

SLANT

• It's party time for the "kayaktivists," some from Eugene, and "#ShellNo" protesters who delayed Royal Dutch Shell's push into the Arctic from Seattle last summer, perhaps contributing to Shell's decision Sept. 28 to indefinitely suspend drilling in that fragile region. Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley also cheered,

saying "This is tremendous news, and a credit to the many people who made clear that offshore Arctic drilling in unacceptable." In July, Merkley introduced the Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act of 2015. He said that "the U.S. should seize this moment to use its chairmanship of the Arctic council to develop an agreement among all Arctic nations to end offshore drilling in the Arctic." If no action is taken soon, the pressure to develop these oil and gas fields will return when the price of fossil fuels rebounds.

• **Retail pot goes legal** for the 21-plus crowd as we hit the streets this week, but will we see any dramatic changes in Oregon when the smoke clears? Probably not. Pesky issues remain to be resolved over the next few years, such as how do we deal with the thousands of drug convictions leftover from prohibition? How will police respond to drivers suspected of being under the influence of pot when blood tests are inconclusive? Will our overloaded courts really get some relief on their dockets? Will the highly profitable black market for weed really diminish? Or will we see organized crime turn to worse vices, as happened when alcohol was legalized? Regardless, Oct. 1 is a day to celebrate.

• A new coalition called "**Great Schools, Great Communities**" gives us hope for more money for public education in Oregon. The League of Women Voters of Oregon, Oregon Education Association, the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and the Oregon Center for Public Policy (the progressive think tank based in Silverton) are joining forces to offer a statewide forum series this fall and winter to talk about the problems and solutions for public education. A preview of the forums was held in Eugene Sept. 29. Coalitions like this kept property tax limitations out of Oregon until we fell to Prop 5. Now the LWV tells us that Oregon has one of the nation's shortest school years, while two-thirds of our fourth graders lack basic reading skills. Even after the 2015 Legislature upped education funding, the League laments, we still have a gap of \$2 billion just to achieve an "average education" program level. Fingers crossed for "Great Schools, Great Communities."

• Attorney Jen Gleason of **Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide** (ELAW), which is headquartered in Eugene, sends us another September success story for the global environment. A farmer petitioned the Green Bench of the Lahore High Court asking it to order the government of Pakistan to protect the citizens of Pakistan from climate change. The court declared that the government's "delay and lethargy" in implementing the Framework for Implementation of Climate Change Policy "offends the fundamental rights of the citizens which need to be safeguarded." Find a summary of this case and the two relevant orders at wkly.ws/22s.

• **Traffic fatalities** in Oregon are up 31 percent over last year at this time. It's bloody dangerous out there for not only drivers, but also cyclists and pedestrians. It's good to see agencies, local leaders and individuals are trying to do something about it. Eugene and Springfield mayors have joined the Mayors' Challenge for "Safer People, Safer Streets" and now some 140 citizens have signed a petition to the Eugene City Council this week to adopt the Vision Zero goal of "zero traffic fatalities and life-changing injuries." Vision Zero comes out of Sweden in response to the 1.2 million traffic fatalities around the world each year. Find a video about this comprehensive approach to traffic safety on our blog this week at wkly.ws/22r. Better Eugene-Springfield Transit (BEST) is helping organize local support for this initiative.

• **New census numbers** are out from the American Society of News Editors showing the continuing decline of journalism jobs in traditional print media. Employment numbers for full-time journalists at 1,400 daily newspapers dropped from a peak of 56,900 in 1990 to 32,900 in 2015. When it comes to employing journalists, free alternative newsweeklies appear to be doing better than dailies in most markets, though survey numbers for alt papers are not available. We looked back and saw we had six full-time editorial staffers in 2001 and while our staffing fluctuates over the years, we currently have five full-time staffers and one slightly over half-time editorial staffer. On a related note, the UO School of Journalism and Communication graduated a record 575 students last June. Most will not find newspaper jobs, which explains the growth of PR and advertising tracks within journalism.

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