

Quick takes

Should you be fired for smoking legal marijuana?

So if it’s legal just as alcohol is legal and you can be a drinker and not get fired, then the logical conclusion should be that you can’t get fired unless you are stoned while you are at work.

— Tracy Fox Birdsell

But that’s saying that apples and oranges are comparable. Alcohol leaves the system, pot doesn’t. Therefore they should not and cannot have the same governing laws, they metabolize differently and should be treated differently.

— Tracie Surran

I think that the testing system just needs to modernize along with the law. They can determine a threshold that indicates that someone is stoned. The current system is designed to test to conclude if the worker has been stoned, not if they are stoned, which makes sense because cannabis used to be illegal.

— Micah Engum

I’m not sure I would want anyone smoking pot that was running machinery or doing my hair. Sober is sober.

— Cheryl Cone

Hermiston and Pendleton in a meaningful relationship

In looking at the people (volunteers) who plan and execute Umatilla County Fair, Pendleton Round-Up, & Happy Canyon I see people from Hermiston and Pendleton, along with many other communities, working side by side to make those events the quality productions they are. I like this editorial. This region seems to be on the upswing, and it’s nice that you took the time to highlight that.

— Corey Neistadt

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week’s takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

A plan to fix moribund Pendleton

Editor’s note: This is the first of two columns on Pendleton’s opportunities to become a more livable, competitive city.



TOM
HEBERT
Comment

While few citizens can welcome the thought, in recent decades Pendleton has grown staid and moribund through a consistent scarcity of vision from its elected leaders and some few commercial interests. Indeed, it’s been locked in the status quo. But moving from that evident truth to several new opportunities afoot, how can we revitalize our fair city without stepping in it?

Back in 2008, Gena Stockton, a newcomer to Pendleton and owner of a Western furniture and decor store across from Hamley’s, began work to establish a much-needed nonprofit public-private partnership to help build a town where her store and family could flourish. Thus was born the Pendleton Downtown Partnership, Inc., founded under the auspices of Oregon Main Street. It was all legal and approved by the mayor and city council in August 2008

But after two-plus years of meetings, the PDP never got going.

Reasons: Because city hall, then not interested in downtown, never supported it. Because downtowns, by themselves, don’t drive development. Because pursuing totally a livable town with new family-wage businesses with jobs

requiring productivity and innovation wasn’t a priority. Because the PDP never found a sufficient number of dedicated board members willing to push hard and raise money. Because it never came close to having an executive director. Because the majority of Main Street merchants never got behind it. Because later a coterie took over the remains of the PDP and nothing has been heard since.

Because it takes the entire community, here’s a possible path to resuscitating the partnership:

First, city appoints an interim executive director, later to be made permanent. And because this small city needs an integrated arena for its only civic coalition-building organization — and to widen its sphere of influence in emerging issues — change its name, dropping the word “downtown.” Interim director to draft a list of consequential board members to number at least 30 who will be lobbied to participate — more directors the better. Some must be fundraisers and not all will live within city limits.

Beyond an executive director, a president and large board with a strong executive committee, the membership will help develop and hold a volunteer base for its several task forces. Set a late fall/early winter deadline for its first official meeting.

Second, such civic service on a diverse board will develop new leadership for Pendleton

that will learn how to prod, propose, plan and pass off; to collaborate and coordinate; to be both helpful and hopeful. “Pendleton: still a wide-open town,” where everything is possible, where our young can fulfill their dreams.

Third, ASAP, open a Main Street open-plan office, sharing it not with an airport manager, but with an actual Pendleton director of economic development. Combined with one-stop shopping for local business licenses and permits, the city could thus help with rent. Immediately secure a floor easel with pad for openly recording meeting notes. Publish interesting group memos (minutes) wherever.

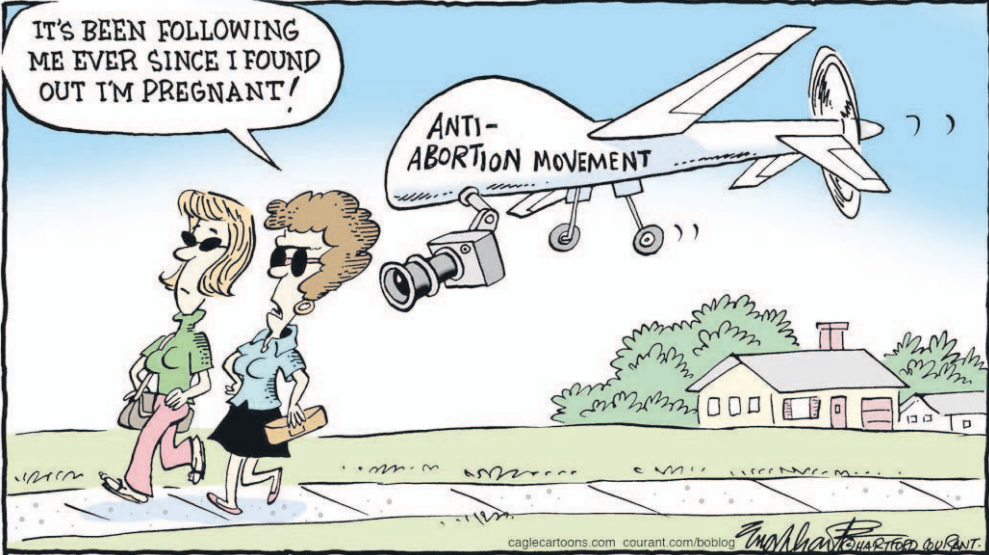
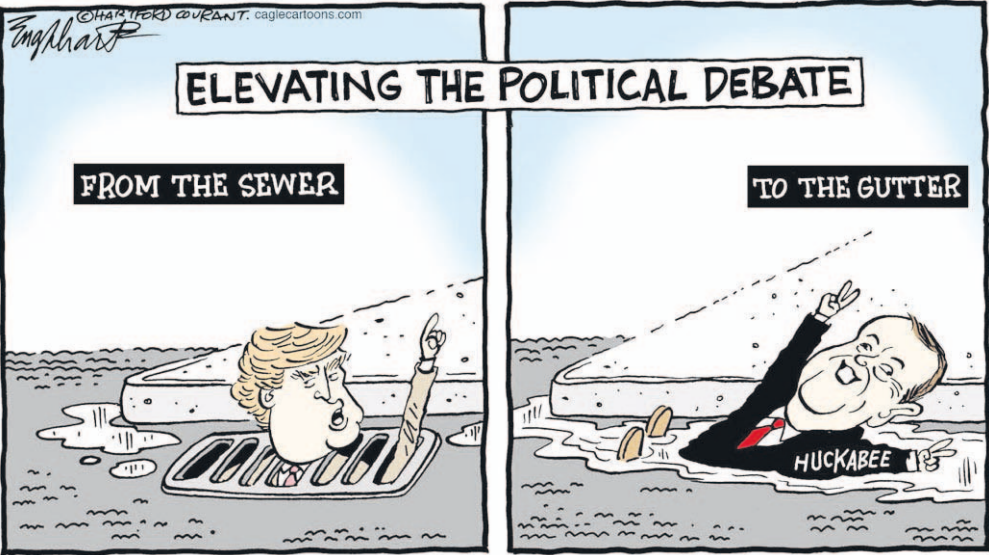
Fourth, donated convivial jug wine and crackers at regular 4 p.m. meetings. The director will schedule visiting experts, individual task force updates and reports and make assignments. Of course, invite the press and media. Immediately, the new board will make relevant inter-city visits, learning best-practices/lessons-learned, attend conferences, read related books and articles, then report back to the community. Such jointly created “community learning,” while creating new knowledge and skills, is also a driver of economic and social change — yielding stronger and better communities. Because there is currently zero community learning going on in Pendleton, it is desperately needed. No community learning, no change, no development.

Fifth, while the Pendleton Development Commission

has the essential authority to buy and hold property suitable for development, the PDC will work closely with the partnership to identify and market such opportunities. As noted, the partnership will also serve as a community convening authority to create the citizen task forces to address local concerns as they develop. The mayor can ask for specific task forces to study and recommend on important issues. The partnership will focus on opportunities for new civic amenities and livability, making Pendleton more attractive to outside investors, visitors, and our children. To this end, the partnership creates a task force of younger people to help Pendleton develop as a sophisticated small city, one they will want to return to.

Sixth, similar to Pendleton’s Vision Quest 1994 (400 participants, never concluded, no assignments or due dates, go figure), organize a large public planning “charrette” pulling together an agenda of needs/opportunities for a Pendleton that works together — marshaling its resources with Western “grit and persistence.” As reported in the July 4 *New York Times*, “Wallace Stegner called the West ‘the native home of hope,’ a place where optimism, initiative and the myth or reality of rugged individualism all run deep into the soil. But for most Westerners it starts with a journey.”

Tom Hebert is a writer and public policy consultant living on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.



Senate Republicans did good work in Legislature

As the longest-serving Republican leader and the senior Oregon senator, I’ve watched our legislators work hard, despite difficult odds, to bring positive changes through good public policy and funding for local programs in their communities, primarily in rural and suburban areas. While I’m not in the habit of designating the session’s “Most Valuable Player,” there are numerous accomplishments that should be recognized that resulted from the dedication of Senate Republicans.

Early in the session, Senator Alan Olsen led the charge against the costly low carbon fuel mandate and “hidden” gas tax that was fast-tracked through the legislative process. Senators Jeff Kruse and Doug Whitsett deserve special recognition for their work on negotiations to repeal the low carbon fuel mandate and replace it with an investment in transportation that would have fixed our roads and bridges. Unfortunately, failed Democrat leadership and misguided priorities derailed a bipartisan transportation package this year.

Senators Tim Knopp and Chuck Thomsen were unwavering advocates for education and pushed for full funding for K-12 education from day one of the legislative session. While the Democrat leadership intentionally underfunded education, we were able to send more money to schools to help reduce class sizes and add school days thanks to an unlikely coalition of the Oregon Education Association and Senate Republicans.

Senator Fred Girod co-chaired the Capital Construction Committee and delivered funding for important projects all over Oregon, including an additional \$300 million to seismically retrofit schools and public safety buildings that keep our communities and children safe. Senator Jackie Winters continued her long tradition of support for the Oregon Youth Authority, ensuring local communities received funding to strengthen treatment, education and



TED
FERRIOLI
Comment

job training services to help youth offenders lead crime-free lives and become productive members of their communities.

Senator Bill Hansell capitalized on more than 30 years of local government experience, developing “ground up” support for the historic water project that will mean new jobs, economic vitality and major agricultural production for northeast Oregon. While the irrigation project had been on the drawing board

for years, and the subject of many broken promises, Senator Hansell’s statesmanship helped gain the confidence of tribal

representatives, local elected officials, the governor, and legislative leaders to secure funding for water storage to Eastern Oregon.

Despite a Democrat super majority, senators Herman Baertschiger and Brian Boquist protected tax cuts for small businesses from the 2013 Special Session, extended tax credits for rural medical providers to strengthen health care in rural communities, and provided tax relief for service members actively in the military. In her first session as senator, Kim Thatcher was at the front line fighting to protect businesses from numerous harmful

anti-business mandates.

Reflecting on accomplishments this past session, the ability to reach a bipartisan solution to end the prohibition of and legalize marijuana, as desired by a majority of Oregon voters, while preserving the right for 15 Eastern Oregon counties to locally opt-out of retail marijuana sales was a tremendous success and a personal highlight.

Despite being outnumbered, Senate Republicans were united and created lasting benefits by opposing higher taxes and new burdens on Oregon’s small businesses and working families.

Senator Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day), is represents SD 30, which includes Baker, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Malheur, Wheeler and parts of Clackamas, Deschutes, Lake, Marion, and Wasco counties.

Two cheers for capitalism

We are clearly heading toward another great debate about the nature of capitalism. Contemporary capitalism’s critics are becoming both bolder and more intellectually rigorous. Protests and discussions are sprouting up all over the place.

For example, this week I was attending the Aspen Action Forum, a gathering of young business and NGO leaders selected because of their work for social change. My friend and *Times* colleague Anand Giridharadas delivered a courageous and provocative keynote address that ruffled some feathers, earned a standing ovation and has had people talking ever since.

Anand argued that a rough etiquette has developed among those who work in and raise money for nonprofits. The rich are to be praised for the good they do with their philanthropy, but they are never to be challenged for the harm they do in their businesses. “Capitalism’s rough edges must be sanded and its surplus fruit shared, but the underlying system must NEVER be questioned,” he said.

Anand suggested that in these days of growing income inequality, this approach is no longer good enough. “Sometimes I wonder,” he said, “whether these various forms of giving back have become to our era what the papal indulgence was to the Middle Ages: a relatively inexpensive way of getting oneself seemingly on the right side of justice, without having to alter the fundamentals of one’s life.”

The winners of our age, he continued, may be helping society with their foundations, but in their business enterprises, the main occupation of their life, they are doing serious harm. First they are using political and financial muscle to enact policies that help them “stack up, protect and bequeath the money.”

Second, they offload risks and volatility onto workers. Uber’s owners have a lot of security but they deny any responsibility for their workers’ “lives, health, desire for career growth.”

Anand’s speech struck me as deeply patriotic in its passion and concern. He didn’t offer a policy agenda to address these deep structural problems, but his description of them implied that government would have to get much more heavily involved in corporate governance and private-sector investment decisions than ever before.



DAVID
BROOKS
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Indeed, progressive economists are already walking down this path. Hillary Clinton’s new tax plan is based on the assumption that government officials are smart enough to tell investors how they should time their investments. Her corporate governance proposals are based on the idea that federal officials know better than executives how they should run their own companies. There will be much more of this in years to come.

This strikes me as a departure from recent progressivism. In the recent past progressives have argued for a little redistribution to fund human capital development: early childhood education, child and family leave, better community colleges.

But the next wave of thinking implies that it is not enough to simply give people access to capitalism and provide them with a safety net. The underlying system has to be reconfigured. This is a bigger debate.

People like me will argue that it’s a wrong turn. First, government planners are not smart enough to plan complex systems in this way. The beauty of capitalism is that it takes a dim view of human reason. No group of experts is smart enough to allocate the resources of society well. Capitalism sets up a system of discovery as different people compete and adapt in accordance with market signals. If you try to get technocratic planners organizing investment markets or internal business governance, you will wind up with perversities and rigidities that will make everything worse.

Second, the attempt to tame the market will end up stultifying it. Everybody knows that capitalism’s creative destruction can be rough. But over the last few decades, a ragged version of global capitalism in places ranging from China to Nigeria has brought about the greatest reduction in poverty in human history.

The coming debate about capitalism will be between those who want to restructure the underlying system and those who want to help people take advantage of its rough intensity. It will be between people who think you need strong government to defeat oligarchy and those who think you need open competition.

This will be fun.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.