EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

EO MEDIA GROUP
East Oregonian • The Daily Astorian • Capital Press • Hermiston Herald
Blue Mountain Eagle • Wallowa County Chieftain • Chinook Observer • Coast River Business Journal
Oregon Coast Today • Coast Weekend • Seaside Signal • Cannon Beach Gazette
Eastern Oregon Real Estate Guide • Eastern Oregon Marketplace • Coast Marketplace
OnlyAg.com • FarmSeller.com • Seaside-Sun.com • NorthwestOpinions.com • DiscoverOurCoast.com

MIKE FORRESTER
Pendleton
Chairman of the Board

STEVE FORRESTER
Astoria
President

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Pendleton
Secretary/Treasurer

TOM BROWN
Bigfork, Mont.
Director

JEFF ROGERS
Indianapolis, Ind.
Director

OUR VIEW

Trade bill divides our two senators

This week's vote to provide President Obama with fast-track authority on a far-reaching trans-Pacific trade deal revealed a deepening fissure in the Democratic Party. Nowhere was that more evident than here in Oregon.

While the president and Republican leaders found something to agree on, our two Democratic senators didn't. Their debate provided an illuminating look at their party's internal debate over America's role in the world and the impact of trade on U.S. workers.

As the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, Ron Wyden was co-author of the trade promotion bill. He worked with Republicans and coaxed Democrats to support the deal. He took to the Senate floor to deliver closing arguments ahead of the final vote, which passed 60-38.

"This is our chance to set a new course," Wyden said. "This is our chance to put in place higher standards in global trade … and ensure that our country writes the rules of the road."

Merkley also spoke from the Senate floor, offering an impassioned, point-by-point rebuttal. He argued that the president was wrong in claiming that the deal contained tough environmental and labor standards:

"We are repeating the same basic structure of the other (trade) agreements with no changes for America and therefore no improvements for the workers of America."

> It is in America's strategic interest to set the trade rules for 38 percent of the world's economy.

Their disagreement is unusual. Wyden and Merkley vote the same 92 percent of the time. On farm bills. On trillion-dollar spending bills. And on other major legislation. But on international trade, they go separate ways.

The trade deal pits the interests of two big Democratic Party constituents — the AFL-CIO and the environmental community — against Democrats like Wyden who believe globalization is an opportunity for American workers rather than a threat.

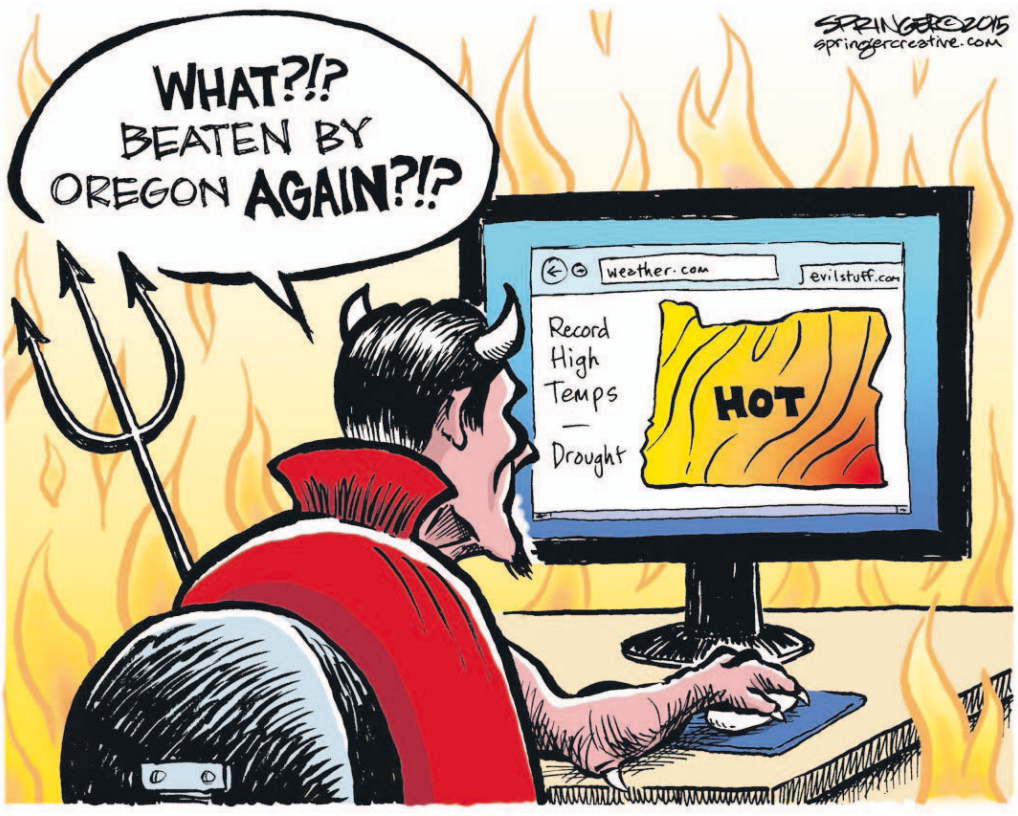
We concur with Wyden. It is in America's strategic interests to set the trade rules for 38 percent of the world's economy. The trade deal also counters China's efforts to create its own Asia-Pacific trade bloc.

Intensified trade, not protectionism, will make Oregon, the nation and our Pacific trading partners more competitive.

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.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

The Robert E. Lee problem

DAVID BROOKS
Comment

The debate about the Charleston, South Carolina Bible study shooting has morphed into a debate about the Confederate battle flag and other symbols of the Confederacy. This is not a trivial sideshow. Racism is not just a personal prejudice and an evolutionary byproduct. It resurfaces year after year because it's been woven by historical events into the fabric of American culture.

That culture is transmitted through the generations by the things we honor or don't honor, by the symbols and names we celebrate and don't celebrate. If we want to reduce racism we have to elevate the symbols that signify the struggle against racism and devalue the symbols that signify its acceptance.

Lowering the Confederate battle flag from public properties is thus an easy call. There are plenty of ways to celebrate Southern heritage and Southern life without choosing one so enmeshed in the fight to preserve slavery.

The harder call concerns Robert E. Lee. Should schools and other facilities be named after the great Confederate general, or should his name be removed and replaced?

The case for Lee begins with his personal character. It is almost impossible to imagine a finer and more considerate gentleman.

As a general and public figure, he was a man of impeccable honesty, integrity and kindness. As a soldier, he displayed courage from the beginning of his career straight through to the end. Despite his blunders at Gettysburg and elsewhere he was by many accounts the most effective general in the Civil War and maybe in American history. One biographer, Michael Korda, writes, "His generosity of spirit, undiminished by ideological or political differences, and even by the divisive, bloody Civil War, shines through in every letter he writes, and in every conversation of his that was reported or remembered."

As a family man, he was surprisingly relaxed and affectionate. We think of him as a man of marble, but he loved having his kids jump into bed with him and tickle his feet. With his wife's loving cooperation, he could write witty and even saucy letters to other women. He was devout in his faith, a gifted watercolorist, a lover of animals and a charming conversationalist.

In theory, he opposed slavery, once calling it "a moral and political evil in any country." He opposed Southern secession, calling it "silly" and a rash revolutionary act. Moreover we shouldn't be overly guilty of the sin of "presentism," judging historical figures by contemporary standards.

The case against Lee begins with the fact that he betrayed his oath to serve the United States. He didn't need to do it. The late historian Elizabeth Brown Pryor demonstrated that 40 percent of Virginia officers decided to remain with the Union forces, including members of Lee's family.

As historian Allen Guelzo emailed me, "He withdrew from the Army and took up arms in a rebellion against the United States." He could have at least sat out the war. But, Guelzo continues, "he raised his hand against the flag and government he had sworn to defend. This more than fulfills the constitutional definition of treason."

More germane, while Lee may have opposed slavery in theory he did nothing to eliminate or reduce it in practice. On the contrary, if he'd been successful in the central task of his life, he would have preserved and prolonged it.

Like Lincoln, he did not believe African-Americans were yet capable of equality. Unlike Lincoln, he accepted the bondage of other human beings with bland complaisance. His wife inherited 196 slaves from her father. Her father's will (somewhat impractically) said they were to be freed, but Lee didn't free them.

Every generation has a duty to root out the stubborn weed of prejudice from the culture. We do that, in part, through expressions of admiration and disdain. Given our history, it seems right to aggressively go the extra mile to show that prejudice is simply unacceptable, no matter how fine a person might otherwise be.

My own view is that we should preserve most Confederate memorials out of respect for the common soldiers. We should keep Lee's name on institutions that reflect postwar service, like Washington and Lee University, where he was president. But we should remove Lee's name from most schools, roads and other institutions, where the name could be seen as acceptance of what he did and stood for during the war.

This is not about rewriting history. It's about shaping the culture going forward.

■

David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times.

OUR VIEW

East Oregonian recycles more than just newsprint

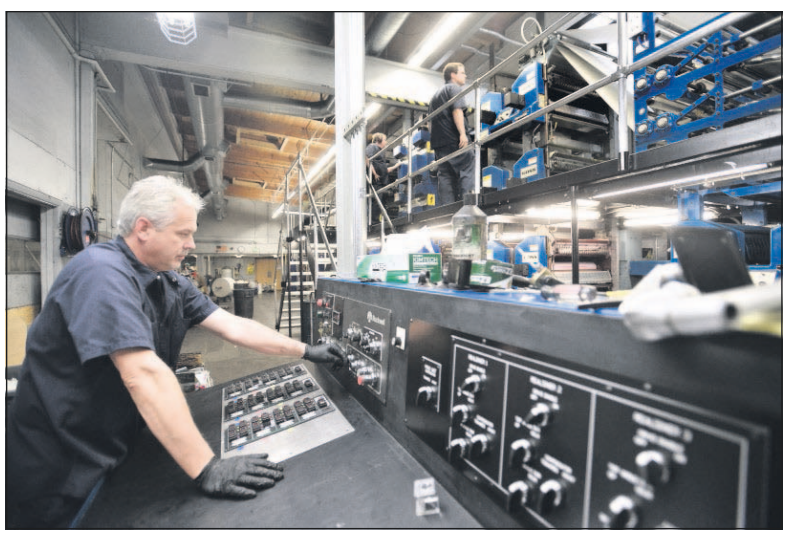
You know us as the *East Oregonian*, the newspaper that arrives five days a week and publishes www.eastoregonian.com, a website devoted to news of Umatilla and Morrow counties.

Most of you also recognize that our company publishes a number of other papers in this part of the state: the *Hermiston Herald*, the *Eastern Oregon Real Estate Guide, Eastern Oregon Marketplace, Eastern Oregon Parent, Blue Mountain Eagle* and *Wallowa County Chieftain*.

Here's something that may surprise you: We issue more than $2.5 million in paychecks each year to our 72 employees in Eastern Oregon. These are journalists, pressmen, sales representatives, bookkeepers and technicians. We also pay a small army of independent contractors another $424,000 to contribute articles and deliver our newspapers in this area.

Most of those hard-earned paychecks are spent in Umatilla County — on mortgages, rent, utilities, food, gas, motor vehicles and other goods and services. These dollars cycle through the local economy, creating other jobs and stimulating commerce.

Our company also spends another $346,000 to cover the health insurance needs of our employees in Eastern Oregon. That provides them with a level of security when they need to see a local health care provider, visit urgent care or seek treatment at St. Anthony or Good Shepherd hospitals.



EO file photo
Pressman Jeff Davis fires up the first run of the East Oregonian newspaper on the new press on July 15, 2013, in Pendleton.

This year, in addition to contributing to employees' 401(k) retirement plans, owners of EO Media Group, the *EO*'s family-owned parent company, have approved a profit share. This lump sum bonus will be added to the retirement accounts of our employees as acknowledgement of their contributions to our success these past 12 months.

As with most businesses, payroll and benefits account for the lion's share of expense. The cost of newsprint pales in comparison.

Our contributions to the local economy go deeper than paychecks. We do business with many Umatilla County companies, most of which are locally owned. Here are a few:

- When our press or building requires electrical supplies or repairs, we call on Gordon's Electric.
- We depend on Wtechlink's fiber to keep us connected to the Internet.
- Stangier Auto Supplies and Zimmerman & Co. are our sources for parts for our press and inserting equipment.
- Tum-a-Lum Lumber is our go-to resource for building supplies.
- Thew's Heating & Cooling and Gordon's Heating & Cooling handle our HVAC needs.
- We fuel up our fleet at Byrnes Oil's Pacific Pride. For tires, we head to Les Schwab, while Premium Tire & Lube does oil changes for our vehicles.
- Frazier Office Supply keeps up with our demand for office paper and supplies.
- Cash & Carry provides us with most of our janitorial supplies.
- When we spring a leak, Rob Merriman Plumbing gets the call.
- Power Pro Concrete is replacing the concrete sidewalk on the west side of our building in Hermiston.

Umatilla County also benefits from the property taxes we pay for our properties in Pendleton and Hermiston. Those taxes help support our schools and cities, making this area a good place to live and raise a family. That, in turn, helps our company when we need to recruit talent from outside the area.

But paying taxes and making payroll is not enough. A newspaper can only be as successful as the communities it serves. That requires leadership.

From its earliest days, the *East Oregonian* has taken the lead in helping Eastern Oregon prosper. The most public example is editor E.B. Aldrich's relentless editorial and personal-action campaign for the construction of McNary Dam. Aldrich first focused attention on the need for the project in 1915 and worked for decades. He lived to see the beginning of McNary Dam's construction in 1947.

Amy Bedford, *EO* owner and public relations director until her death in 2006, was the driving force behind the Umatilla River Parkway in Pendleton.

In 2010, the *EO* made a $30,000 commitment to the Pendleton Round-Up Foundation for the Centennial Plaza project.

Our commitment is ongoing. Each year, the *EO* contributes more than $12,000 annually to local non-profit organizations and schools with cash and in-kind donations.

Our employees are community leaders as well. They volunteer their time for organizations such as Altrusa, Rotary, Guardian Care Center, Agape House and chambers of commerce.

The growth of social media like Facebook and the head-spinning revolution of digital publishing have challenged our company as it has most other businesses. But we embrace this challenge. We believe — now more than ever — that there is a need for a community news organization to make sense of local history as it is written and to provide an essential link between local businesses and customers.

In short, our goal is to reflect, connect and stimulate the communities we serve.

And deliver those paychecks each month.