

Quick takes

John Day battles blazes

After being there yesterday and seeing what they're already dealing with, this makes me sick.

— Josey Grant

To all those who say fire is a natural part of the process. The fires of old, before the settlers came, were small and merely kissed the trees. The fires now destroy everything and swallow trees whole. You see, 30 million bison used to roam the Americas in massive herds. As the herd passed, they trampled and ate everything to the ground.

— Natalie Fleming

Log it, graze it, or watch it burn. The Forest Service used to be self funding, through timber sales, and fires like this didn't happen. Now they waste six billion dollars watching the timber burn. Welcome to the "green" future.

— Logan Wood

Glad the National Guard will be helping. Need the boots on the ground

— Peggy Blais

In addition to the human lives and property lost, where will the wildlife go to find food and shelter this winter? Thanks to the EPA, BPA's mismanagement of the forests, and state/federal laws shutting down responsible logging — all of us suffer.

— April Dyntera

Sending prayers for everyone, especially our firefighters who are working so hard to contain and put out these fires

— Anji Turner

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

Oregon's Independent Party wants to be different

I would like to thank the *East Oregonian* for its recent coverage of the Independent Party's emergence as Oregon's third major political party. Your editorial prompted some thoughts about the work we have done and what the Independent Party could mean for the state of Oregon.

First, I would like to caution folks against setting the expectations too high. Although the state is now calling us a "major party," the reality is that we are just 5 percent of Oregon voters. 2015 is the first year that we have been able to hire paid professional staff.

We have been criticized in some circles, unfairly I think, for having a consensus platform. Critics should remember that the party's growth is unprecedented for a third political party. The largest minor parties in the state, the Libertarians and the Pacific Greens, which are much older than the IPO, both have a membership that has ranged from 10,000 to 15,000 over the years.

By comparison, our party has added 109,000 members in 8 years — more than double the number of new registrants than the Democrats and Republicans combined during that time span.

Folks should also remember



SAL PERALTA
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that our party has not rallied around a single "charismatic leader" as other third party movements have done (e.g., Teddy Roosevelt and the Bull Moose Party or Ross Perot and the Reform Party).

Instead, what has driven the growth of the Independent Party of Oregon is the massive

level of frustration that voters across the spectrum have towards the two major parties. Only one third of Oregon voters feel well-represented by the two major parties, compared with 40 percent who do not feel well-represented and believe that a third party is needed.

So, for the last eight years, the party's officers have worked almost entirely in a volunteer capacity to develop and implement a voting system to allow our members to choose the party's candidates and help decide the platform. In 2010, we became the first political party in Oregon to conduct our own binding statewide primary election and the first party in the United States to conduct such an election using the Internet to deliver ballots and our platform questionnaires.

We can't take any credit for the political climate that has driven so many people to join the Independent Party, but as officers we make no apologies

for creating a process to allow all of the people who joined to meaningfully participate and express their preferences. What we have learned from that process is that there is a lot of common ground from the left to the right in terms of what needs to be done for a group that chooses to define itself based on the things that we agree about.

The easiest way to characterize our agenda: Increase transparency, reduce undue influence, grow the economy and stick up for the little guy.

In terms of actual policies, in the 2014-15 legislative session, our members asked us to prioritize the following specific legislative goals: Pass a constitutional amendment to allow Oregon to limit campaign contributions (Oregon is one of only six states with no contribution limits); pass legislation to open the state's primary elections to more non-affiliated voters (our party will be opening its own election to non-affiliated voter's); support increased funding for vocational training in high schools and community colleges; and ensuring that tax dollars spent for economic development return greater public benefit than they cost.

Those may not seem like controversial issues. Our data suggests that they are broadly supported by Oregonians across

the political spectrum.

So why are so few of those things actually getting done?

I understand that some people have a hard time wrapping their heads around a political party that is positioning itself between the Democrats and Republicans.

I can understand that some people have a hard time wrapping their head around a political party that looks for collaboration rather than controversy. But should it really come as a big surprise that in an era of polarization and hyper-partisanship, that a political party would emerge seeking to promote greater collaboration?

People who want the Hatfield and McCoy-style feud that defines Democratic and Republican politics will never be satisfied with our party's platform or approach, but we hope that people looking for more Hatfields and McCalls might just find what they are looking for.

Sal Peralta is secretary of the Independent Party of Oregon. He lives in McMinnville with his family.

People interested in running for local or state legislative office or in connecting with other Independents in eastern Oregon can reach Sal via telephone at 503-437-2833 or email him at info@indparty.com.

Systemic road problem needs a new approach

I would like to thank Larry O'Rourke for his view printed in the *East Oregonian* last week. It was well written, concise, astute and thought provoking.

Larry had three statements that should be further explored:

1. "How is it possible so many cities suffer from the same fate?"
2. "Perhaps we should look elsewhere for answers to how we got here."
3. "You unjustly attribute the

local problem to many councils past and present when in fact the problem is systemic in Oregon and the U.S., and exacerbated by inaction from the local, state and national levels and is growing worse."

There is a lot of meat to chew on in these statements. Larry, in my opinion, hit the nail on the head when he used the term systemic. We get to choose the action we would like to take, but we don't get to choose the consequence of our actions. When the people of the state chose to limit the amount we pay in property taxes, they capped the amount of money local governments had to work with. I personally have no problem with the present property taxation because I am a senior, and with fixed income right around the corner I do not want the added burden of extra costs.

When this limitation came into being, cities of our great state never changed their model to compensate for the change in future revenue. They still thought growth would save them. Unfortunately that never stood a chance. Growth for the sake of property taxes will bury you. Most cities follow the same pattern: They build or acquire by bonds with little or no regard as to how they will maintain what they are building. Example: Barnhart Road (everyone's favorite topic), was built with government funding and city contribution by fuel tax. The road was built. The road was paid for. The gas tax was sunset. Great! We have a road that is paid for.

However, to properly maintain this five-mile road a yearly contribution of \$150,000 is required to be added to the street fund. The government gives us approximately \$15,000. That leaves us \$135,000 short on an annual basis.

Where does that come from? The answer is nowhere, unless we make provision for it. Do you think we should



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have thought about provision before or after the action? Which would give the most desirable result?

The system we should change to is running our cities like homeowners associations. I've made some bold statements in the past. Here is another one: Any city not running like an HOA is either bankrupt or on the verge of bankruptcy. An HOA is a long-term plan for depreciating assets. It is a detailed plan for maintenance of streets, buildings and infrastructure. It is not subjective and does not give room for mismanagement, unless the people of the association or the management company allow it.

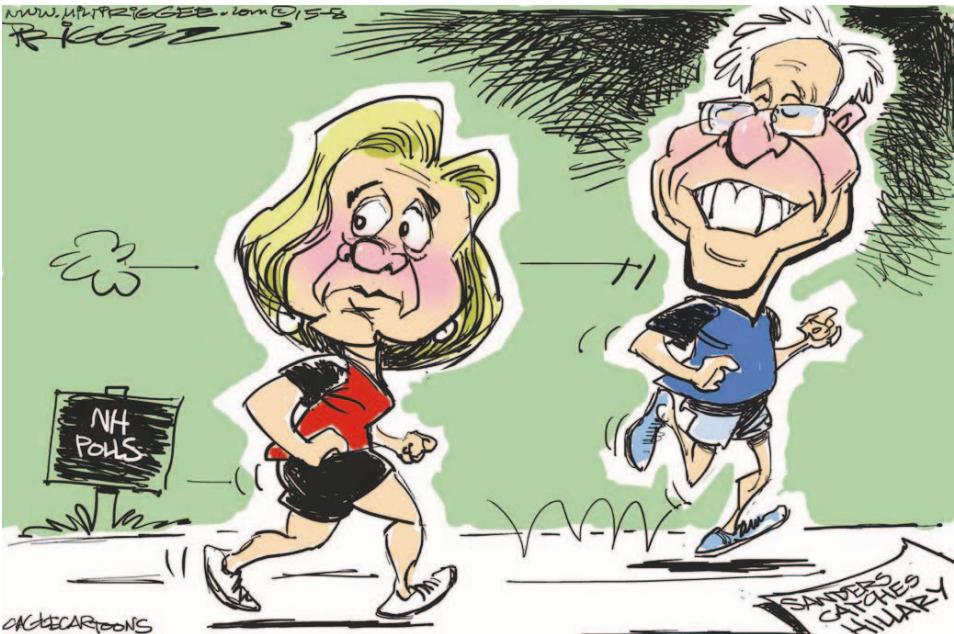
General budgets are subjective. They give lots of room for moving money around, unlike HOAs, which do not. It is a system that makes everyone accountable. If you buy a truck, it is added and the maintenance cost of it is added as well. The cost and the maintenance should be considered before the purchase.

This is why I am opposed to a new fire station at this time. Our council has not come to an agreement on how to maintain it. There is no line item for maintenance and furthermore no thought to where the money will come from. Do we build it and just let our kids figure out how they will maintain it? I think we have done enough of that! It is time we pay as we go, not counting on handouts or our children to pay for it.

What I am proposing is a change in the system, a change in the model. It won't be easy but the consequence will be much more desirable in the long run. If we have \$50 million in deferred maintenance now, we will have \$52 million next year. The following year it gets worse and every year thereafter, if no action is taken.

We must start with a system such as the homeowners association to identify the amount of our actual budget. We must carefully go over all assets of the city and decide as citizens what we want or do not want. We need to know the cost of these assets. We must be honest with ourselves. What can we afford or do without? We cannot satisfy champagne tastes with a beer income to support them.

Al Plute is a Pendleton city counselor.



Media focusing on the election sideshows

To respond to the editor's question: The next president will not necessarily be the candidate with the best name recognition, the most money, or the highest favorability rating 14 months in advance of the election. Nor will it be the pseudo-candidate with the silliest name or longest tail and whiskers. In my opinion, these nonsensical stunts are the body politic's cry for help to the two political parties who have spent more time fighting each other than addressing the issues that daily affect ordinary Americans. The major media indulges it.

There is no reasonable way to predict at this time which candidates will survive to the general contest. We, the people, get to decide this one. And the corporations, but that's another issue.

Most major media have focused on money, polling, manufactured controversies and divisions, and other sideshow topics — features of the campaigns that are not substantive. This is unfortunate for the quality of discourse required to address this critical juncture in our nation's (and species') history. Frankly, these topics are also not interesting to many.

Media should do a better job of informing its readers and viewers about the challenges facing us and the substantive differences among the candidates to guide the discussions necessary to shape our future through the next rounds of federal elections.

Why are the middle and working classes continually being squeezed while the extreme upper crust enjoys increasingly higher profit margins? One percent of U.S. citizens own as much as the bottom 90 percent, and 55 percent of all new gains since 2009 have gone to that one percent. Some of your readers have been forced to work two jobs to make ends meet, and some cannot make ends meet at all.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with wealth, extreme and permanent inequality is a serious problem. The absence of opportunity for upward mobility is the death of the American dream. What can we do to fix this? This is an interesting and vital topic.

Since the industrial revolution, the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere has skyrocketed. CO2 traps heat from the sun, causing minutely but incrementally warmer global average temperatures, melting ancient ice, changing ocean currents, and bringing ever more extreme weather events. There is no serious scientific debate on this point, because it is beyond settled. Eight of the 10 hottest years have been in the last decade, 2014 is the reigning champ, and 2015



WILLIAM PERKINSON
Comment

will likely reset the record. Global CO2 average just exceeded 400 ppm, about 50 percent higher than pre-industrial times, but how much CO2 is too much? Is there a point at which the effects are irreversible? What actions should we take to reduce or reverse the effects of climate change? What will our great-grandchildren say about this point in history? This is also an interesting and vital topic.

Immigration is a very complex issue in dire need of overhaul. Consider those "illegal" immigrants that have contributed to our society by engaging in productive work for decades, paying taxes due, committing no crimes, and integrating into our communities as our family and neighbors. Sanctions and deportation are the wrong answers, clearly, but what is the correct approach that preserves the social bonds this "undocumented" person has built within our society? How can we make it easier for deserving immigrants to enter the country efficiently and legally, both to meet labor demands and to provide immigrants with a shot at the American dream? This is another interesting topic.

I could go on describing many more: race issues and injustice, the prohibitive cost of higher education, the corrupting power of money in politics, the highest incarceration rate in the world, the failed war on drugs, crumbling public infrastructure, mass surveillance of innocent citizens, etc. These issues need immediate and focused attention.

Regarding the democratic contest, independent Bernie Sanders' populist message and reasonable policy positions appeal to many Americans, left and right. He consistently draws the biggest crowds of any candidate (way more than McCubbins). His strong poll numbers are competitive with or ahead of Ms. Clinton's. He's funded overwhelmingly by individual donors and eschews money from corporations. Voters are paying attention to him, but the media treats him as an afterthought.

Continuing to presume Clinton will become the nominee will require the major media to continue avoiding analysis of the candidates' platforms. It's anybody's guess with the Republican contest, but substance still matters, regardless who is nominated.

Major media's repetition of what it believes to be the status quo of the future falls far short of the service that it could provide to its subscribers, readers, and viewers: the voters who will decide these contests. Media should aim higher and dig into the substance, not the sideshows.

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