

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

**A tip of the hat to Harney County Sheriff David Ward.**

Ward has thus far admirably handled the standoff with armed protesters at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, and has been a cautious and reasonable voice amid a sea of partisan and hypocritical shouting from all sides. He has galvanized his community, and earned the respect of many nationwide.

We don't know how many sheriffs in Oregon, especially rural counties that have complicated and antagonistic relationships with the federal government, would be so professional in such a stressful, difficult and dangerous situation. Ward put his own politics aside for safety's sake.

"I could walk around the room and ask every person in here if everybody is happy with the way things are going in our country and I could probably get a thousand different

answers on that," said Ward at a community meeting Jan. 6. "I have my own frustrations. We've got visitors in town that have their own frustrations. But there's appropriate ways to work out our differences."

Sheriff is a strange job in Oregon. It's an elected position, and one that often requires all the campaigning and political promises that other such positions do. But then you get elected and are supposed to forget all that and be an apolitical servant of the people. (Of course, we guess that's the goal of every political office, but Americans have long ago stopped demanding that state and federal legislators put people before politics.)

There is still an awful lot that can go wrong in Burns. But Sheriff Ward has done his best to defuse it. We hope the situation ends peacefully, and that it spurs important conversations about federal lands.

**A kick in the pants to drivers who break the rules of the road and put the rest of us in danger.**

The streets and highways are dangerous enough with vehicles going safe speeds with attentive drivers at the wheel.

What we don't need are racers (like the two who caused a wreck near the county courthouse Tuesday), drunks (like the 29 who were cited during a three-week period in December in Umatilla County), texters, rubberneckers and other distracted, impaired or unsafe drivers.

We're still a few generations away from a self-driving fleet of vehicles on the road that will take human error out of the equation. But until then, take responsibility for yourself, your friends and your family.

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

# Ballot measures will boost campaign contributions

The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times

As we start the new year, it's always tempting to take a look at what might be making news across the state in 2016.

Here's a good bet for the coming year: Some statewide elections will be attracting big money in contributions.

But they might not be the races that you'd expect.

In fact, the races for the state's top elected positions might turn out to be low-wattage affairs. With the possible exception of the crowded field vying for the secretary of state's office (recently, a stepping stone to the governor's office), it seems unlikely that any of those races will be generating much electricity, let alone the big campaign contributions that can flow into hotly contested races. It's always possible that a legislative race somewhere in the state will take off, the way that the race between Sara Gelser and Betsy Close for a state Senate seat took off, and become a magnet for big campaign contributions, but that doesn't seem likely to happen anywhere in the mid-valley in 2016. (In fact, we'd guess that few of the mid-valley's legislative seats up for election in 2016 will even attract contested races, but we'll see about that.)

No, if you're on the lookout for big-money statewide races in 2016, you'll have to look elsewhere on the ballot. In particular, keep an eye on the statewide initiatives that end up qualifying for the ballot.

One of those big-money races may involve efforts to increase the minimum wage in Oregon. Although this could change depending on what happens in

the short legislative session scheduled to begin in February, four separate efforts are underway to collect the signatures necessary to put a minimum wage measure on the November ballot.

And, already, contributions are rolling in. *The Oregonian* recently reported that Service Employees International

Union Local 503 has started a political action committee, the Oregonians Need a Raise PAC, to prepare for a ballot fight.

That PAC already has collected \$363,464 in a contribution that originates with the union's international office, a clear sign that the issue is important to the union.

That's just the opening salvo. It seems a good bet that a minimum-wage ballot measure also will collect substantial contributions from opponents. So this is a race that should cost many millions of dollars, although it would have a way to go to beat the current record-holder, the failed 2014 measure to require labeling on genetically modified food products. (The tab in that race: \$32 million.)

But the minimum-wage fight might just be the undercard for the main event, at least in terms of campaign spending: A proposal to overhaul the state's corporate taxes by establishing a gross receipts tax seems like a good bet to make the ballot. That political fight could prove reminiscent of the battles over Measure 66 and 67 back in 2010; those measures attracted about \$12.5 million in spending.

By contrast, spending for the 2014 gubernatorial race between John Kitzhaber and Dennis Richardson topped out at about \$8.3 million.

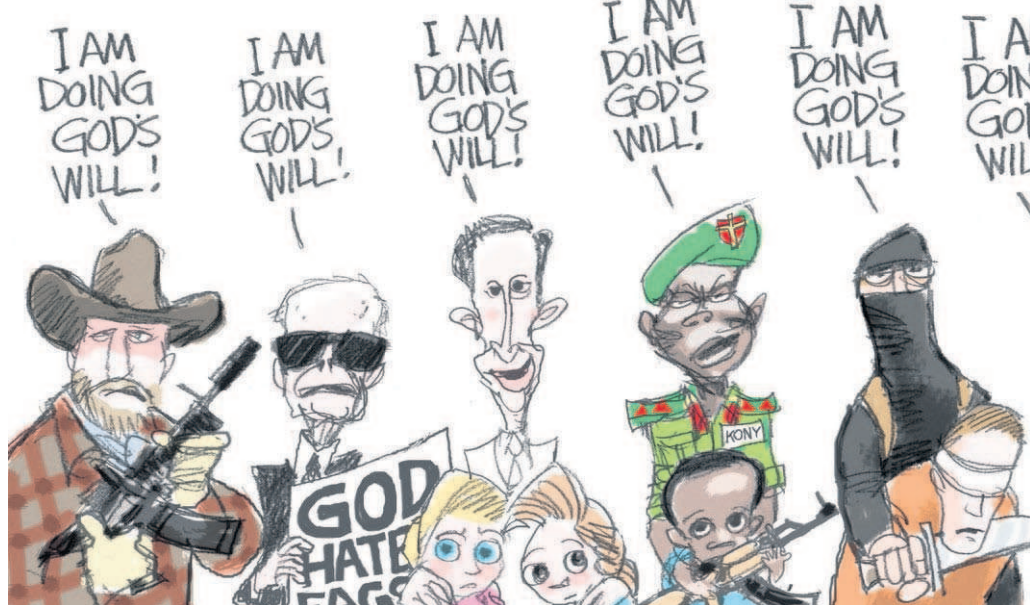
But for now at least, the big-money races in Oregon politics don't seem to be the ones with candidates attached.

## 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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

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PS: I'M NOT TAKING TRUMP



## OTHER VIEWS

# Guns, tears and Republicans

President Barack Obama shed tears Tuesday as he called for new gun safety measures, and some critics perceived weakness or wimpishness. Really? On the contrary, we should all be in tears that 225,000 Americans have already died of gun violence in his seven years in office.

The shame is not a president weeping a bit, but that he has not been able to prevent roughly as many people dying from guns in America on his watch as have been killed in the Syrian civil war (where estimates range from fewer than 200,000 to more than 300,000). Yes, the U.S. gun toll includes suicides and, yes, Syria is a smaller country, but it's worth a cry that a "peaceful" America during Obama's tenure has lost roughly as many lives to gunfire as Syria has in civil war.

Ted Cruz responded to the president's executive actions with a Web page showing a scowling Obama in a helmet, looking like a jackbooted thug staging a home invasion, with the warning, "Obama wants your guns." Chris Christie protested that Obama was behaving like a "petulant child." Jeb Bush decried Obama's "gun-grabbing agenda." Donald Trump warned that Obama was moving toward banning guns. The upshot of all this scaremongering will be more Americans rushing out to buy firearms.

Look, let's acknowledge that liberals have not handled gun issues well over the years. Liberals often antagonize gun owners by coming across as patronizing or insulting — as well as spectacularly unknowledgeable about the guns they seek to regulate. But on the basic question of whether more guns create more safety or more risk, the evidence seems clear: Most gun owners use firearms responsibly, but with more guns there are more tragedies.

Exclude guns and the U.S. has a rate for many violent crimes similar to that of other rich countries. But because we have 300 million guns sloshing around, some in the hands of high-risk individuals, we have a gun homicide rate that is about 20 times that of Australia (which cracked down on guns after a mass shooting there).

Gun advocates say criminals will always have guns, so regulations make no difference. But increasingly we have evidence that this is wrong.

The states with the most restrictive gun laws have the lowest gun death rates (including suicides). Take Massachusetts and New York, which have some of the tightest gun restrictions in America; they have 3 or 4 gun deaths per 100,000 inhabitants per year. At the other extreme, two of the states with the most permissive gun regulations are Alaska and Louisiana, and both have gun death rates about five times as high: more than 19 per



**NICHOLAS KRISTOF**  
Comment

100,000 inhabitants.

Republican presidential candidates should look at the natural experiment that occurred when Missouri eased restrictions on buying handguns. The result was a 25 percent rise in the firearm homicide rate, according to a study in the *Journal of Urban Health*.

In contrast, Connecticut tightened regulations on buying handguns, and gun homicides there fell by 40 percent, according to the *American Journal of Public Health*.

This is not to say that regulations always work, or that fixing the problem is simple. Daniel W. Webster of Johns Hopkins University cites research that keeping guns

from people with past convictions for domestic violence doesn't make much of a difference. But blocking access to guns by people subject to current domestic violence restraining orders does reduce killings of intimate partners.

We need an evidence-driven public health approach, modeled on our highly successful regulation of cars to reduce

auto deaths. That's the approach the Obama executive actions pursue. Republicans have said for years that we should focus on enforcing existing laws. That's what Obama is doing.

Likewise, Obama is pushing to investigate the feasibility of smart guns that operate with a fingerprint or a PIN. This may or may not work, but it's worth a try in a nation where perhaps 300,000 guns are stolen annually. A toddler in America shoots someone on average once a week because guns are so easy to pick up and fire. If our cellphones can be made to work only with a PIN, it's crazy that anyone can use a stolen assault rifle.

There's no magic wand to solve gun violence in America, but neither is it immutable fate that 32,000 Americans die from firearms each year. We know from the experience of states like Connecticut and Missouri that sensible regulations save lives. And why wouldn't we want to keep guns from men subject to domestic violence restraining orders if the result is fewer women murdered by jilted boyfriends?

The Republican presidential candidates are on the wrong side of history here. While even Republican voters overwhelmingly say in polls that they favor sensible steps like universal background checks, the Republican candidates are politicizing what should be a public health issue, and they are scaring Americans into buying more guns, which magnifies the problem and causes more carnage.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon. Kristof, a columnist for *The New York Times* since 2001, won the Pulitzer Prize two times.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Burns standoff a media circus, public relations event

Easy there, troops: Armageddon isn't here.

These loony Rambo types who are trespassing at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge compound will leave when they get hungry. Tonya Harding and her merry crew could have done better.

This is a media event. If I was a hardened skeptic, I would believe Sheriff David Ward coerced this outfit to show up so he could be center stage and do some grandstanding. When you've got these 24-hour news giants on hand and there is no news, they make news.

Last week there was flooding in the Midwest. The media grossly hackneyed the word "historic."

So settle down. The sun will rise tomorrow at its allotted time.

John Shippentower  
Pendleton

### It takes a village, not a police state

Recently, I came home from a friend's birthday party where there was Oreo ice cream cake.

My son, who is four, understandably didn't want to leave the party. Who would? My friend's 18-year-old son had to help me get his coat on him, carry him out to the car, and strap him into his car seat. Many parents of preschoolers know the drill of the child who

is too wiggly to put into the car or the child throwing a tantrum.

When I got home, my son didn't want to get out of the car seat. He wanted me to carry him into the house. I told him I had to carry in two shopping bags, and that he is a big boy and could walk himself in. The fit continued. After I got my son into the house, he ran back outdoors. He ran circles around our parked car in the driveway, all fueled by Oreo ice cream cake. I repeatedly told him to come inside, tried to reason with him. Alas, reasoning with a 4-year-old.

Eventually, he settled down and pouted on the porch for a few minutes (five, by my count while I watched him while putting the shopping bags down), then came inside sobbing and apologizing, and got ready for bed. This morning, I was informed that a neighbor had called Child Protective Services alleging I had locked my child out in the cold for 15 minutes.

I understand that there is child abuse. I understand the "If you see something, say something," philosophy. But why wouldn't someone offer to help? I'm always grateful when another parent steps in and says, "You should listen to your mom," or offers to help me push out a grocery cart when I have an unruly child.

My neighbors might have been well-meaning, but next time, if you're really concerned, I wish you would offer to help rather than calling a government agency.

Shaindel Beers  
Pendleton