EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Journalism is changing, but on these pages it has never been better

The Oregon journalism landscape is changing rapidly, and 2016 will prove to be no different.

Here at the *East Oregonian,* we plan to continue to get better, more sophisticated and more diverse, at a time when that has become exceedingly rare for newspapers.

Fewer professional, independent journalists are working in this state than in quite some time — especially experienced and well-connected ones.

This is largely due to a series of changes at *The Oregonian* newspaper, which has long been the standard-bearer for statewide coverage. But 2015 capped an era of drastic change for the organization. The newspaper is no longer delivered daily, and not at all in Eastern Oregon.

But more importantly, a steady stream of job losses continued in 2015. In the last two years, more than 100 *Oregonian* employees lost their jobs, according to Portland rival *Willamette Week*. And just this month, the bloodletting continued. Top political reporter Jeff Mapes, popular columnist Steve Duin, Pulitzer-Prize winner Richard Read and investigative reporter Bryan Denson accepted buyouts, according to the *WW*, and the newsroom is expected to shrink even further.

This is not the *Oregonian*'s fault, and numerous talented and influential reporters remain on their staff. But it does spotlight an organizational shift, from a statewide print product to an online-driven and Portland-focused enterprise.

The *East Oregonian*, as well as other media outlets, has done its best to fill coverage holes. The EO Media Group has invested significantly in a Capital Bureau, and along with the Pamplin Media Group are employing two journalists in Salem. One of them — Hillary Borrud — helped break open the story that eventually led to Governor John Kitzhaber's resignation, and her work has been excellent. Borrud's reporting can be found in our print product, on our website and in an insider, subscription-based newsletter that has become indispensable reading for those in the Salem sphere.

In 2015, we branched out into other media, too. Our EO Audio podcasts — interviews with interesting people, as well as discussion about politics, science, sports and entertainment — are garnering more listeners each and every week. We've gotten much better at it, and hope to take another step forward in 2016. Search EO Audio on iTunes to hear the improvement.

We started recording some city council meetings, and uploading them in their entirety to our YouTube account and our website. It's a great way for us to increase the transparency and understanding of local government. And modern technology makes it simple to do.

> The *East Oregonian* is providing outsized coverage of regional issues, mostly because Morrow and Umatilla counties are carving out a bigger name for themselves on the statewide scene.

Clearly, plenty of changes are in store in the next decade for media. We will continue to evolve. Some new things we try will work, and some won't.

But we think readers in Morrow and Umatilla counties are in good hands. This newspaper employs a remarkable number of journalists for a population area of this size, and the work they do is well-informed and necessary. They hold local governments accountable, and also tell the important personal stories from our area.

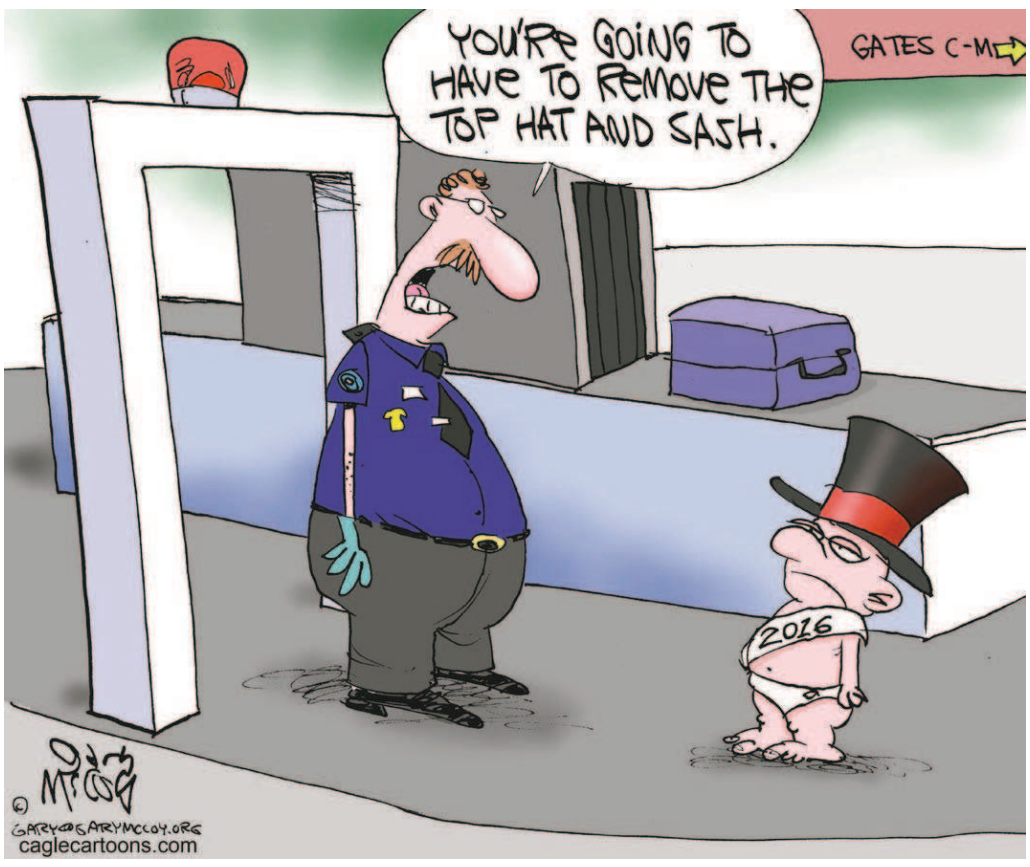
The work of George Plaven, our energy and natural resources reporter who most often covers regional issues, appears as routinely in the pages of *The Oregonian* as many of their staff writers.

The *EO* is providing outsized coverage of regional issues, and that is mostly because Morrow and Umatilla counties are carving out a bigger name for themselves on the statewide scene. Boardman is on the precipice of breakout growth — both in population and economic activity. The Port of Morrow will be a big part of that. And as new Columbia River water begins to trickle into western Umatilla County, the area's agriculture and value-added processing industries will undoubtedly continue their rapid expansion.

Whatever happens, we will be here, reporting on it as the best newspaper of our size in the state. We've won the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association general excellence prize four times in the last five years, and we don't plan on ending that dynasty anytime soon.

We're aiming for the top again in 2016, and look forward to another year of serving our readers in print and online, with audio and video and charts and maps. And with whatever technology comes next.

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

Things to celebrate, like dreams of flying cars

PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

In Star Wars, Han Solo's Millennium Falcon did the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs; in real life, all the Falcon 9 has done so far is land at Cape Canaveral without falling over or exploding. Yet I, like many nerds, was thrilled by that achievement, in part because it reinforced my growing optimism about the direction technology seems to be taking — a direction that may end up saving the world.

OK, if you have no idea what I'm talking about, the Falcon 9 is Elon Musk's reusable rocket, which is supposed to boost a payload into space, then return to where it can be launched again. If the concept works, it could drastically reduce the cost of putting stuff into orbit. And that successful landing was a milestone. We're still a very long way from space colonies and zero-gravity hotels, let alone galactic empires. But space technology is moving forward after decades of stagnation.

And to my amateur eye, this seems to be part of a broader trend, which is making me more hopeful for the future than I've been in a while.

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You see, I got my Ph.D. in 1977, the year of the first Star Wars movie, which means that I have basically spent my whole professional life in an era of technological disappointment.

Until the 1970s, almost everyone believed that advancing technology would do in the future what it had done in the past: produce rapid, unmistakable improvement in just about every aspect of life. But it didn't. And while social factors — above all, soaring inequality — have played an important role in that disappointment, it's also true that in most respects technology has fallen short of expectations.

The most obvious example is travel, where cars and planes are no faster than they were when I was a student, and actual travel times have gone up thanks to congestion and security lines. More generally, there has just been less progress in our command over the physical world — our ability to produce and deliver things — than almost anyone expected.

Now, there has been striking progress in our ability to process and transmit information. But while I like cat and concert videos as much as anyone, we're still talking about a limited slice of life: We are still living in a material world, and pushing information around can do only so much. The famous gibe by investor Peter Thiel ("We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters.") is unfair but contains a large kernel of truth.

Over the past five or six years, however — or at least this is how it seems to me — technology has been getting physical again; once again, we're making progress in the world of things, not just information. And that's important.

Progress in rocketry is fun to watch, but the really big news is on energy, a field of truly immense disappointment until recently. For decades, unconventional energy technologies kept falling short of expectations, and it seemed as if nothing could end our dependence on oil and coal — bad news in the short run because of the prominence it gave to the Middle East; worse news in the long run because of global warming.

But now we're witnessing a revolution on multiple fronts. The biggest effects so far have come from fracking, which has ended fears about peak oil and could, if properly regulated, be some help on climate change: Fracked gas is still fossil fuel, but burning it generates a lot less greenhouse emissions than burning coal. The bigger revolution looking forward, however, is in renewable energy, where costs of wind and especially solar have dropped incredibly fast.

Why does this matter? Everyone who isn't ignorant or a Republican realizes that climate change is by far the biggest threat humanity faces. But how much will we have to sacrifice to meet that threat?

Well, you still hear claims, mostly from the right but also from a few people on the left, that we can't take effective action on climate without bringing an end to economic growth. Marco Rubio, for example, insists that trying to control emissions would "destroy our economy."

This was never reasonable, but those of us asserting that protecting the environment was consistent with growth used to be somewhat vague about the details, simply asserting that given the right incentives the private sector would find a way.

But now we can see the shape of a sustainable, low-emission future quite clearly — basically an electrified economy with, yes, nuclear power playing some role, but sun and wind front and center. Of course, it doesn't have to happen. But if it doesn't, the problem will be politics, not technology.

True, I'm still waiting for flying cars, not to mention hyperdrive. But we have made enough progress in the technology of things that saving the world has suddenly become much more plausible. And that's reason to celebrate.

■

Paul Krugman joined The New York Times in 1999 as a columnist on the Op-Ed Page and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.

YOUR VIEWS

Paranoia shouldn't rule gun control debate

I feel compelled to respond to Mitch Kelty's letters of Dec. 12 and Dec. 26, but I frankly don't know where to begin.

Nobody wants to take your guns, Mr. Kelty. If the evil Kenyan in the White House wanted to do that, he would have done it already. The second part of the straw man you set up is who's going to take your guns if the "progressive, socialistic, communistic" liberals get around to Weston.

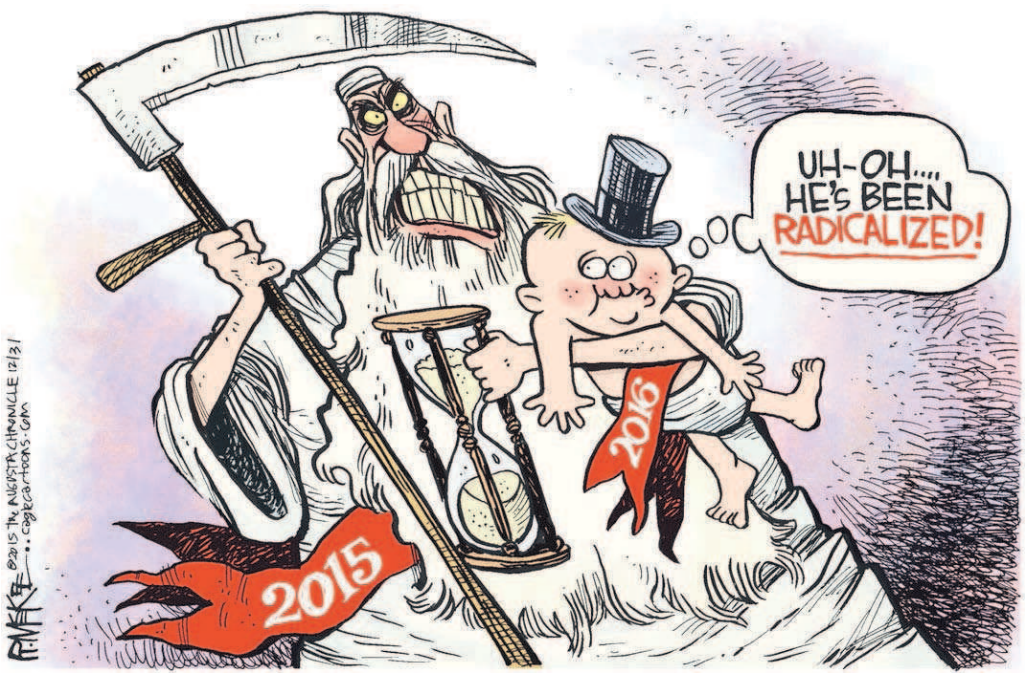
Us "lefties" support the United States Constitution and most of us support the entire document, not just the parts we like. Government, by its very nature, restricts our liberties. For the NRA and supporters like Mr. Kelty to frame the debate in terms of freedom is dishonest.

All we are talking about now is more stringent background checks to keep one gun out of the hands of one person who wants to use that gun to harm other people. To claim we are on the road to some totalitarian nightmare does a disservice to the debate and is a slap in the face of all the people who have felt the pain of gun violence.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

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.



Be heard!

Comment online at eastoregonian.com