

Hood River News

JOE PESHOW
Publisher/President,
Eagle Newspapers, Inc.

CHELSEA MARR
General Manager

JODY THOMPSON
Advertising Manager

DICK NAFSINGER
Publisher, Emeritus (1933-2011)

TOM LANCTOT
Past President,
Eagle Newspapers, Inc.

KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
Editor

TONY METHVIN
Columbia Gorge Press Manager

DAVID MARVIN
Production Manager

Subscription \$42 per year in Hood River trade area. \$68 outside trade area.



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
ASSOCIATION



Printed on recycled paper.



OREGON NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Official Newspaper, City of Hood River and Hood River County
Published Every Wednesday & Saturday by Hood River News,
P.O. Box 390, Hood River, Oregon 97031 • (541) 386-1234 • FAX 386-6796

Voting rolls

*Give automatic DMV
method a pass, for now*

Driverless cars may be a thing of the future, but do we need more clueless voters?

Here's why we ask:

As the Oregon Legislature settles into the new session, among the slurry of proposed legislation filling legislators' trays are plenty of issue- or program-specific ideas.

One piece of proposed legislation now before the Oregon State Legislature is HB 2177, put forth by Secretary of State Kate Brown. It would automatically register to vote all eligible citizens who apply for a driver's license. A similar proposal failed in 2013, and this one needs a long and critical look.

Meanwhile, another electoral question, that of Independent Party status, complicates the matter.

First, HB 2177: in a nutshell, it "directs the Department of Transportation to provide Secretary of State with electronic records containing legal name, age, residence and citizenship information and electronic signature of each person who may qualify as elector as prescribed by secretary by rule."

Brown estimates that up to 300,000 more people would be added to the 2 million voter rolls — a significant increase and, on the surface, a welcome thing.

Opponents exaggerate in saying that it replaces all means of registering a vote. You would still be able to go to your County Clerk's office and fill out the form; after all, not all drivers are voters, and not all voters are drivers. Some people might prefer the participatory method, and the law would not change any existing state or federal law regarding signing up to vote. HB2177 would rely on state records to ensure that only those with a "C" for citizen next to their names actually become registered, but those who apply for a license would receive a postcard asking them to opt out of it. State officials are confident drivers would comply with the law.

(No offense to aficionados of conventional mail, but in 2015, is a postcard the best way to get people to respond? Secretary of State Spokesman Tony Green says it is, and notes that if there is no reply to the opt-out card, it also means the ballot itself will never reach them, for ballots are never forwarded.)

Another option might be for the Secretary of State and Department of Motor Vehicles to combine efforts to encourage people to vote; provide the forms at DMV, for example, without relying on a new law. Brown's office could advocate for getting more people involved, without relying on state records to do it.

But all this raises a certain counter-intuitiveness about participation in the voting process. Fewer and fewer votes are being cast by citizens who ARE eligible, yet this bill suggests an information-based system of enrolling more people to vote — whether they are interested or not.

Voter confidence is at its lowest point ever, meaning people have to want to vote, and making it an automatic process could have the opposite effect of undermining confidence.

Then there is the matter of Independent voters. According to the Oregonian newspaper, the Independent Party of Oregon says it now has enough registered voters — nearly 105,000 — to become the state's third major party along with the Democratic and Republican parties.

Green said elections officials are studying the law to see if the Independent party indeed achieved legal status of a major party and how the Secretary of State will proceed, according to the Oregonian.

Given the likely increase in Independent voters via the automatic method proposed under 2177, Brown should get that sorted out first, and give the legislative route another two years.

WHERE TO WRITE

President — Barack Obama, White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington D.C., 20500
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

U.S. Senators — Jeff Merkley, SDB-40B, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington D.C., 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753; E-mail: oregon@merkley.senate.gov; Ron Wyden, 717 Hart Office Building, Washington D.C., 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244.

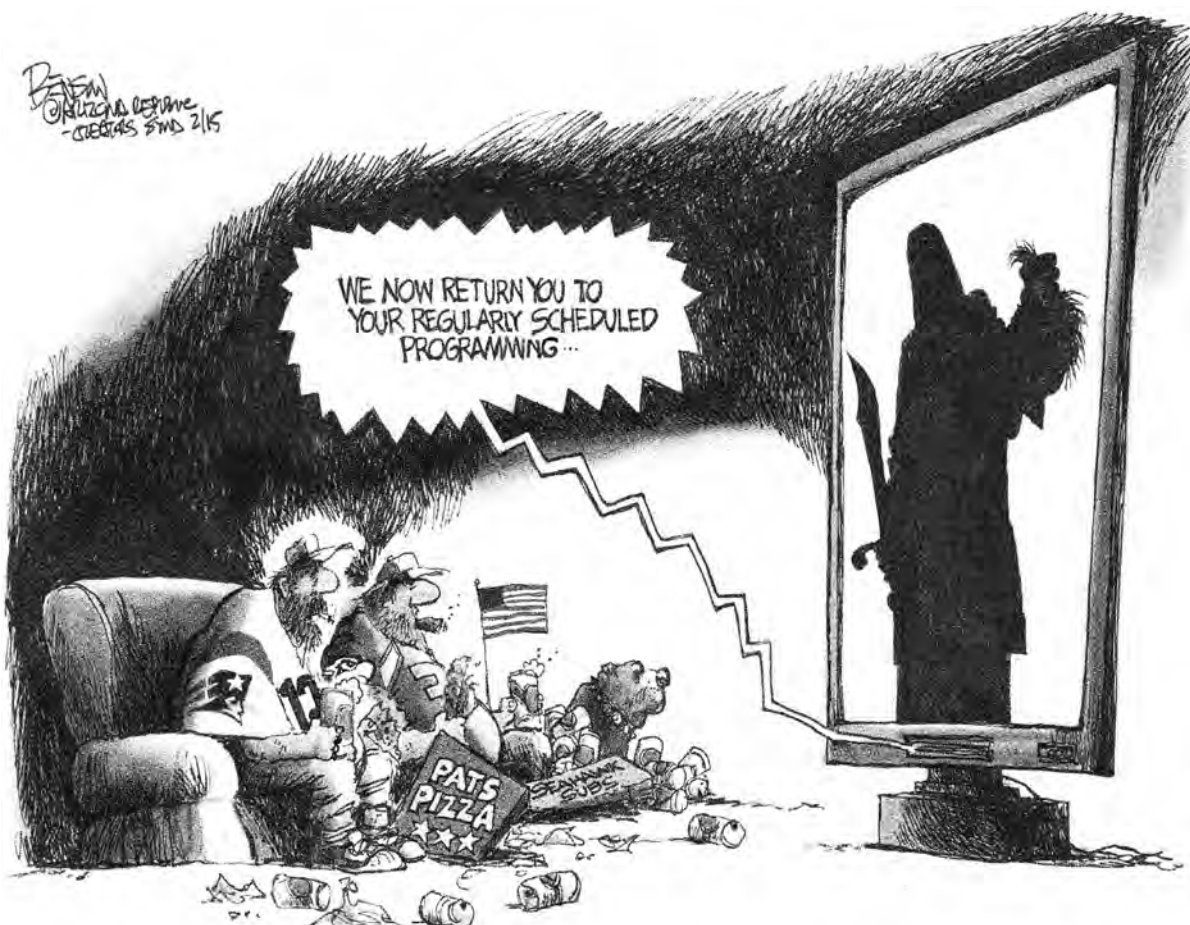
Web address: www.senate.gov/member/or/wyden/general/
2nd Congressional District Representative — Greg Walden, 14 N. Central Ave., Suite 112, Medford, OR 97504. Phone: 541-776-4646;

E-mail: www.walden.house.gov/contactgweg

Governor — John Kitzhaber, 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111;

E-mail: www.governor.state.or.us/email.htm

District 26 State Senator — Chuck Thomsen, 900 Court St. N.E., S-307, State Capitol, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1726; E-mail sen.chuckthomsen@state.or.us



Our readers write

E-fixated danger

Which matters most: your e-toys or your child?

People (usually women ... sorry, ladies!) jog or walk by our house, traveling with traffic on the right (WRONG!) side of the road, clueless of what's coming behind them — some wearing iPod earphones, one hand on the stroller, iPhone in the other, eyes fixed on the screen, TEXTING WITH THEIR THUMBS! It's beyond ignorant and beats anything I've ever witnessed! Equally sad is seeing police drive by, even pulling out around them, without so much as a verbal caution against their behavior.

Do these people believe all drivers pay attention, are never distracted, that they will always be clearly seen and, somehow, safe? Strollers can wander if both hands aren't pushing. What about unseen rocks or holes or out-of-control vehicles because this person is on the wrong side of the road, texting and iTuning? Is any thought given to the child?

Laws are in place regarding child car seats. Some kind of law should protect children in strollers.

Oregon statute pertaining to pedestrians, section 814.070, states (paraphrased): A pedestrian commits (an offense) if, on a two-way residential roadway without sidewalks or shoulders, he/she fails to travel "only on the left side of it." Seems straightforward.

What about police stops, e-toys removed, citations issued for child endangerment and a ride home in a police car — then names and offenses published for all to see? Unlikely — but maybe people could be shamed into valuing their precious cargo more than their electronic lifestyles.

So to our police: If not already doing so, please, even if someone's not texting and/or iTuning, tell them where they belong on our roads, and tell those attached to their e-toys to leave them at home and pay attention to their child.

We live on Post Canyon. Some dimwits think it's a drag strip! But Post Canyon isn't the only place we see stroller/child endangerment! If you don't know the rules or won't disconnect long enough for an outing, perhaps you should learn, go by yourself or stay home.

Betty Osborne
Hood River

Duck pond

While shopping in the supermarket, I noticed a 40-something dad wearing an Oregon sweatshirt going through some Quackish paraphernalia with his children. I stopped and said to him: "January is almost over ... tell me ... have you recovered from the National Championship game?" He replied: "Oh my gosh! Wasn't that awful?" But then I reminded him in order to stay positive ... simply recall ... relive ... and cherish Oregon's resounding Rose Bowl victory! Suddenly he was grinning from ear to ear as he replied, "Hey! That's easy! We were there and loved every moment!" It goes to show you ... Ducks love talking to Ducks no matter what pond they're in.

Bill Davis
Hood River

Vaccination

Beginning in the late 1400s, epidemic infections killed many millions of Native Americans.

Despite medical science's elimination of diseases like polio and smallpox in the intervening cen-

turies, many advantaged people have decided their children need not contribute to your country's immunity protection, and when groups of them visit an amusement park, we get a measles epidemic.

Go figure.

Dr. Chuck Haynie
Hood River

Students take stand on Klamath

Hello, my name is Zoe Swisher. I am 16 years old and a junior at Hood River Valley High School. For my EA project I started a letter writing campaign to raise awareness of the current political and environmental problems in the Klamath River Basin. Within two days of presenting my project to the students of Hood River Valley High School, I was able to gather 114 signatures. I have also met with the Honorable Rep. Greg Walden and discussed my project with him, and I plan to meet with many more state representatives and senators. My goal is to raise as much awareness as I possibly can about this issue.

Through my campaign I am urging congress to take further actions into passing an agreement called the K.B.R.A (aka: the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement); this agreement allows the removal of the four dams on the Klamath River that pollute their environment and are the center of issues concerning water quality and quantity, and the social wellbeing of the surrounding communities. This agreement has been stalled for over five years, and the time for action is now.

This project is not only important to me, but also to the students of Hood River Valley High School as well. As future voters we want to see positive change in our state.

Zoe Swisher
Hood River

Punch Bowl answers

To answer Mr. Chenoweth's "Punchbowl Questions" (Jan 28 edition):

As was explained at a recent public forum: Western Rivers Conservancy is the current owner of the area around Punch Bowl falls. They are not interested in long-term ownership of the land, but they are interested in keeping it undeveloped. So they have generously offered to sell it to the County at approximately 50 percent of market value. The County will purchase and maintain the property ONLY if they can secure a grant to do so (i.e., the purchase will not come out of the County's general fund). If this does not happen, the land will go to another entity that may not wish keep it open to the public.

In regards to the gate at Tucker Park: Closing county campgrounds during times of low demand (winter) makes fiscal sense. Campgrounds require staff to empty garbage cans and clean bathrooms.

In regards to the gate on Middle Mountain: The County Forester got approval from the Board of Commissioners at a public meeting to close that gate (and several others on county forest). This request was made because the roads are prone to damage from traffic during the winter months when they are wet/muddy. Fixing miles of damaged roads is expensive.

I suppose the county could retain their seasonal workers year-

around and keep the campgrounds open, and rock and re-grade the roads, but that would require "a little increase in property tax."

Mike Schrankel
Hood River

'The Hollow Man'

The things I took away from Greg Walden's Hood River town hall meeting tell the true picture of the man. First and foremost is he is a corporatist plutocrat. He tried to deny he is in the top 5 percent of the wealthiest Americans. His published net worth says otherwise. So he will never tax himself and his rich compatriots, only vote to make the wealthy tax breaks permanent. He was happy to tell those in attendance how proud he was to help pass a bill helping small businesses hire vets. My records show he voted against this very thing when it was proposed by Democrats.

Doesn't that makes him a hypocrite? Oh, maybe, he is just a party politician. He spoke of his effort to insure people needing home health care where not left without it. I then asked him what he meant, in his letter to the editor, about his pledge "to continue working hard for policies that will improve access to health care." His answer was, "I already did that." Let's see, he voted against the ACA and about 50 more times to repeal, gut, defund, weaken or destroy the ACA. He would take this all away from the millions of Americans that now have health insurance or lower premiums. His actions make his "pledge" pretty darn hollow. I think the man himself is pretty darn hollow.

Gary Fields
Hood River

Oppose SB 324

One of the first public hearings of the Oregon Legislature's 2015 session was for Senate Bill 324, which extends the sunset for a low carbon fuel standards (LCFS) program set to expire Dec. 31.

The alleged purpose of LCFS is to reduce the "carbon intensity" of fossil fuels. Producers of biofuels will be given "carbon intensity credits" for their production of "renewable" energy products. Suppliers of gasoline and diesel will be forced to purchase these "carbon intensity credits" to "mitigate" their carbon dioxide emissions.

The Department of Environmental Quality estimates this will increase the price of gasoline by about 19 cents per gallon. Consumer user groups are estimating costs to be closer to \$1 per gallon.

SB 324 requires no notification of the covert tax to be provided to consumers. Most Oregonians won't realize that they are paying an extra \$2 to \$20 to fill up their gas tanks.

The LCFS is not really about saving the planet. Even the complete elimination of ALL Oregon greenhouse gas emissions would not result in a measurable difference in global emissions.

It's not about social justice, either. Families living at or near poverty levels spend the highest percentage of their income for energy.

They will suffer the greatest harm by forcing artificial and unaffordable increases in energy prices upon them.

Oregonians concerned about this misguided policy should contact their state representatives and senators and urge them to oppose SB 324.

Sen. Doug Whitsett
Klamath Falls