

Let a commission redistrict

Once again Oregon is going through the sausage-making process of redistricting the state's legislative and congressional districts. Sausage-making is never pretty.

This year's redistricting process brings to light two political altruisms: number one: to the victor go the spoils; and number two, just because you *can*, doesn't mean you should. The Democrats hold supermajorities in both houses of the state legislature, they were always in the driver's seat regarding redrawing state House, state Senate and U.S. House district boundaries.

A group of former Republican lawmakers have filed a lawsuit to block the "egregious partisan gerrymander" redistricting they consider illegal.

At a time when everything is up for debate, when some are ready to litigate to stop what they don't like and those on the other side have votes on their side.

There is nothing more political than redistricting—one party or the other can secure legislative and congressional seats for a decade or more.

It is exactly these battles that turn the average citizen off of politics and government. The people should trust that the playing field is level and fair for all. When one party is in control, such as this year, the process gets twisted—counties and cities are split between districts. That kind of redistricting does not serve the people.

It is time to take the redistricting process out of the hands of politicians and place it in the hands of an independent commission.



A commission should be comprised of academics, citizens and non-partisans—effectively a commission whose members will not benefit by how district lines are drawn. The commission should be appointed by the state Supreme Court who would have to give the final sign off of any final redistricting.

Districts drawn by such a commission would be more equitable, ending the era of safe seats for any party. Elections should not be coronations, instead they should be the result of sober, sane campaigns debating ideas. There are conservative parts of the state just as there are liberal parts of the state. Oregon's voters are generally centrists. If a party wants to win a district historically won by the opposing party, fair and balanced redistricting will level the field, if the parties run candidates palatable to voters.

The future of Oregon depends on all sides working toward the goals of improved quality of life for all and a successful business climate. Oregon worked best when the legislature was evenly divided—lawmakers had no choice but to compromise.

Redistricting by an independent commission would be a big step toward returning common sense to the legislature.

—LAZ

The spirit of volunteerism lives

By MATT LAWYER

Saturday, Oct. 9, was not a typical Saturday morning for many of McNary High schoolers. Rather than sleeping in or enjoying the next trending show on their favorite steaming service, students from McNary's Leadership program and the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) met to complete a service project the week prior to homecoming.

Miranda Colman, a senior at McNary, City of Keizer Youth Councilor and secretary of the Claggett Creek Watershed Council (CCWC), wanted to do a community project. She felt it was important to give back to the community prior to homecoming and felt a project was a great way to kick off spirit week.

Working with the CCWC and the Keizer Parks Department, she organized and developed a plan to add the recycled wood chips from the Big Toy to the playground at North View Terrace Park.

Parks staff had the wood chips pre-staged in the parking lot of the park and volunteers quickly spread all of the material out at the playground. They reduced the distance under the slides and the swings and freshened up the main play areas.

JROTC Master Sergeant Javiar Martin-Vinas empowered his cadets in serving as project leads. They orchestrated the workflow and guided the placement of the wood chips. McNary Leadership and JROTC had a well-choreographed method of filling wheelbarrows, dumping in the appropriate areas

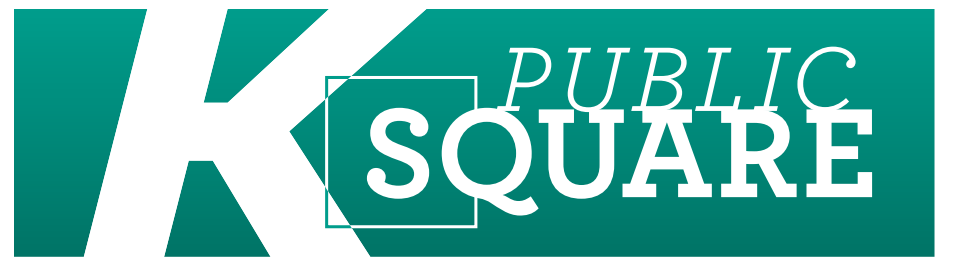


and then spreading the material efficiently and effectively.

The project was scheduled for two hours. The efficiency and expertise of these young people expedited the process and they were complete in just one hour. This allowed Master Sergeant Martin-Vinas to barbeque for his cadets. Each year the cadets have to raise funds to participate in JROTC events and competitions. This year, Master Sergeant Martin-Vinas had challenged them to reach a certain fundraising goal. He promised a barbeque for the success. Having met their goal, Master Sergeant Martin-Vinas took this opportunity to enjoy a beautiful day in the cool sun after a service project. In the spirit of community, he offered his barbeque to the leadership students and others that came to help.

As the day wrapped up, the students were throwing a football around and enjoying some time in the park. The spirit of volunteerism is still very much alive, especially among the more than 30 amazing high school students and others that chose to give back and spend a day in the sun.

(Matt Lawyer lives and volunteers in Keizer. He is a member of several city committees.)



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Commitment to equity and anti-racism

To the Editor:

Re: My position on Resolution No 202122-2:

While I deeply continue to be concerned about the issue of addressing white supremacy and racism, but I am more concerned about our district and board's ability and credibility to sustainably undertake this task at this time. Furthermore, I am concerned about continued alienation of our large sections of moderate community who are wrongly labeled as supremacist, race traitors, threatened, shamed, doxed, or further alienated or made invisible or discounted in this discussion.

I think this is an important issue as we are sitting on top of a dangerous pandemic and any fanning of distrust, divisive rhetoric or false accusations can increase and accelerate the risk of health and safety in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic.

I believe any attempts by any groups to hijack, weaponize and stoke the flames of our primal fears around white supremacy and racism will only inflame the synergistic effects and cause more harm to the vulnerable communities already suffering.

While I am committed to working to heal the racial divide and address this for the sake of our nation and our children, I will not be a party to a plan that can divide my community and cause more harm. The real hard question is how do we make critical changes in the policies that will address the problems of educational inequities, helping our students catch up the learning losses that has disproportionately impacted communities that have always been left behind?

This is a time for us to calm our community, bring groups together and help humanize each other. Hence I will not be able to support this resolution at this time.

I have sent a detailed email to our superintendent explaining my position.

Satya Chandragiri, MD
Salem

(The writer is the Salem Keizer School Board director for Zone 4.)



Uphold the oath

To the Editor:

Recently, while asleep, I experienced walking a steep, high mountain trail that dead-ended only to have the return path blocked by a slide. I could jump and risk death or starve. Thankfully, I awoke to a safe bedroom in Keizer.

The dream just may have been inspired by political events where one political party follows a leader who's indicated he wants to take our nation to an autocratic form of government. Meanwhile, the other party says it wants to serve all Americans through "social infrastructure" enhancements but cannot agree among its own members to pass legislation that'd accomplish such objectives. All and more of the same are enough for a mere mortal like myself to acquire a regimen of nightmares.

So, our elected leaders bicker and fight among themselves, day after day, year after year, while the nation (and state, too) lingers in a kind of a national stalemate where it often seems that only the wealthy make gains. As a result, those of us who care what becomes of our nation wring our hands in helpless distress, nostalgically recalling the days when our politicians were adequately mature, secure enough in themselves to make decisions, dedicated to compromises to keep the nation afloat, with practiced values that exceeded more than acquiring more power, more money and more re-elections.

One answer to what ails us is to elect a new slate of politicians who've proven they can get along with others, recognize fact from fiction, and do the hard and responsible work of governing. Opinion also leads one to believe we need term limits at single numbers, requiring those representatives who leave their voting district for another state to resign.

These conditions appear vital to positive futures for our children and coming generations. Meanwhile, we must insist on and demand of those in public office that they uphold their sworn oath of office.

Gene H. McIntyre
Keizer

KEIZERTimes

WHEATLAND PUBLISHING CORP.
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NEW DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTION PRICING:
\$5 per month, \$60 per year

YEARLY PRINT
SUBSCRIPTION PRICING:
\$35 inside Marion County
\$43 outside Marion County
\$55 outside Oregon

Periodical postage paid at Salem, Oregon

PUBLISHED
EVERY FRIDAY
Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303