and old can come together, to stand in line, to be patient with each other, to put some physical effort and presence into their opinion.

And for those who do face a challenge, that their neighbors, friends, relatives, or even poll workers and volunteers take a little bit of extra time to check on those people to ensure that their ballot is cast.

Voting in-person involves a connection with the community. Voting respects our past and changes the future of our nation. Isn't that worth a few minutes of our time?

Lisa Evans
White Salmon

Biblical beginnings

It matters not what I write or say about the Hebrew Scriptures that would convince anyone of

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'Greater Idaho' means changes for Oregonians

■ **By Rodger Nichols**

IN THE RECENT OREGON PRIMARY election, five Oregon counties — Sherman, Baker, Grant, Lake and Malheur — voted that they would like to be annexed to Idaho. They join Union and Jefferson counties, which voted in favor last November. All the counties were heavily Republican and with relatively small populations. In every county in which it appeared on the ballot, the proposition passed, and Idaho Governor Brad Little and the Idaho legislature have issued statements of support for the idea. There are many hurdles in the way of such a change, but what if it does eventually take place? Here's what a Welcome to Greater Idaho pamphlet might look like:

The moment is finally here! After multiple votes and long-running court cases, you are now citizens of the great state of Idaho. Here's what you need to know right away:

- Starting today, you will have to pay a sales tax. All retail sales are taxable unless specifically

exempted by Idaho or federal law, and the booklet that describes the exemptions is 123 pages long. Current sales tax is 6 percent for the state, but cities are allowed to add another 2.5 percent, and it appears all of your former Oregon cities have met that criteria, so your effective rate is 8.5 percent.

- On the bright side, you'll pay less in state income tax. Idaho's top bracket is 7.4 percent on income more than \$10,417. Oregon's top bracket is 9.9 percent on incomes over \$125,000. And Idaho is lower in property taxes. But keep in mind you'll now be paying all three — property, income and sales. It definitely helps to be in Idaho if you're rich; not so much if you're poor.

- You're going to need a new Idaho driver's license. Over the next six months, we'll be mailing you your scheduled visit to the former Oregon DMV in your area for retesting.

- If your agricultural-based family has traditionally attended Oregon State University, be aware that you

will now have to pay out-of-state tuition. The difference? In-state tuition is \$11,715, while out-of-state tuition is \$31,215, just shy of three times as much. However, in-state tuition at Idaho's land-grant college, the University of Idaho, is just \$8,304, as opposed to out-of-state tuition, which is more than three times as much at \$27,540.

- And just as a reminder, all those of you who proudly proclaim you are fifth-generation Oregonians or more, you are now first generation Idahoans.

- The Assimilation not only changes the political distance between your old counties and a state capital, it also changes the physical distance. People in Hood River County, just 107 miles from Salem, will now travel 369 miles to Boise, more than three times as far. Klamath Falls is 235.9 miles from Salem and 416.8 miles to Boise, turning a four-hour trip into a six hour, 42 minute trip. The break-even point is about 10 miles east of Hermiston. To the west, closer to

Salem, to the east, closer to Boise.

- Socially, you are entering a much more comfortably conservative state. You won't have to worry about your gun rights here. We don't believe in much regulation, including outsiders imposing mask-wearing regulations. We're proud of our independence, even if it costs us. That's why we've had nearly the same number of COVID-19 cases as Oregon (190,900 to 199,356) despite having a population two and a half times smaller. And our death rate per million population was 1163.92, compared to Oregon's 617.87.

- You may encounter some bumpiness in personal relationships. Idahoans have a divorce rate of 4.03 percent to Oregonians' 3.36 percent.

- Your house may lose some value. Median owner-occupied home value in Idaho is \$192,300 to \$287,300 in Oregon.

- You'll discover the joys of hauling yourself to your local polling place to vote. You can get

an absentee ballot without any special eligibility requirements, but you'll have to make an application for each election and remember that it must be received by election officials no later than the 11th day preceding the election.

- Good news — Idaho state gas tax is 33 cents a gallon, three cents less than Oregon. Of course, as a good independent person, you'll enjoy getting out of that comfy car into rain, snow or blazing sun to pump it yourself, unlike the coddled drivers in Oregon.

- And great news if you own a small business. Minimum wage for your employees drops from \$12.75 to \$7.25 per hour, a 43 percent reduction in your wage expense.

- Finally, don't Bogart that joint. Don't even light one, because cannabis is illegal in Idaho for all practical purposes. Possession of even small amounts is a criminal misdemeanor.

Rodger Nichols is a long-time radio and newspaper journalist living in The Dalles.

Regional news for the Gorge

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