

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher
JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor
TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Water worries in the West

For the most part, hydrologists are painting a pretty grim picture of this season's water situation in California and the Pacific Northwest.

California faces its fourth year of drought. Many farmers there face cutoffs of 80 percent or more of their water.

In the Cascades, all but the highest peaks are devoid of snow. Farmers in the Owyhee Basin can expect no more than a third of their normal allocation. A drought emergency has already been declared in Oregon's Malheur and Lake counties, with others expected.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has declared drought emergencies in the Olympic Peninsula; the east side of the central Cascade mountains, including Yakima and Wenatchee; and the Walla Walla region.

Whether a harbinger of summers to come, or not, the current situation underscores the need to build more water storage and to evaluate how existing water resources are allocated.

It's been a fairly wet winter

throughout the West. But warm temperatures prevented a lot of that moisture from falling as snow in the high country. In many cases, what fell as snow was later washed away by warmer rain.

Without storage, that water is lost to irrigators who depend on the snowpack.

Californians last year approved a \$7.5 billion bond initiative that could fund the construction of more storage in coming years. We expect any project to be opposed by environmentalists.

In Oregon, a group of stakeholders is trying to work out the rules for a plan to build more storage. Farm interests say the proposal's environmental concessions make it nearly impossible for storage to pencil out.

A more promising plan, endorsed again last week by Gov. Kate Brown during her visit to Pendleton, would allow farmers in Umatilla and Morrow counties access to more water from the Columbia River.

In Washington, a deal has yet to be reached to recharge the aquifer on the state's eastern edge.

Without storage, that water is lost to irrigators who depend on the snowpack

Brown lets in sunshine; Obama closes the door

In a bold stroke of cruel irony, President Obama chose Sunshine Week to strike a blow for government secrecy. Obama closed a major window that Americans use for federal public records requests.

By contrast, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has sent two bills to the Legislature that would greatly abet the cause of open and transparent government. Here are the major ingredients of Brown's bills:

- Require the state auditor to survey state agencies' disposition of public records requests.
- The position of first spouse or first lady would have the status of public official.
- No statewide elected official or the first spouse could take paying speaking engagements.
- Remove the requirement that a state ethics investigation must cease while a federal investigation begins.
- Reduce the amount of time the Ethics Commission has to decide whether to investigate a complaint.

- Create an online reporting system to include Ethics Commission complaints filed and other procedural matters.

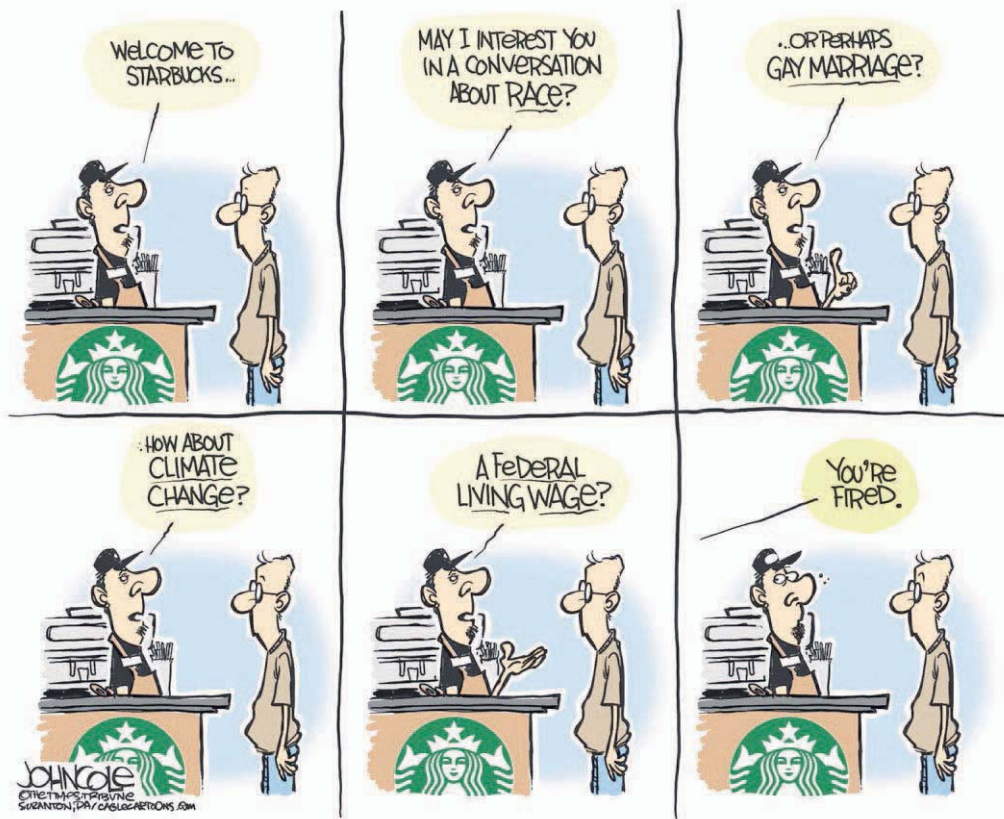
All of these proposals make abundant sense. They reflect a governor who seems to understand her moment in history. Under John Kitzhaber, the governor's office had become a travesty. It is time for the Legislature to draw new rules.

At the other end of the spectrum, President Obama on Freedom of Information Day is removing a federal regulation that subjects its Office of Administration to the Freedom of Information Act. This is no small matter, because this office has responded to FOIA requests for 30 years.

Doing this is diametrically opposed to Obama's professed desire for transparency.

If we have a president whose profile is losing clarity, we have a governor who wants to bring state government back in focus.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

Two women, opposite fortunes

LUANDA, Angola — This is the tale of two women, each an emblem, in her own way, of one of the world's most corrupt and dysfunctional nations.

One of the women is Isabel dos Santos, Africa's richest woman. The daughter of Angola's president, she is worth \$3 billion and is Africa's only female billionaire as well as its youngest billionaire, according to Forbes. The magazine found that all her major Angolan investments were in companies seeking to do business there or were achieved by a stroke of her father's pen.

She has extravagant tastes. For her 10th wedding anniversary, she flew in guests from all over the world for days of lavish celebration. Dos Santos declined to comment, but she is widely seen as a symbol of Angola's status as one of the most corrupt countries in the world — "graft on a scale never before seen in Africa," the Angolan journalist Rafael Marques de Morais told me.

The other woman, more typical, is Delfina Fernandes, and I met her at the end of a bone-rattling journey over impossibly rutted dirt roads in a village called Kibanga in the northern part of the country. Blind in one eye, she lives in a grass-roof hut without electricity or running water, and without access to health care.

Fernandes unrolled a homemade mat of straw on the ground and sat beside me there, telling me that she had lost 10 children (her neighbor, Ana Luciano, who had lost only four children and has a fifth now sick with malaria, said that sounded right). Perhaps the most excruciating blow a parent can suffer is to lose a child, and that has happened 10 times to Fernandes.

It's impossible to be sure how her children died because, like half the country's population, the family is beyond the orbit of the health care system. Therefore, her children never received birth certificates or death certificates. Yet a good guess is that they succumbed to malaria and malnutrition.

In all, Fernandes, 50, says she had 15 children, of whom five survive. She had never heard of family planning, like other women I spoke to along the road, and, in any case, none is available in rural areas here.

For people like Fernandes, life isn't that different from a few hundred years ago. There is no school in this area, so she and everyone else nearby is illiterate. Several villagers I talked to had never heard of the United States or Barack Obama, couldn't recognize a single letter and had no idea that mosquitoes cause malaria.

"Fifty percent of Angolans live outside the orbit of any health care," noted Dr. Stephen Foster, an American surgeon who runs a rural hospital near Lubango. "They're



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

still getting what the traditional healer would have given them if they'd come by in the 17th century."

Fernandes was gracious and hospitable — and also stoical. She never complained, and only when I asked about her rotting, disintegrating teeth did she acknowledge that she has lost so many teeth that she has trouble eating. She said she suffers relentless dental pain, and that the only relief from the agony comes when she is asleep.

She gave no sign of anger at the government, and when I probed to see whom she blamed for her suffering, she said mildly: "It's God who takes my children."

That may be a little unfair to God. An International Monetary Fund report last year noted that Angola has one of the richest

This corruption is also a reason 150,000 children die each year in Angola before the age of 5

pools of natural wealth per person in Africa, yet the country has done much less than its peers to assist ordinary people. And when the IMF reviewed Angola's books from 2007-10, it initially found \$32 billion missing.

"Government corruption at all levels was endemic," the U.S. State Department said of Angola in its annual human rights report in 2013.

Angola is ranked 161 out of 175 countries by Transparency International in its "corruption perceptions index." The World Bank's "Doing Business" series ranks Angola 187 out of 189 countries in enforcing contracts.

This is a global problem, of course, not just Angola's. Two new books, "Thieves of State" by Sarah Chayes and "The Looting Machine" by Tom Burgis, document the way corruption is a catastrophe in many poor countries. Angola is simply an extreme example.

This corruption is also a reason 150,000 children die each year in Angola before the age of 5. The health budget is systematically pillaged: de Morais, the Angolan journalist, cites \$58 million that was allocated to renovate a particular hospital — and then pretty much vanished.

The differences between dos Santos and Fernandes are vast, but there is a wrenching shared interest in the oil industry. Dos Santos has monetized it, and when I asked Fernandes if she knew that Angola was rich with oil she was a bit confused by the question but said eagerly that she, too, values gasoline when she can afford to buy a swallow.

"I put it in my mouth," she said, "to dull the pain from my teeth."

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon. He is a columnist for The New York Times. He and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, share a 1990 Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy movement in China.

YOUR VIEWS

Now is the time for a gas tax

I have been listening to and reading about the problems associated with the lack of funding to keep the streets in Pendleton maintained to a satisfactory level. I'm also made aware of the numerous chuck holes and deteriorating asphalt as I drive around Pendleton. Fortunately, the streets in my neighborhood are in pretty good shape. However, I know that in a few months or years they will be deteriorating from lack of maintenance just like numerous other streets are now.

After considering all the apparent options, I favor a gas tax as the most fair and economically efficient method to raise

funds to do the maintenance and repairs. Nobody likes taxes but a user tax is probably appropriate and beneficial especially when you can see the benefits.

The thing that really makes the tax practical is that we are fortunate to live on an interstate highway halfway between Boise and Portland. Pendleton is an ideal spot for travelers and other visitors to take a break, shop and buy gas. So why not take advantage of this and let them pay about 30 to 40 percent of the cost of our street maintenance. You can't find a better street fairy than that so let's bite the bullet and get it done. I like good streets and I for one am willing to pay my share for them.

Phil Kline
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

Be heard!

Comment online at eastoregonian.com, or visit our Facebook and Twitter pages.