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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Hermiston for securing a big boon for the city's burgeoning economic development.

The four-story Holiday Inn Express hotel will be the city's largest building when it goes up next year at the corner of Highway 395 and West Hermiston Ave.

But more than just adding to the city's skyline, we think the multi-million dollar investment offers Hermiston an opportunity to invigorate the city's less than energetic downtown. The nearly 100 rooms at the hotel will be filled with travelers who each night will need a place to feed themselves and other places to be entertained. It will offer a big boost to the number of warm bodies walking up and down Main Street, and that is as much economic opportunity as any entrepreneur worth their weight in breadsticks needs.

The city of Hermiston (the largest city in Eastern Oregon, if you haven't heard!) will soon have to start growing up instead of out, if it's going to remain an efficient city with small-town charm. We're not talking about skyscrapers here, but multi-level buildings and infill development will have to be in the city's future, and this downtown boost might be just what the doctor ordered for facilitating that. The future sure looks bright.

A tip of the hat to the Don Requa bronze, which took its place along Statue Boulevard in Pendleton.

In our view, it's the best looking statue on Main Street, and we don't think it detracts from the downtown cowboy and Indian vibe a pinch. Clearly, the statue and its location was plenty controversial for a time. And moving forward, statues definitely need go through a more thorough public process in order to evade such division.

But it's a fine piece of art that means a lot to some people, and it didn't cost taxpayers a nickel. Instead of dividing us, Pendleton residents should welcome their new neighbor.

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

Fair Shot Coalition bills can benefit many

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

A lobbying group that wins enactment of 80 percent of its agenda can congratulate itself for having had a highly productive legislative session. Oregon's Fair Shot Coalition will celebrated that level of success recently, when Gov. Kate Brown is scheduled to sign four of the five bills the group promoted in Salem. The coalition found a winning formula by combining constituencies and causes that in the past have been separate or parallel, creating a potent new political force.

Brown will sign Senate Bill 454, mandating paid sick leave for most employees; House Bill 3025, which makes it illegal for employers to include questions about applicants' criminal histories on job applications; House Bill 2002, which will establish a system for collecting data about racial profiling by police, and House Bill 2960, which takes the first steps toward creating an employee-funded workplace-based retirement savings system for workers without access to a savings plan.

The thread that ties these bills together is that each is aimed at improving the lives of people at the bottom of either the social or the economic pyramid.

The Fair Shot Coalition emerged from a recognition that the two groups heavily overlap. The coalition is made up of labor organizations such as the Service Employees International Union and the Oregon AFL-CIO, and social justice organizations such as the Urban League of Portland and Basic Rights Oregon.

The fifth legislative goal on the coalition's agenda, and the only one that did not win approval, was a minimum wage increase. An increase would directly benefit employees, a primary aim of unions. It would also benefit disproportionate numbers women and members of minority groups, whose welfare is of concern to social-justice groups. Labor and civil rights groups have a long history of finding common cause, but the Fair Shot Coalition sees its members' interests as different sides of the same coin.

HB 3025, the job applicants' criminal history bill, is a case in point. Most jail or prison inmates are low-income people, members of minority groups or both. When these people are released, their best chance of avoiding a return to incarceration is to find a job. But many employers automatically exclude job-seekers who indicate on their applications that they have been convicted of a crime.

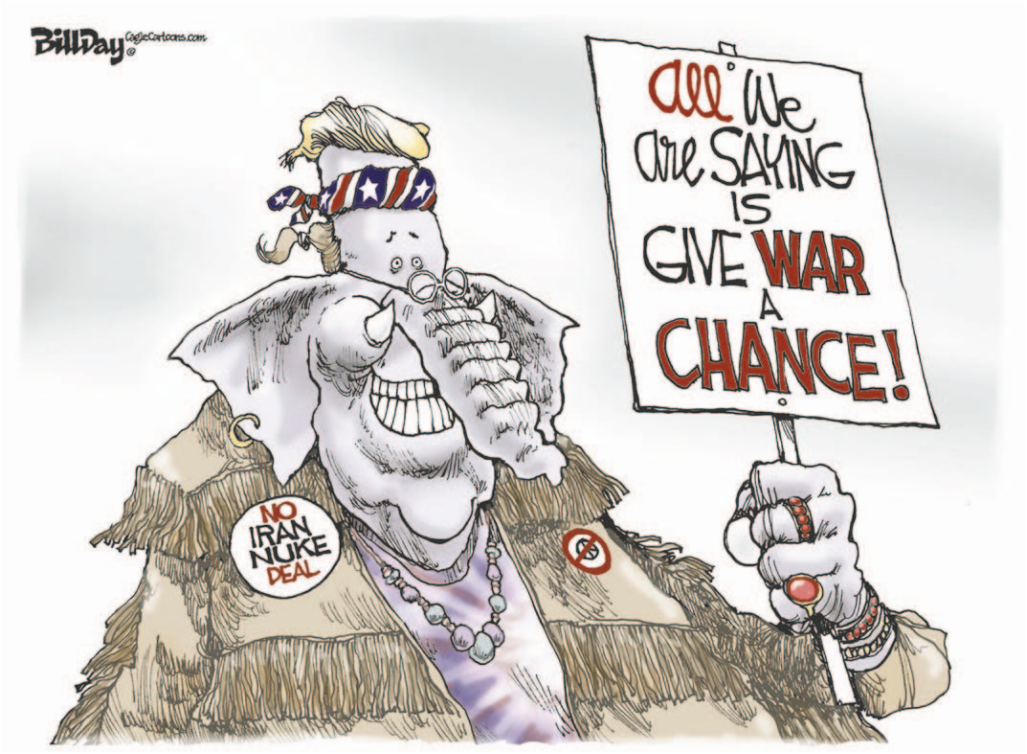
The "ban the box" bill doesn't stop employers from asking about an applicant's criminal history later in the hiring process, or prohibit hiring decisions from being made on the basis, but it will get some people past the first hurdle, giving them a chance to show their qualifications and explain their histories. The Fair Shot Coalition sees this as an issue of both economics and fairness.

Similarly, about half of Oregon workers lack access to a workplace retirement savings plan — and most of those are in lower-wage occupations where large numbers of women and minorities are found. HB 2960, the retirement savings bill, is a start toward giving those workers a more convenient opportunity to begin saving and investing their own money so they can avoid poverty in old age. It's an issue that blurs the lines between labor and social justice — and with the backing of groups committed to both, the bill won legislative approval.

The Fair Shot Coalition can be regarded as being concerned with the quality of life, without making distinctions between whether efforts to improve it are economic, such as mandating paid leave, or in terms of public policy, such as tracking racial profiling by police. The combination addresses both the social and financial struggles of people in Oregon and elsewhere — and bringing those issues under a single umbrella creates a coalition potent enough to promise that today's bill-signing ceremony will be repeated after future legislative sessions.

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

Dalai Lama gets mischievous

NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

The Dalai Lama, who may be the only octogenarian spiritual leader with a profoundly mischievous streak, has a suggestion for China's Communist leaders: Take up reincarnation.

I'm interviewing him in his hotel room in New York, at the end of an overseas tour marking his 80th birthday, and we're talking about what happens after he dies. He is the 14th Dalai Lama, each considered a reincarnation of the previous one, and usually after one has died a search is undertaken for an infant to become the next. But he has said that he may be the last of the line, or that the next Dalai Lama might emerge outside Tibet — or might even be a girl.

This talk infuriates Beijing, which is determined to choose the next Dalai Lama (to use as a tool to control Tibet). So, startlingly, the atheists in the Chinese Communist Party have been insisting that Buddhist reincarnation must continue.

> Beijing is determined to choose the next Dalai Lama as a tool to control Tibet.

"The Chinese Communist Party is pretending that they know more about the reincarnation system than the Dalai Lama," said the Dalai Lama, laughing. "The Chinese Communists should accept the concept of rebirth. Then they should recognize the reincarnation of Chairman Mao Zedong, then Deng Xiaoping. Then they have the right to involve themselves in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation."

The Dalai Lama hinted that he would hold some kind of referendum among Tibetan exiles, and consultations among Tibetans within China, about whether a new Dalai Lama should succeed him. The issue will be formally resolved around his 90th birthday, he said.

One reason to end the line, he suggested, is that a future Dalai Lama might be "naughty" and diminish the position. His biggest concern seems to be that after he dies, China will select a new pet Dalai Lama who may act as a quisling to help the Chinese control Tibet and to give legitimacy to their policies there.

"Sadly, the precedent has been set," he said, referring to the Panchen Lama, the second most important reincarnated lama in Tibetan Buddhism. After the 10th Panchen Lama died in 1989, China kidnapped the baby chosen by Tibetans as his successor and helped anoint a different child as the 11th Panchen Lama. Nobody knows what happened to the real Panchen Lama.

I admire the Dalai Lama enormously, and in 2007 he bravely used my column to send an important olive branch to Beijing — only to be criticized by fellow Tibetans as too conciliatory, and rejected as insincere by China. But I told him that I also thought there were times when he had been too cautious and had missed opportunities for rapprochement with Beijing. My examples: In the 1980s, when the leaders Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang sought compromise on Tibet; after the 10th Panchen Lama died; and in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics.

The Dalai Lama was having none of that — he doesn't think he missed opportunities. But he acknowledged that Zhao had been sympathetic and added that if Zhao and Hu had not been ousted, "the Tibetan issue would already be solved, no question."

To my surprise, the Dalai Lama was also enthusiastic about Xi Jinping, the current Chinese leader. He spoke admiringly of Xi's anti-corruption campaign, said Xi's mother was "very religious, a very devout Buddhist," and noted Xi himself had spoken positively of Buddhism.

So, President Xi, if you're reading this, the Dalai Lama would like to visit China. How about an invitation?

I had asked my followers on Twitter and Facebook to suggest questions for the Dalai Lama, and here are his responses to some of the issues they raised:

— On the Myanmar Buddhists who have murdered, raped and oppressed Muslims: As he has before, the Dalai Lama strongly condemned the violence. He added: "If Buddha would come at that moment, he definitely would save or protect those Muslims."

— On eating meat: The Dalai Lama said he had been a pure vegetarian for 20 months but then developed jaundice, so his doctors told him to start eating meat again. He now eats meat twice a week and is vegetarian the rest of the week, he said, but added that he thinks vegetarianism is preferable.

— On Pope Francis: "I admire his stance," the Dalai Lama said. "He dismissed one German bishop [for too luxurious living]. I was so impressed. I wrote a letter to him. I expressed my admiration."

— On gender: The Dalai Lama says he considers himself a feminist and would like to see more women leaders because he thinks women are often innately more sensitive and peaceful. "I insist that women should carry a more active role," he said. "If eventually most of the leaders of different nations are female, maybe we'll be safer."

■

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

Editor's note: *Regular Friday columnist Byron York is traveling for three weeks and will not file columns for July 13, July 20 and July 27. His schedule will resume on August 3.*

YOUR VIEWS

Moral depravity has overtaken the country

Well, Oregon has again lowered the moral bar by allowing 15-year-old children to decide if they want to get a sex change at taxpayers' expense without parental notification. Shame on you, legislators.

Once the bar was lowered for assisted suicide the playing field was wide open. Ask yourself what's next. All babies born will be delivered to the state for their upbringing and education? That will certainly free up parents to pursue their pleasures.

Remember, it is easier to answer to man than a God. That's why dictatorships are so much effective than republics and a free society.

When can conservatives have or declare a sanctuary city for their beliefs? We are in the greatest peril of collapsing in the history of our great country.

Remember in the 1960s when the one of the most widespread sayings was "Don't trust anyone over 30?" Well, those folks have taken over and look what we have: moral depravity, bankrupted economy, lying politicians, a press that refuses to print any truth or factual information, votes that don't count, laws for the powerful, and laws for you and me. We are no longer equal under law; some are more equal than others.

Roesch Kishpaugh
Pendleton

Editor's note: Since 1971, the age of medical consent in Oregon has been 15.

Walden loses man's vote for not acting against USFS

I personally will never vote for Greg Walden again, ever. He refuse to act and keeps moving staff in and out of his La Grande office that will not act upon the Forest Service to enact change on the planning process that targets to restrict and remove our motorized access from our mountains.

If you vote for the man you are openly supporting your restriction and closure from the mountains, and I would hope you would share this with everyone from Joseph to Medford.

I've made this public for a reason, share it wide and share it far. The man keeps running staff through his La Grande office that has no clue as to what's going on, and we keep having to start from scratch because of Greg's poor leadership.

The man is so spineless, so useless, that he can't even hold one simple agency like the U.S. Forest Service accountable, or find out what they are planning for the people of Eastern Oregon's access to their mountains. It's either that, or he's actually helping them through assisting in the stalling or releasing the information.

I am done! And I hope you will be too.

John George
Bates, Ore.