

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# No age limit on volunteering

Everywhere around the country, groups who rely on volunteers worry about their most committed workers getting older.

It is more pronounced here in Eastern Oregon, where our population's median hair color is more salt than pepper.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released their volunteer

statistics report for 2014. Perhaps surprisingly, adults age 35-44 were the most likely to volunteer and the likelihood that you give freely of your time begins to steadily taper after turning 45. However, though older volunteers were less likely to volunteer, those that did gave more hours to charitable organizations than any other age group.

And that seems obvious. Young families are too busy just putting food on the table and getting everyone dressed and out the door — and returned safely every evening — to have large chunks of hours free to donate. They happily work a bake sale or coach Little League when it fits into their schedule. But older adults, on the other hand, especially those who have crossed into the Eden known as retirement, have more time to spend on causes that are important to them.

But older volunteers have more to offer than just their time. A lifetime of experience can make them among the most valuable volunteers, who know how to get things done and

keep a group focused on a common mission.

Volunteer groups are what makes Eastern Oregon hum — from the well-oiled volunteer machine that produces the Pendleton Round-Up to the in-the-trenches crew that puts together the Umatilla County Fair. A cadre of volunteers takes care of some of our most important needs, including our homeless population, domestic violence victims, foster children and those in need in our hospitals and schools. Their selflessness makes this region a better place to live.

Part of growing up, unfortunately, seems to be a nagging feeling that the next generation doesn't quite measure up. We're not that cranky yet, and think today's children and young adults are more than capable of picking up the mantle of volunteerism that their parents and grandparents are bravely carrying now.

As a community, we can help make that a smooth passing of the baton. We can continue to appreciate and celebrate our volunteers who go above and beyond the call of service. We can work to improve our communication and involvement with all age groups. We can do as much as we can with the time we have. And we don't have to worry when a little salt appears in our hair — there are many decades of being a good community member ahead of us.

**Older volunteers gave more hours to charitable organizations than any other age group.**

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

# Brown's transportation bill gets moving

By The La Grande Observer

Even the most disinterested Oregon voter should give credit to Gov. Kate Brown in the wake of her state of the state speech Friday before the City Club of Portland at a Portland hotel.

Brown touted a number of good signs about Oregon's economy and spoke in an encouraging manner about the future. A key highlight, though, was her insistence that lawmakers put aside partisanship and work together to develop a viable transportation plan before the session ends.

We applaud Brown's views on the transportation package and believe she is correct to draw a line in the sand, if you will, on such an important topic.

The state's roadways are in bad shape. Individual counties, especially in rural areas like Eastern Oregon, face dwindling funding and a growing list of needed repairs.

We are glad the governor is now out in front of this issue, though her leadership on this subject would have been far more decisive weeks ago when Democratic lawmakers rammed a bill regarding carbon-based fuels through the Legislature.

Still, better late than never. Brown's acknowledgement of the state's ruined road system is hopefully a good sign that, through her leadership, both Democrats and Republicans can sit down and hash out their differences and come up with a workable transportation package.

Yet that won't be an easy task. And the governor should know that. The

reason for the difficulty is a broken political covenant between Republican and Democratic lawmakers that revolves around the new low carbon fuel standard pushed into law a few weeks ago.

Republicans opposed it, Democrats favored the law. Democrats carry a majority in the Legislature so the low carbon fuel standard — seen by many to be hopelessly complicated at best and a burden on taxpayers at worst — was passed.

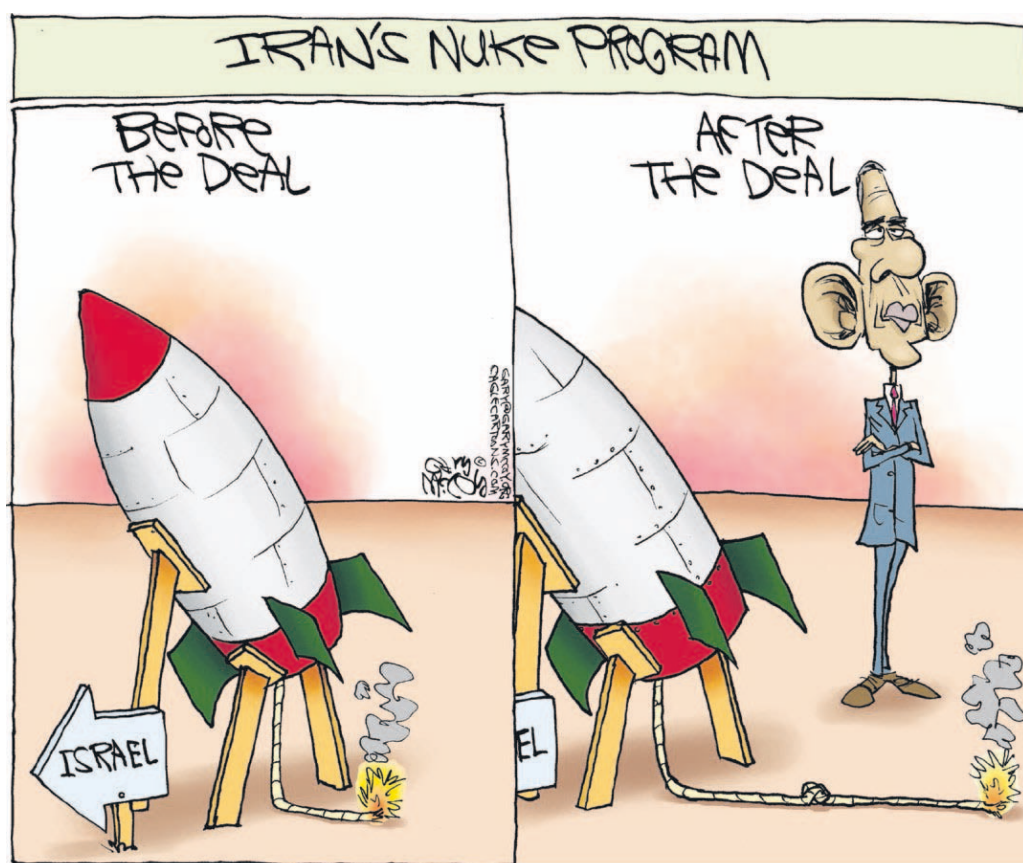
Republicans are willing to talk about a transportation bill if Democrats agree to go back to the low carbon fuel law and re-evaluate it and make some revisions. Otherwise, Republicans probably are not going to sign off on a transportation package.

The entire issue runs the risk of falling into the by now familiar refrain of political gridlock. Yet in this, as in many other political battles of our time, there is plenty of blame to go around.

In short, what needs to happen is both Democrats and Republicans should agree to make concessions regarding the low carbon fuel standard. Is it a bad law? Most likely. How the idea — and then the law — wriggled its way into the Legislature could be a good, albeit tragic, story in and of itself. Yet that is for another time.

Brown is doing what a governor should do. She is sending out a call to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to stop and re-evaluate and then sit down to work out a deal. The question remains, however, regarding whether too much political damage was inflicted during the low carbon fuel battle to salvage a transportation bill. We hope not.

**Rural areas like Eastern Oregon face dwindling funding and a growing list of needed road repairs.**



## OTHER VIEWS

# Hollywood trumps Harvard

Call me an idealist, but I'd like to think that the halls of higher education are less vulnerable to the siren calls of fame and fortune than other byways of American life are. I'd like to believe in a bold dividing line between academic virtues and celebrity values, between intellectual and commercial concerns.

But Henry Louis Gates Jr., a renowned Harvard professor, and Mehmet Oz, a surgeon on the faculty at Columbia, get in my way.

I link the two because they're both in the news, not because they're equally in thrall to the television camera or identically unabashed peddlers of something other than fact. Oz is by far the more compromised figure. But Gates, too, exemplifies what happens when a lecturer is bathed in bright lights and gets to hang with Ben Affleck, who will soon be on-screen in Batman's billowing cape.

Affleck was a guest last October on the PBS documentary series "Finding Your Roots," in which Gates takes luminaries — Sting, Stephen King, Angela Bassett — on journeys into their pasts. Affleck signed up for the trip.

But when he learned that he had a slave-owning ancestor, he asked that the detail be excised, according to communications between Gates and his friend Michael Lynton, the chief executive of Sony Entertainment. Their exchange was part of the hacked Sony emails recently shared by WikiLeaks.

"We've never had anyone ever try to censor or edit what we found," Gates wrote to Lynton, going on to fret over the "integrity" of the series. "He's a megastar. What do we do?"

Gates left the detail out. After the disclosure of this late last week, he insisted, unpersuasively, that the cut reflected nothing more than the need to make room for other ancestors of Affleck's who warranted inclusion in the episode.

Regardless, it exposed Gates, a trusted authority on the African-American experience, to accusations that he'd sold out. It diminished him.

But wasn't that inevitable from the moment he hitched scholarship to show business?

"We conflate what a PBS special is with academic work," Carol Anderson, who teaches at Emory University, told Jamil Smith in The New Republic. "We have to understand that so much of what we see there is packaged for a nonacademic audience that wants the picture of really deep, intellectual discussion but is not quite ready for what that means."

What does the audience of "The Dr. Oz Show" want?

To judge by what Oz gives them, it's



**FRANK BRUNI**  
Comment

winnowed thighs, amulets against cancer and breathless promises of "magic" and "revolutionary" breakthroughs.

Oz has morphed not just willingly but exuberantly into a carnival barker. He's a one-man morality play about the temptations of mammon and the seduction of applause, a Faustian parable with a stethoscope.

Many Americans probably had no idea that he remained affiliated with Columbia — he's vice chairman of its surgery department — until they read last week about an email sent to the university by 10 physicians around the country. They accused him of "promoting quack treatments" for "personal financial gain" and urged Columbia to sever its ties with him.

He's expected to defend himself on television later this week, and his publicity machine has gone into overdrive, seeking to discredit the physicians and frame the issue as one of free speech.

But don't forget that he was called before a U.S. Senate panel last year to explain his on-air gushing about green coffee extract, raspberry ketones and other faddish weight-loss supplements. Admonishing him, Sen. Claire McCaskill noted that "the scientific community is almost monolithic" in its rejection of "products you called 'miracles.'"

Also remember that the British Medical Journal published a study of scores of his show's medical recommendations, saying more than half didn't have sound scientific backing.

And bear in mind that the Sony emails included one that showed Oz to be eager, as Vox reported, "to use his platform on the show to help expand Sony's fitness and health-tracking devices market." Sony is one of the producers of "Dr. Oz."

But well beyond Oz, there's an unsettling corruption of academia by celebrity culture.

Many professors do double duty as television pundits, even though sound bites, which are inherently unsubtle, run counter to what scholarship exalts. And educational institutions choose speakers largely — and sometimes solely — for their star power. The University of Houston spent \$155,000 to schedule Matthew McConaughey for its commencement next month.

Maybe he's more learned than we realize. Or maybe erudition counts for less than buzz, even in those enclaves that are supposed to be about deep, durable things.

*Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011, joined the New York Times in 1995.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### BMCC opens the door to academic, life opportunities

When I was growing up and playing sports, I remember the motivational posters in the locker rooms. One in particular was significant: "Success = Desire, Dedication and Determination"

I have witnessed disciples of this philosophy with students I've met at BMCC. I used to teach English as a Second Language for the college. The students would work hard at their jobs during the day and then come to class two nights a week. Even though they were exhausted, they were alert and eager to learn English to get better jobs or become citizens.

An example of a person who exemplifies a BMCC student with exceptional desire, dedication, and determination was a young woman I recently met. She came from a background that would horrify most people. Her family had seven children. Her parents were alcoholics. When both of them were thrown in jail, she had to take on the responsibility of being a substitute parent.

Unfortunately, she had her own troubles. She was frequently truant from school and had brushes with the law as a result of the negative influence of her friends. She was raised by her grandmother, who suffered from

arthritis and was not able to provide her with much financial support.

Imagine attending high school and having to one day attend the funeral of an uncle murdered by a gangbanger and then going to her prom the next day.

She was able to escape that life by leaving the negative impact of her strife-filled city circumstances and ending up at BMCC in rural Pendleton. She had no money but managed to survive with the help of the faculty and staff members at the college.

Altrusa is known for its emphasis on literacy but few people are aware of its other role as a service organization. They gave her a laptop and money to pay her rent and buy food when she was desperate and almost had to leave BMCC.

During the summer, the college gave her a job performing janitorial duties, a job that she was grateful for, and she managed to save enough to continue at the college.

As a result of her desire, dedication, and determination, Marshay Moore signed a letter of intent this week and was given a full ride scholarship to play basketball at the University of Oregon.

Support the BMCC bond measure and you will be helping other students realize their dreams.

Jerry Cronin  
Pendleton

## LETTERS POLICY

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