

SPOKESMAN Opinion

OUR VIEW

Demystifying the newsroom

Hi. I feel like I should formally introduce myself after a month of helping build the new and reimagined *Redmond Spokesman* along with Tim Trainor, Leo Baudhuin and a whole slew of passionate people over at Central Oregon Media Group.

I'm Nick Rosenberger. I'm a reporter for the *Redmond Spokesman*. I've met many of you already, and let me just say it's been an absolute pleasure. I've loved getting to know this community and feel grateful to be in such a tight-knit and welcoming place.



Rosenberger

I wasn't entirely sure what to write about when I was first asked to write this column. But, knowing that trust in media is at an all time low, I realized this would be the perfect opportunity to open the newsroom to all of you and show you exactly what happens at Sixth and Deschutes.

Mostly, it's a lot of phone calls, emails, taking photographs, meeting with community members, attending meetings I think people should know about and hammering out words on Google Docs as I drink an unhealthy amount of coffee.

I'm just like many of you. I wake up on Monday mornings with an ever expanding to-do list and close my laptop on Friday evening hoping I've done the best I can. I know I'm not always perfect and I don't always ace every piece I write, but I try my best to be fair in my coverage, detailed and precise in my writing and accurate in my photography.

But, even as I try my best, media and communications is an imperfect system. There's typos. There's inaccuracies. There's mistakes. That's an inherent part of an industry that relies on hard and fast deadlines. It's difficult to interview someone for an hour or two and boil that down into a few quotes and a 500 word news story.

And, there will always be implicit biases. The way I was raised and the experiences I've had paint my worldview and, in turn, will always affect the way I use words and the way I gravitate towards certain stories no matter how hard I try to remain objective.

To be completely open and transparent, I feel I should explain my own background so that you can each make informed decisions based upon the stories I write and how I write them.

I was raised in about as central Portland as possible (in the King neighborhood), before moving out to Oregon City for high school. I was fed a constant IV drip of adventure stories growing up — blasting through Percy Jackson novels on repeat and ripping through covers of National Geographic. I decided, when I was around 13 years old, that I wanted to become a journalist.

After high school, I took a year off to solo backpack through Southeast Asia and Europe on money I'd saved up while cashiering at Safeway, then stuffed my head in books for four years at the University of Oregon. I continued to work through college, first changing oil at Valvoline then as a writing coach, reporter and managing editor of a magazine. I graduated in 2021 with double majors in journalism and international studies with minors in Arabic and Middle East-North African studies. From there, I spent some time at the *East Oregonian* in Pendleton, covering everything from education to rodeos, before going freelance and winding up here helping Tim build a newsroom.

I believe in diplomacy and hard work. I believe people are inherently good and want to do good for others, even if it can be misguided at times. I believe in honesty and being true to your word. I believe writing has the ability to bring people together and that local newspapers can act as a vehicle for greater understanding and communication.

If you see me around with a notebook and camera in hand, please feel free to say hi. Let me know what stories I'm missing. Let me know how I can better serve you and the people you care about. And, if you have something you want to get off your chest, please feel free to contribute to this opinion and editorial section. This isn't just my paper or Tim's paper or Central Oregon Media Group's paper — this is your paper.

■ Nick Rosenberger is a reporter. Email him at nrosenberger@redmondspokesman.com.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Nick Rosenberger reporting on an anti-vaccine rally, while working for the *East Oregonian* in Pendleton in September 2021.

Editorials reflect the views of the Spokesman's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright and Editor Tim Trainor.

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GUEST COLUMN

Put the kibosh on porch piracy

BY PAUL STEIDLER

America's crime wave is coming to your front door if it has not hit there already.

Porch piracy — the theft of brand-new, unopened items in packages lying just outside the sanctuary of your home's living space — is a hot trend. Especially coveted items include large-screen televisions, cell phones and anything from high-end retailers. But even the loss of items such as baby formula, prescription medicines and medical devices can be highly disruptive.

Ben Stickle at Middle Tennessee State University, one of the country's top experts on porch piracy, found in a thorough pre-pandemic study that 24 percent of 562 respondents surveyed in 49 states had been a victim of porch piracy. The pandemic drove a significant increase in package deliveries and, consequently, in thefts.

A late 2021 survey by SafeWise, a home security publication, put the figure at 64 percent, with 53.5 percent having multiple packages stolen. The hardest hit cities in 2021, according to SafeWise: Denver, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Seattle and San Antonio.

Despite the audacity of someone doing a near-home break-in to steal a package, statistics on porch thefts are likely underreported for several reasons. Retailers often do not want to upset a customer who suffered a theft and often just agree to replace the item.

Customers who suspect thefts may also hold off on making police reports because of the time involved, especially if the item is insured or replaced.

It is time to get tough on thieves who commit these crimes in broad daylight. Even door cameras are not a deterrent as perpetrators can easily cover their faces with a hoodie, baseball cap or other clothing.

Like many other crimes, the poor and the middle class are most affected by porch piracy. The well-off have homes farther from the road, where crimes are less likely to occur, and they can afford devices and services where packages can be safely stored. The poor and middle class must worry about nefarious actors taking hard-earned, valuable items.

And we all should be concerned about porch pirates becoming emboldened and moving to bigger crimes.

It is imperative to send a message that porch piracy is unacceptable and not worth the risks to those contemplating it.

Prosecutors should have the flexibility to treat porch piracy as a felony. Yet federal law applies only to thefts from the U.S. Postal Service, which delivers 32 percent of the country's packages.

Stealing a Postal Service package can mean up to five years in jail and a \$250,000 fine. Some thieves know to go after non-Postal Service packages as the penalties will be significantly lower, i.e., for trespassing or a theft misdemeanor.

States are already taking action. In January, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed the Defense Against Porch Pirates Act, which allows prosecutors to

seek fines up to \$15,000 and/or three to five years of imprisonment. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear signed legislation in June that toughens penalties as well. Texas and Georgia did so earlier.

Congressman Dean Phillips of Minnesota has introduced the Porch Pirates Act in the House of Representatives. It would treat the theft of packages from private carriers the same as the theft of packages from the Postal Service while ensuring prosecutorial discretion. The measure, introduced in May, already has a bipartisan group of 70 co-sponsors, 48 of them Democrats.

The congressman is spot-on in his call for swift action to deter these escalating crimes.

"Porch piracy is an increasingly dangerous crime as more Americans, especially our seniors, rely on delivery services for vital necessities such as medicines and groceries. American consumers lose hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars as victims of this crime," Phillips said.

Strengthening penalties against porch piracy, as would happen under Phillips' legislation, is an overdue, common-sense action necessary to protect American homes. It merits bipartisan support, as it has already received in many states.

Putting in place the same, long-standing penalties pertaining to Postal Service packages will deter crimes and protect Americans, especially the middle class and poor.

■ Paul Steidler is a senior fellow with the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. He wrote this for *InsideSources.com*.

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Redmond

Mayor George Endicott: George.Endicott@redmondoregon.gov, 541-948-3219

Deschutes County

County Commission Chair Patti Adair: Patti.Adair@deschutes.org, 541-388-6567

County Commission Vice Chair Tony DeBone: Tony.DeBone@deschutes.org, 541-388-6568

County Commissioner Phil Chang: Phil.Chang@deschutes.org, 541-388-6569

Your Legislators

Rep. Jack Zika (District 53): 503-986-1453; 900 Court St. NE, H-387, Salem, OR 97301, Rep.JackZika@oregonlegislature.gov

Sen. Tim Knopp (District 27): 503-986-1727; 900 Court St. NE, S-425, Salem, OR 97301, Sen.TimKnopp@oregonlegislature.gov

State

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

Federal

President Joe Biden: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart

Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District): D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97505; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.

WRITE TO US

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Guest columns: Your submissions should be between 600 and 800 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere.

How to submit:

- Email is preferred: news@redmondspokesman.com
- Or mail to: 361 SW Sixth Street, Redmond OR 97756