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Stop the kangaroo slaughter

Some older runners may recall a time when kangaroo skins were used in some running shoes, but are surprised to learn that while diminished, the use of these wildlife skins is still a big part of the athletic shoe industry supply chain.

Adidas, New Balance, Puma and even Oregon’s own Nike, the iconic brand founded by Phil Knight and Bill Bow-erman, are end users of these skins for about 70 models of soccer cleats.



EMILY
AhYOU

Most of us find kangaroos charming. They’re sociable box-ers. The females carry their babies around in a pouch. They pose no threat to humans. The recent catastrophic fires in Australia called attention to these remarkable creatures, alerting the world to the effects of climate change and their fragile existence when their habitats are aflame.



JOSH
MARQUIS

Even before the fires raged, these iconic sym-bols of Australia were the victims of human callousness and cruelty.

The government blesses an annual massacre, conducted by commercial hunters, of upwards of 2 million kangaroos per year. The hunting practices are ruthless, often occurring at night, with the hunters shining a light on the mar-supials and trying to shoot them in the head. If the victim is female, and lac-tating, there’s an additional casualty:



Associated Press

Kangaroo leather is used to make some soccer cleats.

IT’S TIME FOR NIKE TO BLAZE A HUMANE PATH AND HELP PUSH THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY OUT OF THE BUSINESS OF MASS WILDLIFE KILLING. JUST DO IT.

a “joey” yanked from the pouch and decapitated or swung by the legs onto a rock to bash in its head.

Just as America protects the bald eagle, Australia must do better when it comes to kangaroos. The recent fires are a reminder of what’s at stake.

California has banned the sale of shoes containing kangaroo leather, but buyers can still find them. But most consumers remain largely unaware of their role in wildlife exploitation, since the athletic shoe industry doesn’t often explicitly label its fabrics.

China has finally acknowledged that the rest of the world is repulsed by the dog-meat industry there, and we should expect companies like Nike, which high-light their social consciousness in adver-tising and as part of their corporate culture, to adapt and end their role in driving the slaughter of kangaroos. Nike and other companies already offer soc-er cleats made from synthetic or plant-based fibers.

There was a time when we slaugh-tered bison by the billions and hunted other species into extinction. That is an ugly era in our treatment of wildlife, and the kangaroo slaughter seems more than a little bit misplaced in the 21st century.

Corporate talk of sustainability and social consciousness must have practi-cal features. Those representations fall flat when you consider the company is behind the largest mammalian slaugh-ter of wildlife in their native habitats in the world.

The slaughter of kangaroos plays no legitimate role in Nike’s corporate cul-ture. It is instead something that any sane person or company would conceal and minimize. But in our era of global communications, there’s no way to hide a body count of this scale.

It’s time for Nike to blaze a humane path and help push the entire indus-try out of the business of mass wildlife killing.

Just do it.
Joshua Marquis, the former Clatsop County district attorney, is director of legal affairs for Animal Wellness Action. Emily AhYou is Oregon state director of Animal Wellness Action.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just asking

It’s interesting that President Donald Trump recently vowed that no anti-fas, terrorists or left-wing radicals will be allowed to deface or destroy federal statu-ary or property on his watch without fac-ing massive U.S. Department of Justice prosecution and punishment.

In nearly the same breath he explored the addition of his own image to Mount Rushmore, which is a federal monument.

It’s been revealed that on the Fourth of July the governor of South Dakota presented President Trump with a large sculpted model of Mount Rushmore, with his face added alongside those of Wash-ington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln. (A technicality: How could his “hair” be safely cantilevered over his brow?)

Just asking, but if that can even hap-pen, who’ll pay for it? President Trump himself? The Republican Party? Vladimir Putin? Or all of us?

P.S.: Damn my eyes, but I recall the Taliban dynamiting statuary they despised.

R.D. SMITH
Gearhart

Short-term fix

The Oregon economic unemployment compensation system has one major shortcoming that fouls the entire process: Historically, major safety net programs are tormented by some people seeking weak-nesses in the system to allow them to make fraudulent attempts to obtain money they are not entitled to.

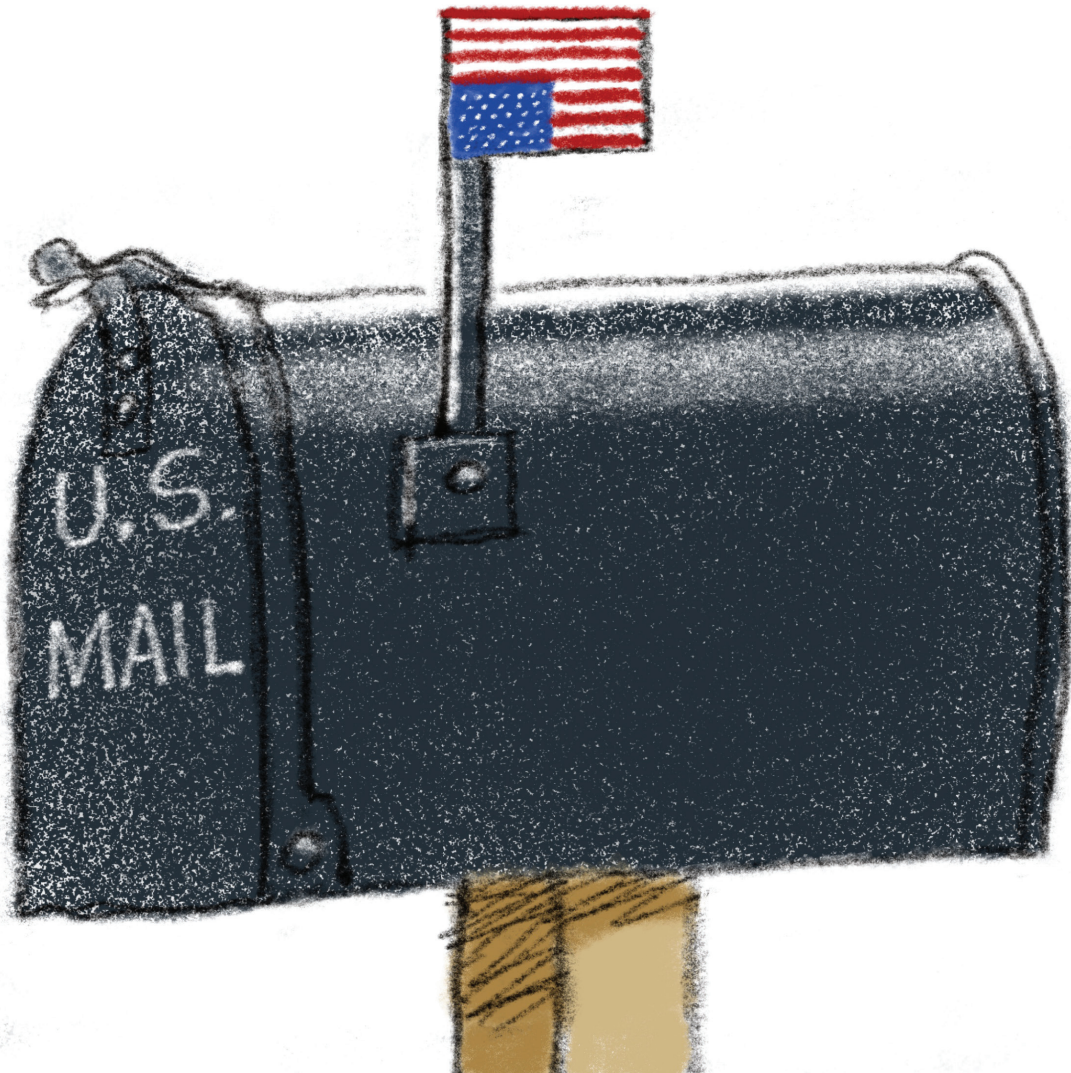
Qualified applicants seeking benefits should be able to go to an unemployment office in person and present a 100% reli-able photo ID — a new Oregon driver’s license or a current U.S. passport — along with verifiable employer ID info from the employer they were dismissed from. State tax records could be accessed to determine if taxes were paid to the applicant in the recent past from the employer.

If the applicant and employer are ver-ified as legitimate, the governor could negotiate with banks doing business in Oregon to accept a state guarantee to the bank to pay funds to an applicant, with the state directly reimbursing the bank after normal steps to satisfy unemployment compensation requirements the current computer system cannot now process in a timely way are completed.

The banks would need to be compen-sated with a small profit for this service. However, it is a state failure the current system cannot cope, and the state needs to find a shortcut to provide fast cash to qual-ified people.

I would expect problems with appli-cants or employers not having verifiable ID, along with amount to be advanced. Doing nothing now is unfair to quali-fied people. A short-term fix is better than doing nothing now.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE
Warrenton



LETTERS WELCOME

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Ashamed

In response to Tom and Siv Barnum’s letter “Unwarranted” (Aug. 6, The Astorian): They talk about Jeff Bryant’s complaints about the graffiti in Portland. I think Bryant saw what I did, before some of it was closed up.

The Barnums also felt the federal mil-itary-style response was not justified. The feds stopped people who broke in and started a fire to burn a building down; I guess the Barnums felt that would be OK. And as for the tear gas, the feds used that to stop a riot.

What about the officer who was hit with bottles and rocks? That must be OK. But if they are peaceful protesters, why would they throw bottles and rocks?

I grew up in Portland, and my sister

still lives there. She will not go downtown due to the protesters. I am ashamed by what has happened to the city I grew up in, done by a few people who have noth-ing better to do than destroy Portland.

Tom Barnum, why don’t you go down-town the next day after the protesters, and do something?

EDWARD COX
Ocean Park, Washington

Who is to blame?

It’s telling that The Astorian gave Sen. Betsy Johnson the headline quote for the Aug. 11 article on computer upgrades at the Oregon Employment Department, “No urgency and no leadership.”

The paper also pictured her at work at

her desk, looming larger than the Dem-ocratic governors mentioned in the arti-cle, who were given small mug shots all linked together, off to the side, as though they might be part of a nefarious cabal.

The implication is clear: Democratic governors bad; Betsy Johnson good. Never mind that Johnson is a Democrat in name only, who votes Republican on important issues like cap and trade and gun control.

More to the point, Johnson, as the arti-cle states, was on a “budget subcommittee overseeing the employment department from 2009 through 2019.” That puts her directly in the line of fire for blame as to why monies to be used for revamping the computer system were not taken advan-tage of during that time.

It is the duty of lawmakers on such committees to bring matters of urgency to the attention of the governor, who may be busy frying bigger fish. Unless she can produce a stack of emails or phone records showing that governors ignored her pleas to fix the employment depart-ment’s computer system, her remark that the current problems with that department resulted from “no urgency and no leader-ship,” is one of self condemnation.

Johnson took the low road of blam-ing others instead of taking at least par-tial responsibility for a problem she could have helped avoid.

ROGER DORBAND
Astoria