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OUR VIEW

The long road to normalization

Medical marijuana moratoriums across Eastern Oregon are lifting. A year ago, fueled by fear and ignorance, these bans were instituted as a way to slow the prevalence of pot and keep people from convenient access to their medicine. But a year later, they are coming off the books without much of a fuss.

The slow but steady journey to marijuana normalization has begun. Even in Pendleton, where progress is always slow, the moratorium was officially lifted on Tuesday. While dispensaries remain effectively banned because of the city's business license rules, the ball is rolling and it is possible that dispensaries may soon be a part of the city's business community.

Some municipalities are moving faster, some slower. La Grande has long had rules in place to allow and govern medical marijuana dispensaries. On the other end of the scale, both the city and county

of Umatilla have extended their moratoriums while committees, councilors and commissioners invent rules for the new industry. Hermiston's outright ban on both medical and recreational

dispensaries will look more archaic with each passing month.

But as much as some governmental bodies seem content to delay the decision making, the calendar won't wait. It has recently flipped to May, as the flowers outside the window will attest.

It is T-minus 55 days until we enter

the marijuana era in Oregon, when it becomes legal for adults to recreationally grow and use the drug.

The road to normalization in this state will have plenty of bumps and bruises and misunderstandings. But those who walk down that road of their own accord and deal with problems as they arise will be much better off than those that must be dragged kicking and screaming into the future.

In less than 60 days, recreational marijuana will be legal for adults in Oregon.

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

FCC must reverse decision on Internet neutrality

The Federal Communications Commission's recent decision to place the Internet under public utility rules will inflict massive costs on customers, particularly those living in rural areas with limited Internet access.

Lawmakers in Washington have an obligation to correct this mistake before the regulations begin to take their toll. I appreciate Representative Greg Walden's leadership in reversing the FCC's misstep.

Never before has the FCC asserted such broad control over the broadband industry. The industry has thrived, allowing the Internet to evolve at its own pace.

As a result, today the Internet is a vibrant source of innovation, generating billions in economic activity and millions of jobs. Now this progress could come to a screeching halt. Companies that have relied for years on a much lighter regulatory regime now face a world of uncertainty.

With the future in such limbo, companies will undoubtedly cut back investment into building new networks. The solution is for Congress to reinstate the restrained framework that has been so critical to the Internet's success. Unless Congress takes action soon, the FCC's rules threaten to virtually choke the Internet as we know it.

Polly Johnson
Pendleton

Too much of our tax bill goes to education

I am voting no on the Blue Mountain Community College bond and the Pendleton School District local option levy. Here are my reasons for voting no:

The Blue Mountain Community College Bond includes \$8.6 million for what I call maintenance. A homeowner cannot levy a tax on his neighbors to pay for repairs to his home.

Why can't the college spend money each year for upkeep from its budget? I have not heard of any plan to keep this from happening again in a few years.

If the Pendleton School District tax levy passes it will be 20 years of override levies. My idea of an override levy is short-term help until a taxing district can solve a problem. Twenty years is long enough to correct the district's overspending. You can only live on a credit card so long.

Everybody agrees that education is important, but if both taxes pass

education will be 46 percent of my tax bill. I want some money left for fire, ambulance, police, roads, jails and other city and county necessary expenses.

If you don't vote, don't complain.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

BMCC a major factor in Eastern Oregon economy

I am writing to encourage my fellow voters to support the Blue Mountain Community College bond in the upcoming election.

As a BMCC graduate, I know the benefits I have enjoyed as a result of that experience. It helped me stay in Eastern Oregon for my career. The annual list of local graduates demonstrates the benefits that BMCC bestows on our area.

BMCC is also a major factor in economic development. The ability to identify and respond to workforce training needs is crucial to attracting new employers and supporting existing employers. In addition to that, the availability of higher education resources is an important amenity that is increasingly important in economic development.

BMCC is an asset that we need to support. The original campus was built in 1962 and we need to maintain it.

Please join me in voting yes on the BMCC bond measure.

Tim Mabry
Hermiston

Plass an exemplary candidate for BMCC

Quality board members are critical to any organization, and Blue Mountain Community College will be well served by having Susan Plass on its Board of Education.

I had the privilege of working with Susan for eight years at BMCC. As director of grants, she was extremely skilled at forming internal collaborations while solving problems to meet grant specifications and articulating college needs. She worked diligently to build reliable budgets and keep all partners well informed during the grant process. Her quality (and very successful) work generated over \$9 million in grant revenue for BMCC.

Susan Plass values the BMCC mission and is willing to serve in a board capacity to help the college evolve and grow. She is an exemplary candidate and deserves our vote.

Karen L. Hill
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

Germany, the green superpower

BERLIN — A week at the American Academy in Berlin leaves me with two contradictory feelings: One is that Germany today deserves a Nobel Peace Prize, and the other is that Germany tomorrow will have to overcome its deeply ingrained post-World War II pacifism and become a more serious, activist global power. And I say both as a compliment.

On the first point, what the Germans have done in converting almost 30 percent of their electric grid to solar and wind energy from near zero in about 15 years has been a great contribution to the stability of our planet and its climate.

The centerpiece of the German "Energiewende," or energy transformation, was an extremely generous "feed-in tariff" that made it a no-brainer for Germans to install solar power (or wind) at home and receive a predictable high price for the energy generated off their own rooftops.

There is no denying that the early days of the feed-in tariff were expensive. The subsidies cost billions of euros, paid for through a surcharge on everyone's electric bill. But the goal was not simply to buy more renewable energy: It was to create demand that would drive down the cost of solar and wind to make them mainstream, affordable options. And, in that, the energiewende has been an undiluted success. With price drops of more than 80 percent for solar, and 55 percent for wind, zero-carbon energy is now competitive with fossil fuels here.

"In my view the greatest success of the German energy transition was giving a boost to the Chinese solar panel industry," said Ralf Fuecks, the president of the Heinrich-Boell-Stiftung, the German Green Party's political foundation. "We created the mass market, and that led to the increased productivity and dramatic decrease in cost." And all this in a country whose northern tip is the same latitude as the southern tip of Alaska!

This is a world-saving achievement. And, happily, as the price fell, the subsidies for new installations also dropped. The Germans who installed solar ended up making money, which is why the program remains popular, except in coal-producing regions. Today, more than 1.4 million German households and cooperatives are generating their own solar/wind electricity. "There are now a thousand energy cooperatives operated by private people," said energy economist Claudia Kemfert.

Oliver Krischer, the vice chairman of the Green Party's parliamentary group, told me: "I have a friend who comes home, and, if the sun is shining, he doesn't even say hello to his wife. He first goes downstairs and looks at the meter to see what (electricity) he has produced himself. ... The idea now is that energy is something you can (produce) on your own. It's a new development." And it has created so much pushback against the



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

country's four major coal/nuclear utilities that one of them, E.On, just split into two companies — one focusing on squeezing the last profits from coal, oil, gas and nuclear, while the other focuses on renewables. Germans jokingly call them "E.Off" and "E.On."

One problem: Germany still has tons of cheap, dirty lignite coal that is used as backup power for wind and solar, because cleaner natural gas is more expensive and nuclear is being phased out.

So if that's the story on renewable power, how about national power? Two generations

Today, more than 1.4 million German households and cooperatives are generating their own solar and wind electricity.

after World War II, Germany's reticence to project any power outside its borders is deeply ingrained in the political psyche here. That is a good thing, given Germany's past. But it is not sustainable. There is an impressive weight to Germany today — derived from the quality of its governing institution, its rule of law and the sheer power of its economy built on midsize businesses — that is unique in Europe.

When you talk to German officials about Greece, their main complaint is not about Greek fiscal policy, which is better lately, but about the rot and corruption in Greece's governing institutions. The Greeks "couldn't implement the structural reforms they needed, if they wanted to," one German financial official said to me. Athens' institutions are a mess.

With the United States less interested in Europe, Britain fading away both from the European Union and the last vestiges of its being a global military power, France and Italy economically hobbled and most NATO members shrinking their defense budgets, I don't see how Germany avoids exercising

This is a world-saving achievement.

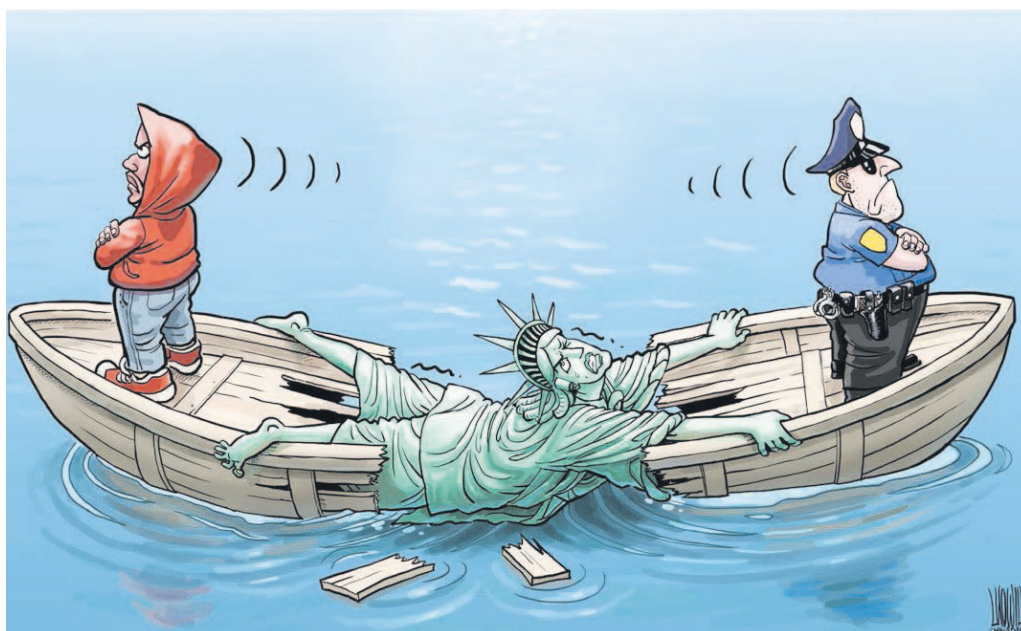
more leadership. Its economic sanctions are already the most important counter to Russian aggression in Ukraine. And in the Mediterranean Sea, where Europe faces a rising tide of refugees (and where

Russia and China just announced that their navies will hold a joint exercise in mid-May), Germany will have to catalyze some kind of EU naval response.

The relative weight of German power vis-à-vis the rest of Europe just keeps growing, but don't say that out loud here. A German foreign policy official put their dilemma this way: "We have to get used to assuming more leadership and be aware of how reluctant others are to have Germany lead — so we have to do it through the EU."

Here's my prediction: Germany will be Europe's first green, solar-powered superpower. Can those attributes coexist in one country, you ask? They're going to have to.

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.



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.

DEADLINE TODAY!

Editor's note: Letters to the editor regarding issues on the May ballot must be received by the *East Oregonian* by 5 p.m. May 7 to ensure publication in time for our May 9 edition. Letters received after the deadline will be posted online but not in print. Email your thoughts to editor@eastoregonian.com or drop them at 211 S.E. Byers in Pendleton.