

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Between a rock and a harder place

Producers and processors who use a lot of migrant labor are used to being between a rock and a hard place. Those hoping President Obama's recent executive actions to defer deportations and offer work permits to illegal immigrants might make their lot easier may be disappointed.

There are 12 million illegal immigrants already in the country. Many fill invaluable roles in our economy, particularly in agriculture.

Farmers who raise vegetables, fruit and nursery crops depend on immigrant labor, as do many processors and packers. It's generally agreed that most of these workers, as many as 85 percent in some areas, are in the country illegally and are providing employers with fake papers.

There's no question producers and processors need the labor. So, an informal "don't ask, don't tell" arrangement exists between employers and employees.

So when the president announced he was taking executive action that would defer deportations and grant work permits to as many as 5 million illegal immigrants, many employers could be heard to breathe a sigh of relief. Illegals made legal, even temporarily, could be a boon to employers for all kinds of reasons.

The president's programs are currently tied up in the court, but immigration officials are taking applications. As part of that process, applicants must prove they've been in the country the required time period. Employment records can help establish worker eligibility for the program.

When an employee reaches out to an employer to help provide

documentation for the application, it quickly becomes obvious the worker is in the country illegally.

Enter Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The Washington Farm Labor Federation asked ICE if employers who become aware through this scenario that an employee is illegal can have safe harbor from prosecution as the worker completes the application process.

No. Applying for a program doesn't make an applicant eligible for employment. Employers who hire, or continue to employ, workers who they know to be undocumented are liable for audit and prosecution for violating immigration law.

Once you know an employee is in the country illegally, you have to fire them.

Welcome to the harder place.

This is why we've been opposed to extralegal attempts to change immigration policy.

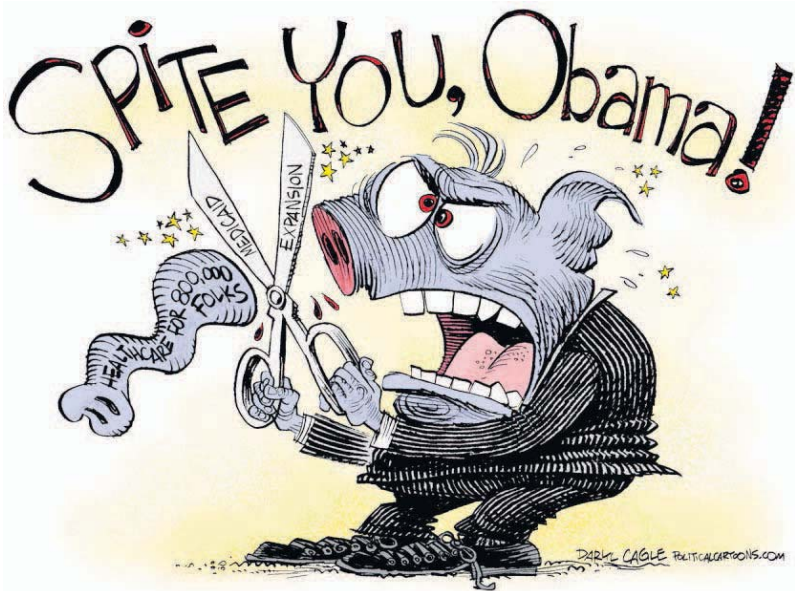
We think the president has overstepped, and lacks the authority to offer work permits to millions of illegal immigrants. But even as the president moves to make illegals legal, his administration stands by to enforce the laws as they apply to employers.

Only Congress can change immigration law, and change it Congress must.

We continue to call for a program that secures the border, revises the guest worker program, and grants illegals currently in the country a reasonable path to permanent residency.

It's time to bring everyone in from the cold, whether through some grand bargain or by incremental reform.

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

Are you smarter than an 8th grader?

I am afraid you're eligible to read this column only if you can answer this question faced by eighth graders around the world:

What is the sum of the three consecutive whole numbers with 2n as the middle number?

A. $6n+3$; B. $6n$; C. $6n-1$; D. $6n-3$

More than three-quarters of South Korean kids answered correctly (it is B). Only 37 percent of American kids were correct, lagging their peers from Iran, Indonesia and Ghana.

We know Johnny can't read; it appears that Johnny is even worse at counting.

The Educational Testing Service released a global report finding that young adults from the United States rank poorly in reading but are even worse in math — the worst of all countries tested. This is the generation that will be in the labor force for the next half-century, struggling to compete with citizens of other countries.

It's not just that U.S. results are dragged down by poverty. Even U.S. millennials with graduate degrees score near the bottom of international ranks in numeracy.

We interrupt this column for another problem:

How many degrees does a minute hand of a clock turn through from 6:20 a.m. to 8 a.m. on the same day?

A. 680 degrees; B. 600 degrees; C. 540 degrees; D. 420 degrees

Only 22 percent of American eighth-graders correctly answered B, below Palestinians, Turks and Armenians.

In a recent column, I offered a paean to the humanities. But it's also true, as a professor notes in a letter to the editor, that science majors do take humanities courses. In contrast, humanities majors often desperately avoid any semblance of math or science (except for classes like "Physics for Poets").

Numeracy isn't a sign of geekiness, but a basic requirement for intelligent discussions of public policy. Without it, politicians routinely get away with using statistics, as Mark Twain supposedly observed, the way a drunk uses a lamppost: for support rather than illumination.

(I believe U.S. high schools and colleges overemphasize calculus and don't sufficiently teach statistics. Statistical literacy should be part of every citizen's tool kit.)

Public debates often dance around basic statistical concepts, like standard deviation,



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

because too few Americans understand them. And people assume far too much of "averages."

After all, American adults have, on average, one ovary and one testicle. But try finding such an "average person."

I know many readers will grudgingly protest that they're just not good at math! True, there are math prodigies who are different from you and me. When the great mathematician Carl Gauss was a young boy, his

teacher is said to have asked his class to calculate the sum of all the numbers from 1 to 100. Gauss supposedly supplied the answer almost instantly: 5,050.

The teacher, flabbergasted, asked how he knew. Gauss explained that he had added 1 and 100, 2 and 99, and realized that there would be 50 such pairs each summing 101. So 50 times 101 equals 5,050.

So I agree: Let's resent the Gausses of the world for being annoyingly smart. But let's not use that as an excuse to hide from the rigor of numbers. Countries like Singapore manage to impart extraordinary math skills in ordinary children because they work at it.

Numeracy isn't just about numbers, of course. It's also about logic. Let me leave you with a logical puzzle — a family favorite, one that I first heard as a little kid — that isn't mathematical at all. Yet people with math training seem better at thinking it through and solving it:

You're in a dungeon with two doors. One leads to escape, the other to execution. There are only two other people in the room, one of whom always tells the truth, while the other always lies. You don't know which is which, but they know that the other always lies or tells the truth. You can ask one of them one question, but, of course, you don't know whether you'll be speaking to the truth-teller or the liar. So what single question can you ask one of them that will enable you to figure out which door is which and make your escape?

It's not a trick question. When you hear the answer, you'll see it's straightforward. I've posted the answer on my blog, nytimes.com/onthegeground, but you won't need the help, will you?

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon. He is a columnist for The New York Times.

YOUR VIEWS

We're taxed enough already

The Pendleton Tea Party Patriots believe Blue Mountain Community College is a needed asset to our community. We believe our roads need improvement, our drinking water should be safe and some of the statues are a welcome asset in helping to make Pendleton a pleasing place to visit/live. However, we also believe "TEA" stands for "Taxed Enough Already." It is past time to find over-funded or obsolete programs to eliminate so those funds that can be better used on other needed projects.

The Pendleton Tea Party Patriots have reached our limit in increased taxes. When is enough, enough? So, Cam, what programs can you cut? How can you better use the assets you already have? Why blame the BMCC board for unnecessary projects?

We ask, "Why are we building new facilities in Boardman and Hermiston?" Didn't BMCC implement online classes to service those areas? Over \$2 million is designated for expanded technology. Would these funds further enhance the online classes programs? We ask, "Why are we building new facilities for these areas? Do these areas really need of both these class options?"

Next up for questioning is the city of Pendleton.

Phil and Bob, we ask, "If the budget is insufficient to repair our failing roads and/or water pipes without requesting additional

tax funding, then why were statues and speed bumps funded?" The Patriots believe that the operating budget should take care of basics needs of the community first. After all, when I can't pay rent, I don't go on vacation. This is simple logic. And by the way, if the fire station is relocated to a site closer to downtown, won't it be further from West Pendleton and the hospital?

The Patriots suggest that funding for these projects and the BMCC bond should come from funds allocated for obsolete/over-funded programs. Is it your plan to tax the property owners until you take 90 percent of their pay and leave them with only insufficient funds to cover their own living expenses? Our county commissioners, as does the sheriff department, understand the consequence of increasing taxes so they are operating within their current budgets. We thank them for that.

New taxes for roads. New taxes for water and new taxes for a BMCC bond. When is enough, enough?

Bond is short for "bondage"!

Eli Stephens
Pendleton

Early childhood center a crucial part of BMCC bond

Blue Mountain Community College's \$23 million proposed bond on the May 19 election ballot includes multiple

community and industry partnerships that help to reduce the financial burden on local taxpayers. One of those partnerships would create the Workforce and Early Childhood Education Training Center in Boardman adjacent to the SAGE Center. The Port of Morrow has agreed to lease around three acres of land at a minimal-cost lease to BMCC for the facility.

The center would house workforce training programs, including training in advanced manufacturing, mechatronics and data center technician — skills businesses at the Port of Morrow are asking for in new employees.

Due to the type of facility BMCC is looking to construct, other partners have reached out to the college to assist with funding and staffing. A partnership between BMCC, local school districts, the InterMountain Education Service District and Head Start would enable the center to house the college's Early Childhood Education program. This program, which the college has offered for about 10 years, provides instruction to BMCC students interested in working in the early childhood education field. An early childhood education center in Boardman would provide a learning lab — preschool and early childhood education programs for children ages birth to 5 — for BMCC students to gain hands-on experience with children in a classroom setting. Just as BMCC's animal science students

need livestock for acquiring hands-on experience, Early Childhood Education program students need kids.

If approved by voters, this center would be a positive effort for the community — children in Morrow County would have an opportunity to receive early learning educational programs, while BMCC students would gain hands-on experience to become skilled workers ready for jobs in education.

Ed Taber, chair
BMCC Board of Education
Mark Mulvihill, Ed.D., superintendent
InterMountain ESD
Gary Neal, general manager
Port of Morrow

Naked child not a police issue

According to your recent "Public Safety Log," someone called the police because a four-year-old child was playing naked in the sprinklers in his/her own yard.

I'm curious as to why this was inappropriate. The child was *gasp* running through sprinklers in their own yard. The mother of this child even said that the police officer seemed embarrassed to show up on this call and said something like, "What is the world coming to?"

I'm just wondering if children are supposed to be ashamed of their bodies and covered at all times (even at four years of age), or if parents in Pendleton need to be worried about neighbors policing their parenting at all times. Neither seems like a good situation to me. It sounds to me like this neighbor needed a "talking to" and not the child's parents.

Shaindel Beers
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.