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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

Tip of the hat to the multiple groups in Pendleton who came together to make sure the city has a Fourth of July fireworks show this year.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles deserves credit for taking on the risk and the work. The Pendleton Round-Up and Wildhorse Casino deserve credit for ponying up the dough. And residents deserve credit for speaking up and telling the city that you just can’t wish America a happy birthday without some colorful explosions.

There was some pushback that the fireworks show will happen on July 3, not on the holiday proper. But moving the show up a day is a pro, not a con.

Fourth of July fireworks on July 3 is actually an awesome alternative.



It’s not so much this year, because July 4 falls on a Saturday, square in the middle of the weekend. But more often than not, it falls on a weekday when hardworking Americans are only able to cash in on one day of vacation. When that’s the case, fireworks on holiday eve are even better. You can stay up late, get a little silly, sleep in the next morning and then go out and celebrate the good ol’ US of A by barbecuing your buns off. Is this a great country or what?

A tip of the hat to our standout stars of a successful springs sports season in Eastern Oregon.

Most impressive may have been the all-Eastern Oregon softball final between Pilot Rock and Weston-McEwen, won in dramatic fashion with a game-winning play at the plate. The Rockets took home the title, but both programs should be congratulated for excellent seasons.



We can’t forget those girls from Milton-Freewater either. Mac-Hi’s softball team stormed through the playoffs, en route to their second-straight state title. Can they go for a three in a row? We’ll find out next spring.

Pendleton’s softball team excelled as well, but dropped their nail-biter of a state title game to finish as runners-up. And the baseball team pulled off upset after upset in their side of the tournament, coming up just short of making a state title game appearance of their own.

All in all, it was a season of showing the boys and girls of Eastern Oregon can really play some ball.

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OTHER VIEWS

Limiting campaign contributions

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Oregonians have voted in favor of campaign contribution limits three times, with the earliest measure winning approval in 1908. Each attempt was eventually spiked by the state Supreme Court on grounds that the Oregon Constitution provides bulletproof protection for free speech, including the kind in which money does the talking. Campaign contribution limits pass constitutional muster in 44 states and at the federal level, but not in Oregon. Voters deserve a chance to say whether that should be changed.

Senate Joint Resolution 5 would provide that opportunity. It would place on the November 2016 ballot a proposal to add a simple amendment to the state Constitution: “The Legislative Assembly, or the people through the initiative process, may enact laws limiting or prohibiting contributions made in connection with political campaigns.”

That’s it. SJR 5 does not ask legislators to establish specific limits on campaign contributions. It doesn’t require that they endorse limits of any kind. Approval of SJR 5 would mean nothing more than that the Legislature believes the voters ought to decide whether to remove the constitutional impediment that blocks limits.

A separate piece of legislation, Senate Bill 75, would set specific limits that would take effect if SJR 5 is approved. The proposed limits are equal to those in federal law: Individual donors could give up to \$2,600 to candidates, and political action committees could give up to \$5,000.

Those limits sound about right, but Gov. Kate Brown has a better idea: On Wednesday she asked the Legislature to create a task force to recommend appropriate contribution limits.

Brown, at whose behest SJR 5 was introduced while she was secretary of state, called for the task force after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in a May 26 ruling, tossed out Montana’s contribution limits on grounds that they were too low — a maximum of \$170, for instance, for individual donations to legislative candidates. Because no limits could take effect until after the voters laid the constitutional groundwork late next year, Oregon has plenty of time to consider what the appropriate limits

would be.

But the task force would have a deadline. Oregon’s last attempt to limit campaign contributions came in 2006, when voters faced a pair of initiatives — a constitutional amendment to allow limits, and a statutory proposal establishing specific limits.

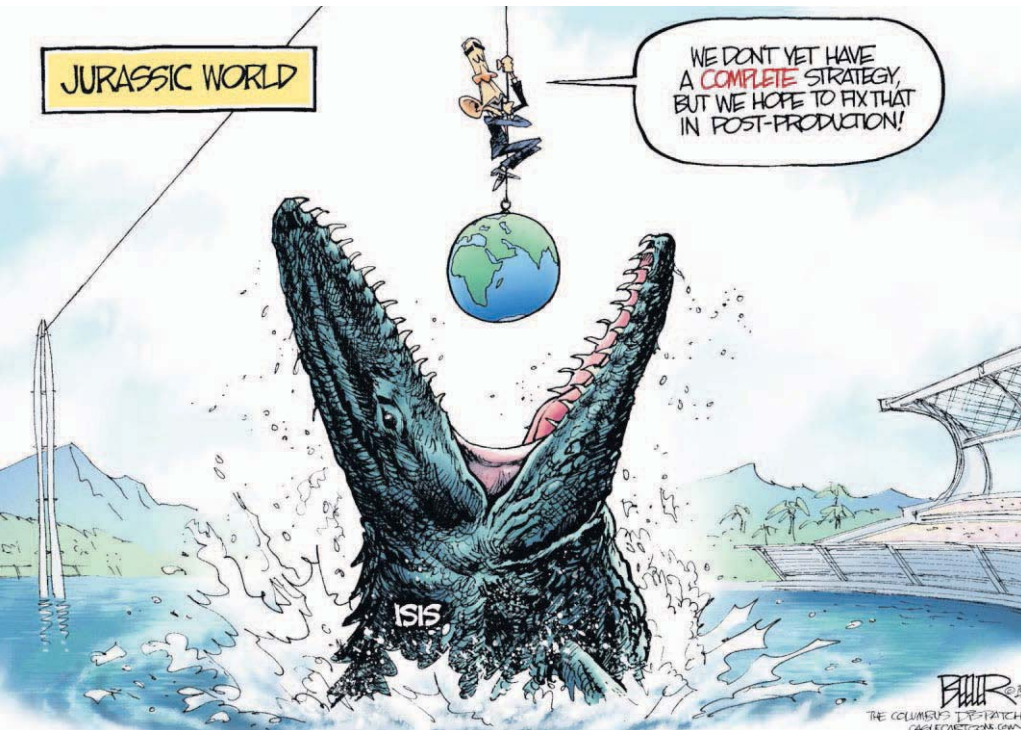
The split 2006 vote is evidence of Oregonians’ healthy wariness of proposals that might weaken the free-speech protections their constitution provides. But SJR 5 would not place an asterisk alongside the ironclad guarantees in Article I, Oregon’s Bill of Rights. It would amend Article II, which deals with elections.

There’s also reason to scale back hopes that SJR 5 would reduce the amount of money in politics. Contribution limits are no panacea; if one door is closed, money will find its way into the political system through another. The U.S. Supreme Court, with its 2010 Citizens United decision, threw one door wide open by prohibiting limits on political spending by independent groups whose activities are supposedly not associated with candidates’ campaigns — even when it’s clear that candidates and independent groups are moving with the unspoken coordination of a synchronized swimming team.

But while there’s reason to doubt that SJR 5 would restore Oregon politics to some imagined golden age of political purity, there is strong evidence that the lack of limits on campaign donations has unwanted effects.

According to *The Oregonian*, legislative campaigns in Oregon are the second most costly in the nation on a per-capita basis, trailing only New Jersey. The National Institute on Money in State Politics lists Oregon as having the 12th-highest spending on legislative races in 2010. All 11 states with higher spending had larger populations than Oregon.

Expensive campaigns are good for no one but big donors. Candidates who are forced to raise large amounts of money to mount competitive races find themselves beholden to a few powerful groups and wealthy individuals. The voices of those who contribute only a little or nothing are drowned out. The Legislature should give Oregonians a chance to decide whether ensure that more voices are heard in campaigns, and approve SJR 5.



OTHER VIEWS

GOP rivals see opportunity in Hillary’s weakness

At its most basic level, Hillary Clinton’s polling problem is pretty simple: Everybody knows her.

When a poll reveals that, say, 20 percent of voters have a favorable impression of Candidate A, and 30 percent have an unfavorable impression, and 50 percent don’t know enough to have any impression — well, it’s not great news, but it also says Candidate A has room to grow. He or she can work on that big group of undecideds and try to leave them with a favorable impression.



BYRON YORK
Comment

Clinton, perhaps the most famous woman in the United States, if not the world, doesn’t have that opportunity. In the latest CNN poll of the Democratic presidential race, for example, just 3 percent said they have no opinion of her. Fifty percent said they have an unfavorable opinion her, versus 46 percent favorable.

For Clinton to surpass 50 percent favorable, she will have to convince people who already know her, and who have probably known her for years, to change their opinion of her. Not an easy task.

The CNN survey, and other similar polls released recently, shows some pretty significant structural problems for Clinton. One is the yawning divide between the opinions that men and women have of her.

“Want to talk gender gaps? She has a huge one,” notes one adviser to a Republican presidential campaign. The adviser points to several in the CNN poll:

- When asked whether Clinton “cares about people like you,” 57 percent of women said yes, while just 36 percent of men said the same — a 21-point gender gap.
- When asked whether Clinton “inspires confidence,” 57 percent of women said yes, while just 41 percent of men said so — a 16-point gender gap.
- When asked whether Clinton “is honest and trustworthy,” 49 percent of women said yes, while just 34 percent of men agreed — a 15-point gender gap.
- When asked if they have an overall favorable or unfavorable opinion of Clinton, 54 percent of women said favorable, while just 38 percent of men said the same — a 16-point gender gap.

“Those are the definition of problematic data,” notes the GOP campaign adviser. “Imagine the story if these numbers existed for a Republican.”

The numbers also suggest Clinton could

have problems trying to match Barack Obama’s winning performance in 2008 and 2012. Obama did well with women, winning 56 percent in 2008 and 55 percent in 2012, according to exit polls. Clinton might well replicate, or maybe even exceed, those numbers.

But Obama also did reasonably well with men, too — winning 49 percent in 2008 and 45 percent in 2012. Can Clinton do that? It’s unclear.

It should be noted that simply having an unfavorable impression of a candidate does not mean a voter will not vote for that candidate; faced with an either-or choice in a general election, voters often hold their noses and cast a ballot for a candidate they don’t really like. But the more voters dislike Clinton, the greater Republicans’ chances of winning undecided voters.

GOP candidates increasingly see openings to press Clinton on the three topics dogging her campaign today — her secret email system, the Clinton Foundation’s financial affairs, and Benghazi — as well as Clinton’s near-total silence on all of them.

“The press avoidance and scandals are starting

For Hillary Clinton to win, she will have to convince people who already know her to change their opinion of her.

to take a toll,” says an adviser for another GOP campaign. “Her numbers are sliding backwards as the curtain is starting to get drawn on a lot of these issues. There are definitely opportunities for Republicans.”

There are signs some Republicans are already benefiting. In CNN’s poll back in March, Clinton led Marco Rubio in a head-to-head matchup 55 percent to 42 percent. In the new poll, she leads Rubio 49 percent to 46 percent.

In March, Clinton led Rand Paul 54 percent to 43 percent. Now, she leads 48 percent to 47 percent.

In March, Clinton led Scott Walker 55 percent to 40 percent. Now, she leads 49 percent to 46 percent.

Of course the GOP has problems of its own, but numbers like that convince Republicans they are on the right track — and that Clinton herself will continue to help them in the polls.

“With every shoe that drops, people become more and more convinced that Hillary Clinton cannot be trusted,” says an aide at yet another GOP campaign. “They increasingly believe she’s in this for herself, and that entrusting her with our safety and security is a really, really bad idea.”

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Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.



LETTERS POLICY

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