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**KATHRYN B. BROWN**  
Publisher

**DANIEL WATTENBURGER**  
Managing Editor

**JENNINE PERKINSON**  
Advertising Director

**TIM TRAINOR**  
Opinion Page Editor

**OUR VIEW**

# Tea party must freshen its cup

We like to think of Eastern Oregon as a bastion of conservatism. But when it comes down to it, we don't always vote that way.

Take Tuesday's results. The headline victory was the passage of the Blue Mountain Community College bond, an issue that failed narrowly little more than a year ago. As election day drew near, the anti-taxer statements against the bond — and other issues, like Pendleton schools levy — became more noticeable. Yard signs started going up. A billboard was erected outside Hermiston decrying "BMCC bondage." A giant pig was trucked into Pendleton, sporting anti-bond slogans. Letters to the editor asked people to not give more money and more power to government institutions.

But when the votes were tallied, yes beat no. Part of that is due to the hard work BMCC put into rallying their troops and making sure the bond was airtight. But part of it, too, is that the anti-tax movement bark may be worse than its bite these days. Heck, every Oregon school levy on the ballot Tuesday passed — in places both liberal and conservative, urban and rural.

Locally, chair of the Greater Hermiston Tea Party, Rob Lovett, was thumped in his race to win a seat on the Hermiston School District board. His opponent, David Smith, got twice as many votes. Staunch conservative James Leitch went down too, albeit by a tighter margin. The Pendleton Schools levy passed by a wider margin than it did in the recession-lean year of 2010.

Sure, some measures failed: the Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District issue went down by 100 votes in

Morrow County. Public safety levies went down again in Southern Oregon, home to some of the most staunch "no" voters in America. They may have to close a jail in Josephine County, or the sheriff's office may have to stop patrolling altogether.

Taxes are an eternal issue in America. The cost to live in Pendleton, for instance, is getting ready to skyrocket as the city tries to get a handle on its crumbling infrastructure. And there will always be plenty of people grumbling about the amount of our hard work that is siphoned away by the government. No one likes that feeling. But it's something else to be entirely unwilling to recognize the benefits we receive from those dollars.

As the hard-edged, gruff and uncompromising voices fade, we're hopeful a new "tea party" candidate emerges. One who can make the pitch for less spending without being abrasive or paranoid. A person who can show they understand the importance of education, while explaining how that value is reduced by inefficiencies and well-intentioned but dead-end investments. They might even win a seat on a board, or convince a district to think differently about what we want from our government.

The problem with the tea party at this point is that it comes across as so anti-community, intentionally or not. That just doesn't fly in Eastern Oregon, where friends and neighbors and social organizations make out world go 'round.

"Compassionate conservative" was a buzzword about a decade ago. We'd love for that movement to make an appearance locally.

**The yes votes outnumbered the no votes. Maybe the anti-tax movement bark is worse than its bite these days.**

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**

## Another voice for self-serve gas

*Klamath Falls Herald and News*

People living in remote areas of Oregon or traveling through them will get a break in finding gas available if the state Senate follows the lead of the Legislature's House of Representatives.

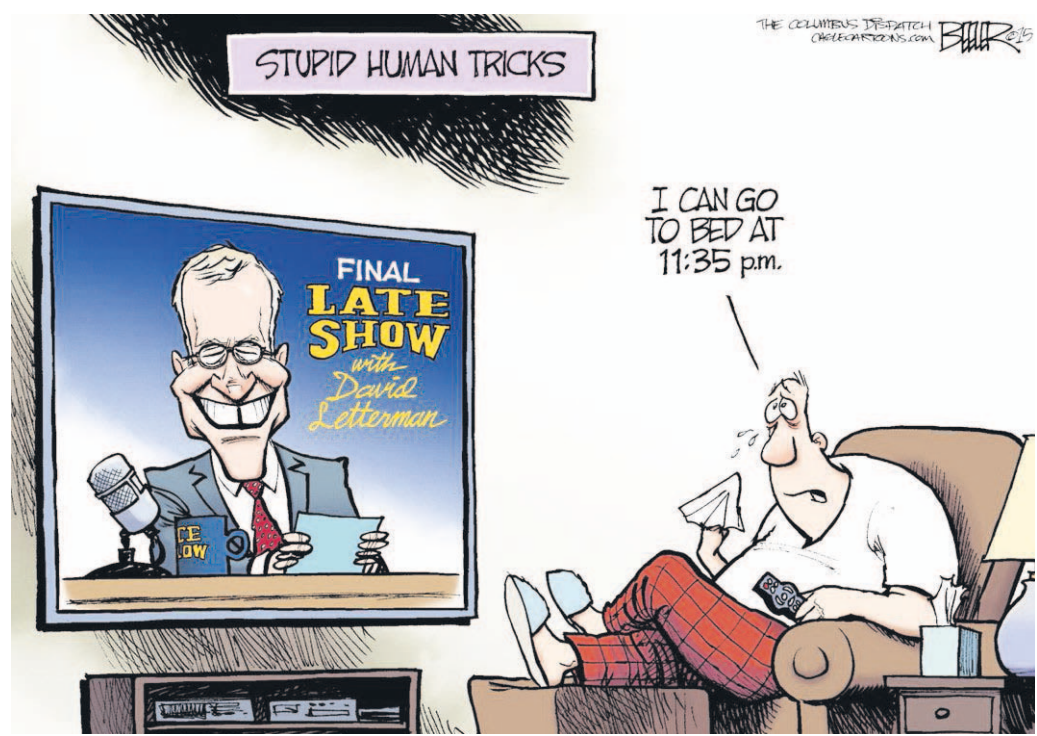
The Oregon House unanimously approved a bill that would legalize self-service gas "stations," which actually amounts to a pump available for use on a self-pay basis when no attendants are at the station, say in the middle of the night. It was common sense to do so and the state Senate should approve it, too, and send it on to Gov. Kate Brown. It would apply to counties with less than 40,000 population, such as Lake County (population 7,838), but not in Klamath County (population 64,455).

**It's a big help to farmers and ranchers.**

There are a lot of wide open spaces in Eastern Oregon. People can find themselves in trouble if not familiar with how unlikely it is for that dot 50 or 60 miles down the thin blue line on the road map to have a gas station open after 7 p.m. or, in many cases, any other time.

We doubt if the move is a significant step toward self-service gasoline in Oregon, though, and that's too bad. We're in favor of any way, including self-service, to sell gasoline that is safe and makes it readily available to those who need it, including those who are physically limited.

Not only would this bill benefit people passing through isolated areas, it would help farmers and ranchers and others living there even more. The state Senate should approve it.



**OTHER VIEWS**

# Platinum pay in ivory towers

Gregory Fenves recently got a big promotion, from provost to president of the University of Texas at Austin. A raise came with it. Instead of his current base of about \$425,000, he was offered \$1 million.

And he rejected it — as too much. "With many issues and concerns about administrative costs, affordability and tuition, such a salary will affect the ability of the president to work with the Texas Legislature," Fenves wrote to a university official, in an email obtained by *The Austin American-Statesman* and published last week.

He suggested, and agreed to, \$750,000.

That's hardly chump change. But in the context of the shockingly lucrative deals that have become almost commonplace among college presidents, the sum — or, more precisely, the sentiment behind it — is worthy of note and praise.

Too few presidents give adequate thought to the symbolism and dissonance of extraordinarily generous compensation packages, which are in sync with this era of lavish executive pay and glaring income inequality but out of line with the ostensible mission of academia.

Ideally, higher education is dedicated to values different from those that govern Wall Street and corporate America. It supposedly calls students to more soulful concerns, even to sacrifice.

But that message is muddled when some of the people who run colleges wallow in payments and perks that would once have been considered vulgar.

For E. Gordon Gee's final year as the president of Ohio State University, which he left in 2013, he got a package of more than \$6 million, as was widely reported. It was a one-time bonanza, including deferred payments and severance, but he'd earned roughly \$2 million annually over the previous years.

The Chronicle of Higher Education analyzed salary information for private colleges from 2012, the most recent year available, and found that Shirley Ann Jackson, the president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, received a package worth over \$7 million.

John L. Lahey of Quinnipiac University: about \$3.75 million. Lee Bollinger of Columbia University: almost \$3.4 million.

Fenves' salary as the president of the University of Texas puts him well behind that of his counterpart at Texas A&M University, who has an annual base of \$1 million plus \$400,000 in additional compensation, according to *The American-Statesman*.

Each profligate compensation package breeds more like it, as schools' trustees convince themselves that they must keep pace in order to recruit, retain and receive

the precious fairy dust of the heaviest hitters.

They reason that "this is a winner-take-all society and that people with extremely high levels of talent are richly rewarded," said Richard Vedder, the director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity.

"But I think that things are getting out of hand, especially given the tax-exempt nature of universities," he told me. "They're in privileged positions, and they were given these privileged positions not to enrich themselves but to serve society. These presidents are expected to live quite nicely but not exorbitantly and not extravagantly."

Their extravagance strikes an especially discordant note in light of the challenges confronting higher education today, and it undercuts their moral authority.

**Their extravagance strikes an especially discordant note in light of the challenges confronting higher education today, and it undercuts their moral authority.**

How do you defend the transfer of teaching responsibilities to low-paid, part-time adjuncts when the president is sitting so pretty? How do you cut administrative costs, which indeed need cutting? How do you explain steep tuition increases, mammoth student debt and the failure to admit more children from poor families?

How do you summon students back to the liberal arts and away from mercenary priorities?

The high salaries are frequently defended on the grounds that a university president's job is all consuming. But if it is, how do so many of them find time to serve, for hundreds of thousands of extra dollars, on corporate boards? Rensselaer's Jackson was at one point on

five boards simultaneously.

The high salaries are also defended in terms of the fundraising that certain presidents reputedly excel at, covering their compensation many times over.

But do they deserve sole credit for those donations? And at nonprofit institutions, should money be the main yardstick and currency? Shouldn't ethics compete with economics, as they sometimes do when a school invests its endowment?

The lofty pay of college presidents is part of higher education's increasingly corporate bent, of the blurred lines between the campus and the marketplace.

And like the private enrichment of many political candidates who speak of "public service," it's not just a mirror of our pervasive money culture. It's a green light for it, from precincts of principle where a flashing yellow would be more appropriate.

Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for *The New York Times* since June 2011, joined the *New York Times* in 1995. Over his years, he has worn a wide variety of hats, including chief restaurant critic and Rome bureau chief.

**YOUR VIEWS**

### EO coverage of small school track not up to snuff

To the *East Oregonian* sports department: I was disappointed but not surprised that you didn't send a reporter to the Columbia Basin Conference district track championship in Stanfield last Friday. You haven't covered a small school track meet this year.

Our family is a track family, both our boys going to state for Pilot Rock. The *EO* used to send a reporter to our district meets; now you don't even list the names of the kids that

worked so hard to make that trip to state.

So my family would like to say "good job" to all the athletes that are going to state, and all the athletes that competed this year for your schools. You are all winners and should have been noticed and praised, like all the other hard working athletes in other local sports have been.

Remember, track is the oldest sport in the world. Good luck at state, Columbia Basin Conference track athletes.

Loal King  
Pilot Rock

**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.

