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**OUR VIEW**

**Looking forward to 2016**

What a year 2016 is shaping up to be. Though having just arrived, there is enough on the calendar for everyone to have something to be excited about.

The biggest event in this country will be the presidential election in November. Yes, still eleven months away. But at least that's something to look forward to. After Election Day, we will only have to listen to one of these jokers, and can let the other dozen or so fade away.

On a local level there is a lot to look forward to, too.

Decades in the making, the plan to pull more water from the Columbia River into the Umatilla Basin may take solid steps to fruition, and the water itself may trickle its way onto Umatilla and Morrow county farms. It needs to, if the Northeast Oregon Water Association wants to keep their coalition together and see this potentially game-changing project through to the finish.

EOTEC, beset by financial, construction and public relations problems in the last year, will look to rebound. In the midst of a last-ditch effort to raise private funds, much of the construction will be finished in 2016. It's possible the center will begin hosting some events this year. That may give taxpayers their first chance to see where their money went, Hermiston and Umatilla County financial managers will get a better idea on annual costs, and EOETEC can see what kind of events it can attract.

In Pendleton, the nascent drone range will need show some sign of

breaking through the bureaucracy which, now two years in, it has not yet done. City officials will have to deal with housing, jobs and infrastructure problems or Pendleton will continue to shrink both in population and prestige. No more kicking the can down the road.

Editorial writers are rarely good at prognosticating, but we thought we would look into the future for headlines we would like to see appear on the front pages of the *East Oregonian* in the next year.

Here's a few we came up with: Hermiston, Pendleton play for state football title

Horse racing, roughstock cowgirls return to Pendleton Round-Up

Excavation at EOTEC site uncovers \$2 million cash

Obama will retire to North Hill mansion

Boeing tests pilot-less commuter plane in Pendleton

Wet spring follows snowy winter; drought broken

Governor Brown follows through on transparency pledge

Robert De Niro, Al Pacino to star in Happy Canyon centennial

Watermelon returns to Hermiston water tower

Two brokered conventions cap wild 2016 campaign

Money trees sprout along Umatilla River; a bounty for all

Compromise found on Blue Mountain Forest Plan

Olive Garden coming to downtown Hermiston

Qatar out, Pendleton chosen as site of 2020 World Cup

Wolves, cattle sign peace accord

**If we could pick some of the headlines in 2016, this is what we'd choose.**

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**

**Achievable education goals**

The Oregonian

It's a good thing that Oregon set the year 2025 as its target for achieving its "40-40-20" aspirations. Because setbacks this year are compounding the state's already slow progress toward its goal of getting 40 percent of Oregonians to earn a bachelor's or advanced degree, another 40 percent to earn an associate's degree and the other 20 percent to have at least earned a high school degree.

Consider that 10,000 students drop out of Oregon's high schools each year. Nearly 94,000 students are chronically absent, missing more than 10 percent of school each year. Not only is Oregon's overall graduation rate the fourth-lowest in the country, but white students' rate is the worst and black students' rate is second worst.

Meanwhile, with the resignation by Gov. John Kitzhaber in the face of ethical allegations mounting against him and his fiancée, Sylvia Hayes, momentum for education reform stalled. State leaders, with new Gov. Kate Brown's blessing, spent much of the year more focused on unwinding some of the efforts, dismantling the powerful Oregon Education Investment Board, which had been charged to build a more rigorous education system to carry students from birth to age 20. Legislators also narrowed the role of the Kitzhaber-created chief education officer.

There were other leadership changes as well: Deputy superintendent for public instruction Rob Saxton, who advocated for Oregon schools to adopt and teach to tougher standards, retired from the state to take a position with the Northwest Regional Education Service District. Salam Noor, who previously worked for the Higher Education Coordination Commission and served as assistant superintendent for Salem-Keizer schools, was tapped to take over. But he has largely kept a lower and less controversial profile.

Students taking the Common-Core aligned Smarter Balanced exam for the first time fared better than expected, but backlash over testing led to passage of a bill, signed by Brown, that allows Oregon families to opt their student out of standardized testing for any reason. This could bode poorly for Oregon which, like other states, faces federal mandates requiring participation from at least 95 percent of students and various subgroups of students. The state recently received a warning from the U.S. Department of Education that it could lose federal funding if it doesn't improve its participation rates which fell short in many schools and districts across Oregon, according to a report by Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Still, the state notched a few wins. The Legislature funded full day kindergarten for students across the state, broadening access to early education for students regardless of household income. The state, which had slashed per-student funding for higher education more than nearly every other state over the previous 14 years, dramatically boosted investment to pre-recession levels.

And there's signs that Brown is paying more attention to education. She recently announced that she will name an education innovation officer to her administration who will focus on improving high school graduation rates, although there's been little information since on what that will entail.

But clearly, the state needs someone to push the effort to move ahead in education. Oregon, not the federal government, will be responsible for defining success and the ways in which it will hold schools accountable for students' progress. How will a state that has lagged the rest of the nation in accomplishing one of the most basic elements of public education — graduating students — perform? Hopefully 2016 will show some more encouraging signs than 2015.



**OTHER VIEWS**

**The juicy subplots of 2016**

In American politics, one narrative — one question — eclipses all others: Who will become the 45th president?

But there are dramas within that drama. There's also suspense aplenty beyond center stage, and much of it does not involve Donald Trump, a third-party candidacy or the specter of a brokered Republican convention. This column, in the spirit of the holidays, will be a Trump-free zone.

Some of the following subplots could greatly influence the outcome of the presidential contest while others have big implications for the sway and the health of the Republican and Democratic parties.

They're just a glimmer of what 2016 has in store.

**Barack Obama**

**Unbound.** He's zipping down the road with Jerry Seinfeld. He's unzipping his lip with Steve Inskeep of National Public Radio. He's intensifying his fight against climate change.

As Obama pivots into the final phase of his presidency, he seems to be heading in a new direction, toward greater candor, fewer inhibitions, no apologies. He has felt muzzled and misunderstood for much of his time in the White House. I sense a catharsis coming.

And it could complicate the inevitably strained etiquette between him and the Democratic presidential nominee, meaning Hillary Clinton. She'll have to defend many aspects of his legacy and disparage others as she does and doesn't campaign for a third Obama term. He'll react to this as someone who's losing his limited patience with political gamesmanship, who's tired of playing the punching bag and whose aides and associates are sometimes aghast at the Clintons.

Side note: Watch for Joe Biden, by design or accident, to blurt out something harmful to her at some point.

**Bill Clinton on the Loose.** Until recent weeks, it was almost possible to forget him as presidential-race factor. Then Hillary Clinton, in the last Democratic debate, tagged him as a key economic adviser in any second Clinton administration. Her campaign confirmed that he'd be popping up more often on the campaign trail. And references to his Oval Office misdeeds and the Clintons' marital psychodrama started to creep back into the news.

All of that was a fresh reminder that his proper role in, and impact on, his wife's candidacy is unsettled and unclear. He remains both wildly charismatic and maddeningly undisciplined. He connotes both prosperous times and cynical scheming.

There's no legitimate worry that his presence might eclipse and diminish hers, but the two of them together root her candidacy as much in the past as in the future. So how to deploy and integrate him? Is it controllable?



**FRANK BRUNI**  
Comment

**All Eyes on New Hampshire.** I don't mean the state's Republican and Democratic primaries in February. I mean the U.S. Senate election in November. The balance of power in the chamber could hinge on the battle between the Republican incumbent, Kelly Ayotte, and her Democratic challenger, Maggie Hassan, the state's governor.

It won't look like many other Senate contests. New Hampshire's peculiar political realities mean that neither candidate is likely to be especially nasty or ideologically strident; each may well emphasize consensus-building and look for opportunities to flex independence from the party that's paradoxically pumping enormous resources into her race.

And their matchup will underscore New Hampshire's encouraging record of electing women to prominent public offices, where they're still frustratingly underrepresented nationwide.

**A Tale of Two Mayors.** The Democratic mayors of two of the nation's three most populous cities are under enormous strain, their approval ratings low, their approaches to governing under attack. I speak of Bill

de Blasio in New York and Rahm Emanuel in Chicago, each of whom has acknowledged the need for redemption in 2016.

But while de Blasio's greatest problems are with white voters, Emanuel has lost the trust in particular of minorities, who are justly outraged by the deadly actions of his city's police officers.

The methods and success with which these remarkably different men chart their comebacks warrant scrutiny, harboring lessons about the Democratic Party's ability to bridge diverse constituencies and about the most effective style of leadership for fractious, tense times.

**Religion on the Run.** Same-sex marriage became the law in 50 states despite the opposition of many prominent church figures. The percentage of Americans who don't subscribe to any organized religion steadily grows.

And that means that whoever winds up with the Republican nomination has to figure out how to play down the primary's degree of God talk and moralizing without alienating voters on the so-called religious right, who could cause a distracting scene, impede the party's outreach to moderate and younger voters, and decide to sit out the election.

Can the party soften its image, adapt to the times and expand its appeal while satisfying evangelicals? Its success in presidential contests could hinge on that.

Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995.

**YOUR VIEWS**

**Liberalism driving state into castes, unbending systems**

The problem with Oregon being a so-called "nanny state" has to do with the creation of a caste system. Liberalism fails to comprehend why unchecked agencies are so dangerous to our way of life here in America.

Our schools cater to those seeking degrees, which set people up for careers in civil service, social work, psychology, etc. We have college graduates seeking professional status working for what is known as "the system." So what could possibly be wrong with so many educated people entering the workforce? Vested interests.

Our healthcare is suffering due to unnecessary government entanglement. Do we realize how many people are working for

the state of Oregon and the agencies thriving here? It is truly a booming industry.

We have a ruling class of liberals who sustain themselves by pulling more and more disadvantaged people into the vicious cycle that is welfare dependency and foster care. There is no financial incentive to getting people out of the system, as these industries survive on the addition of more human lives. Human life is a commodity in liberal America. We the people are footing the bill for this chaos. Tyranny is growing when really that growth belongs in the private sector.

We the disadvantaged need to stand up for ourselves alongside leaders who care about the future of America.

Oregon, it's time for a change.

Carlin Sacco  
Pendleton

**LETTERS POLICY**

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