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OUR VIEW

Photo by Maegan Murray/EO Media Group

Last year, a number of students and area residents participated in a day of prayer at McKenzie Park in Hermiston in honor of those killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Under a new ordinance passed by the city council, the participants could be banned from the park for 30 days for sitting on the counters in the cook shack.

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

It's pretty rare that a local city ordinance is laugh-out-loud funny, but it was hard to suppress chuckles reading Hermiston's new rule that allows law enforcement to temporarily ban people for misusing public park equipment.

Running up the slide? You're out of here! Sitting sideways on the swing? Off with your head!

This remarkably thick and discriminatory ordinance was created with input from the school district, police department and parks and recreation department. Noticeably absent was the Department of Common Sense.

Laws are laws. If anyone is breaking them — smoking underage or vandalizing property or urinating in public — police have long had the ability to punish offenders. But to create new rules and new rulebreakers in order to hassle unwanted teenagers in a public space is clearly wrong.

Hermiston city councilors didn't see it that way. In fact, they hurriedly passed the ordinance and declared a city emergency so it could be enacted immediately. The reason for the emergency? Cue dramatic, distressing music: it's springtime. And there is nothing we can do to stop it!

The final ordinance was even scaled back from the wishes of some persnickety community members who wanted to ban teenagers from the park entirely. Good grief, ya grinches. Having that demographic hang out in a park in plain view of the police station is exactly where a community should want teens to congregate. Hopefully Hermiston police have better things to do than fill out paperwork and micromanage park benches and this rule sinks to the netherworld of forgotten ordinances where it belongs.

Every aspect of it is absurd. Just because some fussbudgety park walkers don't like the way a group of teens skateboard and talk and enjoy a spring day, doesn't mean city and school officials should give in to their demands.

They have the wrong attitude toward a population that needs safe, free places to congregate. Teens need the support of the community when they go through that unavoidable phase where they want to look and think weird and make their own rules. To spend that phase in the sunshine sitting atop picnic tables is among the best of all possible options.

So without restraint we wallop a kick in the pants to the city for approving such an ordinance. For the punishment, the city now gets to deal with the consequences of such inane and ill-conceived legislation. City leaders of the next generation will surely scratch their heads when they come across this rule the next time they update the books.

A tip of the hat to Bradley Miltenberger, who fought the good fight against the federal government and won a victory for recreationists on the Columbia River.

Miltenberger spent his own money and his own time to challenge a $125 citation given by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department for trespass on Little Blalock Island, located in the middle of the river between Boardman and Irrigon. He represented himself, too.

"It was the principle of the matter," he told the *East Oregonian* earlier this week.

Miltenberger was principled, but more importantly he was right. That is what made him successful in court.

Sure, bureaucracy and the maze of federal rules can feel like a Kafkaesque villain that cannot even be confronted, much less defeated. But Miltenberger proved that's not the case. The odds are stacked against the common man, but it's good to know that in some cases, when the facts and laws are on his side, that he can prevail.

We'd go so far as to say the federal government owes Miltenberger compensation for his time and energy defending himself.

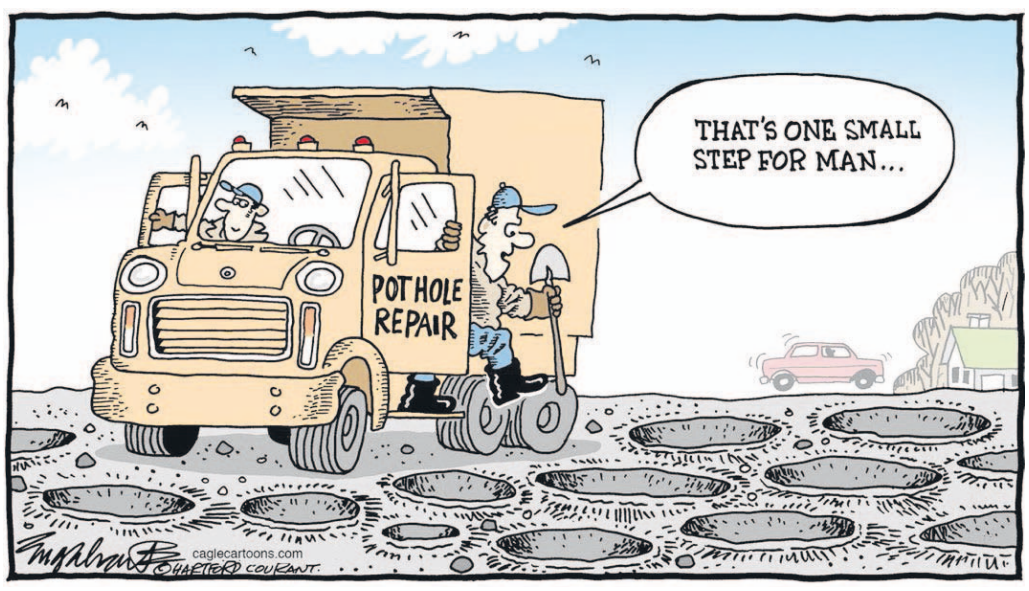
A tip of the hat to Blake Wickers, a 10-year-old Umatilla boy who, with the help of a jump rope, has raised more than $7,000 for the American Heart Association.

Wickers was featured in an article in the *Hermiston Herald* on March 11. After being inspired by a video in health class about babies born with heart defects, he began collecting pledges for the school's Jump Rope for Heart program. That was in second grade, and over the next four years he raised enough money for the American Heart Association to provide treatment for 140 children.

Wickers and a few other students from around the state will jump rope during halftime of a Portland Trail Blazers game at the Moda Center on April 11, where his story will be told on the Jumbotron.

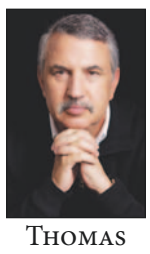
Blake's a good example that there's no such thing as too young to make a difference.

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

Look before leaping



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

I can think of many good reasons to go ahead with the nuclear deal with Iran, and I can think of just as many reasons not to. So, if you're confused, let me see if I can confuse you even more.

The proposed deal to lift sanctions on Iran — in return for curbs on its bomb-making capabilities so that it would take at least a year for Tehran to make a weapon — has to be judged in its own right. I will be looking closely at the quality of the verification regime and the specificity of what happens if Iran cheats. But the deal also has to be judged in terms of how it fits with wider American strategic goals in the region, because a U.S.-Iran deal would be an earthquake that touches every corner of the Middle East. Not enough attention is being paid to the regional implications — particularly what happens if we strengthen Iran at a time when large parts of the Sunni Arab world are in meltdown.

The Obama team's best argument for doing this deal with Iran is that, in time, it could be "transformational." That is, the ending of sanctions could open Iran to the world and bring in enough fresh air — Iran has been deliberately isolated since 1979 by its ayatollahs and Revolutionary Guard Corps — to gradually move Iran from being a revolutionary state to a normal one, and one less inclined to threaten Israel. If one assumes that Iran already has the know-how and tools to build a nuclear weapon, changing the character of its regime is the only way it becomes less threatening.

The challenge to this argument, explains Karim Sadjadpour, a Middle East specialist at the Carnegie Endowment, is that while the Obama team wants to believe this deal could be "transformational," Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, "sees it as transactional" — Iran plugs its nose, does the deal, regains its strength and doubles-down on its long-standing revolutionary principles. But, then again, you never know. What starts out as transactional can end up being transformational in ways that no one can prevent or predict.

A second argument is that Iran is a real country and civilization, with competitive (if restricted) elections, educated women and a powerful military.

Patching up the U.S.-Iran relationship could enable America to better manage and balance the Sunni Arab Taliban in Afghanistan, and counterbalance the Sunni jihadis, like those in the Islamic State, or ISIS, now controlling chunks of Iraq and Syria. The United States has relied heavily on Saudi Arabia, ever since Iran's 1979 revolution, and while the Saudi ruling family and elites are aligned with America, there is a Saudi Wahhabi hard core that has funded the spread of the most puritanical, anti-pluralistic, anti-women form of Islam that has changed the character of Arab Islam and helped to foster mutations like Islamic State. There were no Iranians involved in 9/11.

Then again, it was Iranian agents who made the most lethal improvised explosives in Iraq that killed many U.S. troops there. And it was Iran that encouraged its Iraqi Shiite allies to reject any extended U.S. military presence in Iraq and to also overplay their hand in stripping power from Iraqi Sunnis, which is what helped to produce the Islamic State counterreaction.

"In the fight against ISIS, Iran is both the arsonist and the fire brigade," added Sadjadpour. To Saudi Arabia, he added, the rise of the Islamic State is attributable to the repression of Sunnis in Syria and Iraq by Iran and its Shiite clients. To Tehran, the rise of the Islamic State is attributable to the financial and ideological support of Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies.

> Given the disarray in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, do we really care if Iran tries to play policeman there and is embroiled with endless struggles with Sunni militias?

And they are both right, which is why America's interests lie not with either the Saudis or the Iranian ideologues winning, but rather with balancing the two against each other until they get exhausted enough to stop prosecuting their ancient Shiite-Sunni, Persian-Arab feud.

Then again, if this nuclear deal with Iran is finalized, and sanctions lifted, much more Iranian oil will hit the global market, suppressing prices and benefiting global consumers. Then again, Iran would have billions of dollars more to spend on cyberwarfare, long-range ballistic missiles and projecting power across the Arab world, where its proxies already dominate four Arab capitals: Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus and Sanaa.

But, given the disarray in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, do we really care if Iran tries to play policeman there and is embroiled in endless struggles with Sunni militias? For 10 years, it was America that was overstretched across Iraq and Afghanistan. Now it will be Iran's turn. I feel terrible for the people who have to live in these places, and we certainly should use U.S. air power to help prevent the chaos from spreading to islands of decency like Jordan, Lebanon and Kurdistan in Iraq. But managing the decline of the Arab state system is not a problem we should own. We've amply proved that we don't know how.

So before you make up your mind on the Iran deal, ask how it affects Israel, the country most threatened by Iran. But also ask how it fits into a wider U.S. strategy aimed at quelling tensions in the Middle East with the least U.S. involvement necessary and the lowest oil prices possible.

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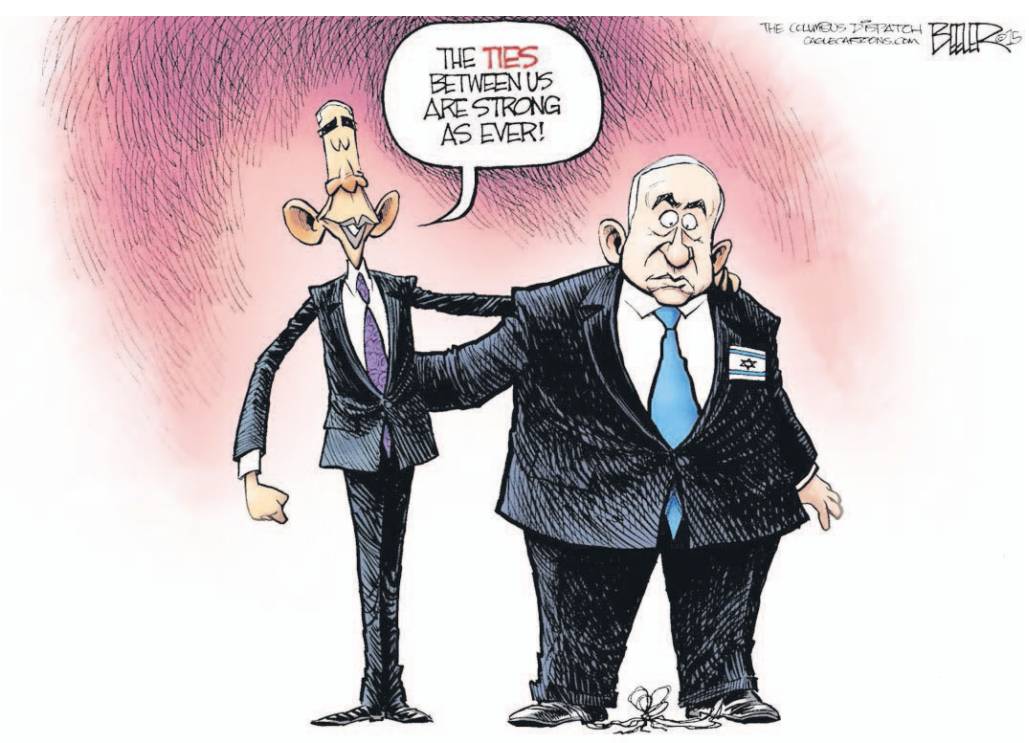
Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for The New York Times. He became the paper's foreign-affairs Op-Ed columnist in 1995.



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