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OUR VIEW

Allow phones to tune in FM radio

You might not know it, but your smartphone is more than just a machine to stalk Facebook and watch YouTube videos of cats.

There are some old-school technologies in your pocket that can be preciously important in an emergency. First, it's a phone! That means you can dial a string of numbers and connect with another person. That other person could be an emergency dispatcher in the case that you are in danger, or your mother in the case that you are not.

Secondly, your cellphone has a built-in FM radio receiver.

While that might sound like outdated technology as well, it won't be in the event that a natural or unnatural event severs our electronic infrastructure.

It's not a far-fetched possibility, especially here in the Cascadia Subduction Zone. It happened just last week in Nepal, when satellite and Internet-enabled phones were rendered useless after a powerful earthquake. More than 4,600 people have been confirmed killed in the quake, a death toll that is sure to rise considerably as rescue teams continue to work toward the epicenter.

Sure, Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries and infrastructure is of far lower quality than in America. But a quake that measures 7.8 on the Richter Scale will be terribly destructive wherever it hits.

That's where cellphones can save lives, and they don't require any expensive infrastructure upgrades or wonky emergency management decrees.

Almost all smartphones sold in

the U.S. have a plain old FM radio receiver inside. But in many of the phones, the radio is disabled. In iPhones, for instance, the FM receivers are turned off, for no benefit to the consumer.

They are turned off for a simple reason: customers with a device capable of receiving FM radio signals might stream less digital music and download fewer tunes. That translated into fewer dollars for cell companies and app makers.

But those lost pennies in the short term may turn into lost lives in a time of tragedy. As all emergency responders know, communication is key to timely response and

effective use of resources. FM signals can be an excellent way to reach citizens when electricity is sparse and Internet and television is knocked out. Using an FM signal is not nearly the battery suck as live streaming news and music via an online application.

Some of the largest radio lobbyists, such as National Public Radio, have been campaigning to get those radios switched on. They want Congress to require cellphone companies to flip the switch, or at least give customers the option to do so themselves.

The industry even created an app called NextRadio that manages local FM stations. It makes sense to have that communication device at our fingertips.

Hopefully we won't need to depend on our cellphones for radio signals in the case of a catastrophe. But someone, somewhere, will benefit from it. At no cost, we might as well flip the switch and allow it.

Inside of most smartphones is an FM radio receiver, which has been disabled to no benefit of the consumer.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Two issues on May ballot is just the beginning

Voters of Pendleton, don't spend all of your fortune on the Pendleton School District special levy and Blue Mountain Community College bond election. The city of Pendleton needs your money also. In July the city council will raise your water and sewer rates without your vote. There is also a new utility (stormwater system) that needs to be funded.

Last year the city proposed a \$10 million bond issue that somehow missed the ballot. I think there will be a repeat of some kind of bond issue this fall.

The next thing that needs your money is the fire station at 911 S.W. Court Avenue. The over \$70,000 assessment by a Portland company is not good. I do not know how the fire station is still standing up, according to the assessment. Maybe anyone who owns a home built before 1959 should be careful that their house does not fall down when they are in bed. The city will probably be seeking money for a new fire station near Main Street in November.

The last thing is funding for street repair. Watch when the new budget is released. See if the council has added any money from the general fund for street repair. This can be done but it will mean cuts in funding for parks, recreation and the aquatic center. Fees for use of city-owned property need to be raised so that the taxpayer is not paying the lion's share of the cost of operating these facilities. Free stuff is good for some people, but not the taxpayers. Enough is enough.

I am not telling you to vote no on school and college issues. Just remember more is on the way. Your vote counts.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

BMCC helps industries at Port of Morrow

The ability to obtain a quality post-high school education close to home made sense to Morrow and Umatilla county taxpayers when they voted overwhelmingly to establish Blue Mountain Community College in 1962.

That support has been rewarded as BMCC has evolved over the past 53 years into a respected provider of the classes and training needed to prepare our citizens to fill the many good paying jobs available in our region. Continuing on with that tradition of excellence, the college is working in partnership with key industries and the Port of Morrow to identify and establish the courses and certifications needed by today's workforce. A workforce training center dedicated to that effort paves a bright pathway to the future for our students and citizens.

Please join us in voting yes for the BMCC bond levy.

Gary and Kathy Neal
Boardman

Plass uniquely qualified for BMCC board post

Do you want a person on the Blue Mountain Community College Board who is experienced, dedicated and informed? We know that Susan Plass is the person you will want to vote for.

Susan is experienced. She has over 30 years experience in higher education, including the last ten years of her career as director of grants for BMCC.

She knows the strengths and challenges of a community college in a rural area. She understands that a community college provides students with opportunities while also supporting the economic growth of those communities which the college serves.

Susan is dedicated. As director of grants for BMCC those ten years, she worked on special projects and was instrumental in raising \$9.1 million of external revenue for BMCC. These revenues supported academic programs and student services as well as the physical plant.

Susan is informed. With her experience in higher education, she understands the responsibilities of a board member. She sees that BMCC needs to look forward; she will continue to seek information to help determine the best course for the future of BMCC.

Bob and Jill Heffner
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

Goodness and power

There was an interesting poll result about Hillary Clinton last week. According to a Quinnipiac poll, 60 percent of independent voters believe that she has strong leadership qualities. But when these same voters were asked if she is honest and trustworthy, the evaluations flipped. Sixty-one percent said she is not honest and trustworthy. Apparently there are a lot of Americans who believe that Hillary Clinton is dishonest and untrustworthy but also a strong leader.

Let's set aside her specific case for a second. These poll results raise a larger question: Can you be a bad person but a strong leader?

The case for that proposition is reasonably straightforward. Politics is a tough, brutal arena. People play by the rules of the jungle. Sometimes to get anything done, a leader has to push, bully, intimidate, elide the truth. The qualities that make you a good person in private life — kindness, humility and a capacity for introspection — can be drawbacks on the public stage. Electing a president is different than finding a friend or lover. It's better to hire a ruthless person to do a hard job.

I get that argument, but outside the make-believe world of "House of Cards," it's usually wrong. Voting for someone with bad private morals is like setting off on a battleship with awesome guns and a rotting hull. There's a good chance you're going to sink before the voyage is over.

People who are dishonest, unkind and inconsiderate have trouble attracting and retaining good people to their team. They tend to have sleazy friends. They may be personally canny, but they are almost always surrounded by sycophants and second-raters who kick up scandal and undermine the leader's effectiveness.

Leaders who lack humility are fragile. Their pride is bloated and sensitive. People are never treating them as respectfully as they think they deserve. They become consumed with resentments. They treat politics as battle, armor up and wall themselves off to information and feedback.

You may think they are championing your cause or agenda, but when the fur is flying, they are really only interested in defending themselves. They keep an enemies list and life becomes a matter of settling scores and imagining conspiracies. They jettison any policy that might hurt their standing.

It is a paradox of politics that the people who set out obsessively to succeed in it usually end up sabotaging themselves. They treat each relationship as a transaction and don't generate loyalty. They lose any honest



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

internal voice. After a while they can't accurately perceive themselves or their situation. Sooner or later their Watergate will come.

Maybe once upon a time there was an environment in which ruthless Machiavellians had room to work their dark arts, but we don't live in Renaissance Italy. We live in a world of universal media attention. Once there is a hint of scandal of any kind, the political world goes into maximum frenzy and everything stops.

We live in a world in which power is dispersed. You can't intimidate people by chopping your enemies to bits in the town square. Even the presidency isn't a powerful enough office to allow a leader to rule by fear. You have to build coalitions by appealing to

people's self-interest and by luring them voluntarily to your side.

Modern politics, like private morality, is about building trust and enduring personal relationships. That means being fair, empathetic, honest and trustworthy. If you stink at establishing trust, you stink at politics.

People with good private morality are better at navigating for the long term. They genuinely love causes beyond themselves. When the news cycle distracts and the short-term passions

surge, they can still steer by that distant star. They're less likely to overreact and do something stupid.

People with astute moral sentiments have an early warning system. They don't have to think through the dangers of tit-for-tat favor-exchanges with billionaires. They have an aesthetic revulsion against people who seem icky and situations that are distasteful, which heads off a lot of trouble.

Of course, private morality is not enough. You have to know how to react to unprincipled people who want to destroy you.

But, historically, most effective leaders — like, say, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill — had a dual consciousness. They had an earnest, inner moral voice capable of radical self-awareness, rectitude and great compassion. They also had a pragmatic, canny outer voice. These two voices were in constant conversation, checking each other, probing for synthesis, wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove.

I don't know if Hillary Clinton possesses this double-mindedness. But I do know that if candidates don't acquire a moral compass outside of politics, they're not going to get it in the White House, and they won't be effective there.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.



LETTERS POLICY

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