

Quick takes

Kitzhaber/Hayes fallout

It is astounding or maybe just excruciatingly arrogant that so many of these plans and strategies were written down and released to cyberspace.

— Anne Morte

It is very sad that after doing so much good and working for the people that he became so stupid and lost his career because of this idiot money grubbing dishonest woman.

— Patrice Graham

Hayes wrote that she intended to “explore opportunities for income from non-policy, non-Oregon, non-time-consuming work.” Bwahahaha “non-time-consuming work” means get paid for doing nothing because I sleep with the governor.

—Valerie Calley

Brown has ties to east side

So?

— Marvin Williams

Unfortunately her positions seem to be to the left of Kitzhaber. I hope she is a governor for all of Oregon, not just the valley. Time will tell.

— Mike Navratil

Seeing and living the (Eastern Oregon) lifestyle we have here are two separate things. Let's see what she actually does for us.

— Shasta Baney

More power to her.

— Dave Lazinka

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Hermiston charter carefully crafted

Hermiston city council's proposal for a new charter has been well covered by the local news media. I would like to offer my thoughts and perspective to this issue.

The city council recognized that the city charter had been in place for almost 60 years. They found many provisions needed to be removed or modified as they no longer served the needs of our community and/or were contradictory to state and federal law. Just by way of example, our current charter requires that any person who seeks to run for council must be a “freeholder upon property located within the city of Hermiston,” which is no longer a valid requirement under state and federal law.

The council took on the project of a thorough review of this important document to update the language and to provide a document that will last many years into the future. Our charter is our city's constitution and it shouldn't need frequent adjustments in order to function properly.

Because of the council's recognition of this project's importance, the city hired the law firm of Beery, Elsner and Hammond to guide them through an updated charter that is more concise, easier to use and understand and is consistent with state and federal law.

One particular issue in the draft charter has risen to the forefront of discussion.

As readers are likely well aware, the council has discussed changing the municipal judge from an elected position



DAVID DROTZMANN
Comment

to an appointed position. There is at least a segment of our community that has caught hold of this issue. I want to offer my perspective on the reason for proposing this change.

At the outset, it is important we are all clear that this discussion was not about the current judge or about controlling the rulings that come from the court or taking away anyone's right to vote.

Rather, the proposal is an attempt to align Hermiston with the overwhelming majority of other cities in Oregon (according to data compiled by the League of Oregon Cities, about four of Oregon's 133 municipal court judges are elected) and provide a mechanism for the council and city manager to control the administrative affairs of the court such as budgeting and personnel.

The proposed change also reflects a desire to make sure the community has an opportunity to fully discuss the qualifications of the municipal court judge. At this point, election turnout percentages are not very high for municipal elections held off-cycle of statewide and national elections. Selecting a judge with an appointment process will allow a more thorough and deliberate discussion of the qualifications, skills and abilities of those interested in the job. Having a thorough and transparent hiring process will allow the community, through the council, to select the most qualified candidate.

In reality, the position of municipal court judge is that of a department head of a very specialized department of the city. It is not typically a political position

and it shouldn't be treated as one. Having an appointed judge relieves the judge of the need to worry about re-election and the need to seek votes from those that he or she must rule in favor of or against on a daily basis. Taking the politics out of the process will hopefully create the perception, if not reality, of a more neutral tribunal.

An elected judge can also cause a lot of problems from a management perspective. Elected judges can get cities into trouble through mismanagement of city funds and not following applicable labor laws.

Because removal of an elected judge relies almost entirely on the recall process, there is very little ability to control an elected judge who creates liability for a city by violating these laws. It is widely acknowledged in cities across Oregon that an elected judge is much more difficult to discipline.

Finally, it is the mayor and council's most important task to oversee the funds of the city. For them and the city manager to keep a separately elected department head within established budgetary requirements can be a difficult job.

The issue of an elected or appointed judge should not take away from the need for a new and modern charter for the city. To that end, the council has proposed two separate ballot measures. One will be for the community to decide if they approve of the changes to the charter as suggested with our current elected judge position. The second measure, if the community agrees with the council, is an immediate amendment to appoint the judge. By having two separate measures, the voters can decide the issue of an elected or appointed municipal court judge on its own merits, separate and apart from the adoption of a new charter.

David Drotzmann is the mayor of Hermiston.

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Requa: the man

By Karen Schimmel

I feel this is one of those times when we fail to see and appreciate “greatness in our midst.” Because of this I would like to share the following history.

I first met “Mr. Requa” in 1962-65. I was required to:

- Show up on time or get locked out.
- Be prepared to work hard.
- Produce excellence in all of my efforts.

No, I was not out for football. Mr. Requa was my Algebra I and II teacher in a classroom where you could hear a pin drop. The expectation was “You're here to learn; get it done.” And we did.

I knew of “Coach Requa” when I attended Pendleton High School ('62-'65) and then taught in the Pendleton School District from 1969-'79. Living in Pendleton at that time automatically made you part of Oregon's most successful football program. Watching excellence in motion on Friday nights added an exciting dimension to living in a rural town. His passion for football, camaraderie with the PHS staff and leadership formula of dedication, hard work and “outside the box” thinking:

- Lead other PHS coaches to greatness in their respective athletic programs and the building of their much-needed facilities with private financial and community labor donations: 1) Bob White: present-day baseball facility; 2) Rollin Schimmel: present-day wrestling building; and 3) Mark Christensen and Rollin Schimmel (activities director): present day track and tiered spectators facility.

- Challenged other coaches around Oregon to improve their programs since they knew they would meet him on the field of battle as part of the IMC or in the playoffs. (Read contributions to articles in the *East Oregonian* written when Coach Requa passed away.)
- Encouraged the educational community: 1) recruiting new and talented educators who

wanted to be part of a successful program; 2) music, journalism, and all classroom academics were encouraged to excel. The efforts of these educators produced an educational climate that to this day is one of Oregon's greatest school systems. (Please open PHS yearbooks and look at all of these programs and their awards.)

Brought the people of Pendleton together in support of financially backing the schools. I was president of Pendleton Association of Teachers, a job you prepare for by learning the management system of a schools. Budgets and building new facilities are voted in or vetoed by the people of this community. Successful sports arenas and the dedicated educators of Pendleton set the bar very high making passage of these much-needed finances happen.

Today, Pendleton is lead by intelligent, talented people who played in Requa's program.

I first met Don Requa or “Req” when I became the wife of an assistant football coach, 1980-'86. I walked into the eye of the storm. Space and time do not allow me to share all we lived and learned from “Req.” The single most important lesson: The demands of any successful program are 24/7, requiring tremendous sacrifices of everyone, most of all its leader. (Family vacation is not part of your vocabulary.)

I applaud the city council for their decision. Pendleton was extremely fortunate to have Don Requa bring his intelligence, passion, leadership and work ethic to our city. His 36 years of dedication and influence reach far beyond the walls and playing fields of PHS into the very heart of this community, around the state of Oregon, and our nation. Main Street is an appropriate place to share his history, contributions and success with all who live here and visit.

Karen Schimmel, of Pendleton, was a student, coworker and friend of Pendleton High School football coach Don Requa.

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Crude tactics worked against the sage grouse

By JIMMY TOBIAS
Writers on the Range

For years now, the oil and gas industry has been stirring up trouble for sage grouse. The possibility that the prairie-dwelling birds might receive Endangered Species Act protection gives oil executives high-grade anxiety. It would threaten jobs, they say. It would ruin the economy. It would reduce profits.

All the noise the industry has made finally paid off. Last Dec. 16, President Obama signed a \$1.1 trillion spending bill that was chock-full of unfortunate compromises, including a rider introduced by Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev. The rider effectively bars the Interior Department from listing either the greater sage grouse or its Gunnison cousins under the Endangered Species Act during the current fiscal year.

Oil and gas interests are delighted, of course, having worked hard to make this happen. For at least three years, the industry has waged a sophisticated lobbying campaign aimed at preventing federal protection of the birds. In ads and reports and TV spots, Big Oil tried to frame the sage grouse issue as an economic rather than a scientific matter, while portraying supporters of an endangered species listing as unsavory agitators. And in the months before the recent rider's passage, the tone of this campaign intensified.

From August to October 2014, for example, the Western Energy Alliance — a consortium of major oil companies such as Halliburton and Anadarko — ran online and radio ads meant to undermine the trustworthiness of environmental groups working on the sage grouse issue. With creepy tunes blaring in the background, one video reported that “environmental activists, teamed with powerful out-of-state lawyers, are using bad science and the courts to stop responsible energy development. ...”

The ad failed to mention that the energy alliance has long relied on the courts to get its way, suing the Bureau of Land Management in 2010, to open up backlogged oil and gas leases.

Another video, featuring bucolic shots of horseback riders and mountain bikers, claimed that a federal listing would threaten “our rural Western way of life.” These scare-tactic ads ran in six states.

The Western Energy Alliance has also tried to discredit scientists working with federal agencies, claiming on its website and in published reports that “disproportionate influence from a small group of activist scientists” has tainted government studies of sage grouse. In a commissioned report, it went so far as to publish and then criticize the emails of Pat Diebert, a federal employee whose

findings displeased the industry.

Supporters of this anti-grouse agenda included many other industry groups and a herd of congressmen and senators. In June, Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., and then-Rep. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., now a senator, introduced a bill meant to prevent the sage grouse from being listed under the Endangered Species Act for 10 years. According to a Center for Responsive Politics database, Big Oil donated more than \$600,000 to Gardner during the 2014 campaign season alone. Enzi, for his part, has taken in more than \$500,000 in oil-industry campaign dollars throughout his congressional career.

Perhaps the best insight into the industry's strategy of tarnishing supporters of a sage grouse listing came during the Western Energy Alliance's annual meeting in Colorado Springs last summer. The meeting featured presentations such as “Big Green Radicals: Exposing Environmental Groups,” with Richard Berman, a Washington political consultant, serving as keynote speaker. Berman told the oil representatives that they must wage an “endless war” with environmental groups. The industry will win, he added, only by

taking away “the moral authority” of its opponents and “reframing the debate” on its own terms. According to *The New York Times*, he told the industry that the challenge was either to “win ugly or lose pretty.”

Oil and gas interests continue to insist that they, too, want to protect grouse. An alliance report notes that the industry “implements, on average, 6.5 restrictive measures per project to protect the Greater Sage-Grouse.” But some question the efficacy, not to mention the sincerity, of these efforts. The report “does not address whether these measures are (or) have been adequate to protect the species,” says Mark Salvo, a Defenders of Wildlife staffer.

There is a sad irony to all of this. The oil and gas sector, desperate to keep sage grouse off the endangered species list, has done more than any group to impede the state-based conservation efforts that are the best chance there is to avert a listing. By undermining federal law, by politicizing scientific facts, by using scare and smear tactics, and pushing its weight around Congress, it has poisoned the debate. All the while, grouse populations continue to decline.

In the end, this is about more than birds. Big Oil wants unfettered access to the public lands, and it is determined to win ugly.

Jimmy Tobias is a contributor to *Writers on the Range*, a column service of *High Country News* (hcn.org). A freelance journalist and former trail worker with the *Forest Service*, he lives in California.

Oil and gas interests are delighted, having worked hard to bar the greater sage grouse from being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

WHICH CALIBER CAN PIERCE the ARMOR of RADICAL ISLAM?



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