

## Quick takes

### Mythbusters bend tanker

So that's why they were in town. Cool.  
— Tisha Horton

I saw the aftermath sitting there. Wondered if someone forgot to open a vent when unloading it!

— Kalista Schuster

### County guarantees EOTEC loan

You would think that if the city of Hermiston and Umatilla County are going to cover the shortfall that we could make requirements that the work be done with all local contractors instead of out of Washington.

— Kalista Schuster

Easy to pledge other people's money.

— Sharon Gaines

### Minimum wage

Small businesses will go out of business, people will lose their jobs and the cost of living is going to increase everywhere.

— Gina L Koskela

How sad, to divide up the state like that. Oregon needs a \$15 minimum wage and it needs it now. We must stand together!

— Jack Davis

Raising the minimum wage significantly like this suggests it would wind up leaving a depressing number of lower level job employees jobless, as hours and help would be cut back to compensate.

— Carrie Brooke Campbell-Turk

Why are the lawmakers in Washington and Oregon so ignorant of reality? If they force business to raise the dollar per hour wage it will cause the business to go bankrupt then everyone will be out of a job.

— Diane Kincaid Fowler

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.

# Justice in the West has a double standard

By ANDREW GULLIFORD  
Writers on the Range

In Boston over 200 years ago, a group of American patriots dressed and painted like Indians smashed crates and dumped tea into the city's harbor.

In today's American West, protesters ride their ATVs into publicly owned canyons to protest federal restriction of motorized access, and more recently, grazing-fee opponents forcibly "occupy" the desks of wildlife biologists. In a different spirit of protest not so long ago, a young man quietly disrupted the sale of oil and gas leases to save two national parks from industrial development.

For centuries, protesters committed to their causes have broken the law and changed the United States, sometimes for the better. But to earn a place in American history, I think protesters must be willing to accept their punishment. Justice must also be meted out evenly, and that has not been the case in the West.

In May 2014, San Juan County Commissioner Phil Lyman and Monticello City Councilman Monte Wells encouraged owners of all-terrain vehicles to come to Blanding, Utah. They asked supporters to help them ride through Recapture Canyon, where locals had built an illegal trail through ancient archaeological sites. The Bureau of Land Management had closed the area to motorized use in 2007, in an effort to prevent motorized vehicles from doing more damage to cultural artifacts.

Some years earlier, in 2008, college student Tim DeChristopher walked into a federal auction of oil and gas leases and took up wooden paddle #70. In an effort to halt drilling near the boundaries of Arches and Canyonlands national parks, he effectively rendered the sale moot by bidding \$1.8 million for 14 leases that he never intended to purchase.

For this act of civil disobedience, DeChristopher was convicted of a felony, sentenced to two years in prison, and fined \$10,000.

The prosecutor said piously, "The rule of

law is the bedrock of our civilized society, not acts of 'civil disobedience' committed in the name of the cause of the day." Yet U.S. District Judge Dee Benson stated that if it were not for DeChristopher's "continuing trail of statements" after the auction, in which he justified his actions, he might have plea-bargained and avoided prosecution.

It is worth noting that the Obama administration eventually dismissed 87 of the 116 oil and gas leases in question, which had been offered by the Bush administration, citing the wilderness value of public land adjacent to two popular national parks.

Nonetheless, the judge threw the book at DeChristopher, who served 21 months in a Colorado prison for his climate-change activism. He has since co-founded the environmental group Peaceful Uprising.

A different judge in Utah showed a great deal more tolerance when ruling on the illegal ATV ride into Recapture Canyon. Lyman's sentence: 10 days in a county jail in St. George, Utah, payment of a \$1,000 fine, and probation for three years. The two men were also ordered to pay \$96,000, payable over several years, in restitution for damaging government property. Unhappy with his mild sentence, Lyman recently announced that he plans to appeal the judge's verdict.

Ten days in jail for Lyman, 21 months for DeChristopher. A \$1,000 fine for Lyman and \$10,000 for DeChristopher. The bedrock of American law seems not to be all that solid in Utah's red-rock canyon country.

The same U.S. Attorney's Office in Utah that insisted on making an example out of DeChristopher to "deter others from entering a path of criminal behavior" issued only a slap on the wrist for an armed ATV invasion on public land that challenged

federal authority. Yet how can raising a wooden bidder's paddle be called a felony while breaking a closure order to drive over archaeological sites be considered a misdemeanor?

Now we have an armed takeover of a wildlife refuge near Burns, Oregon. When asked about legal charges against the occupiers, retired Oregon U.S. Attorney Kris Olson said she thought anti-terrorism laws had been broken.

"I'm also thinking of laws such as the ones prohibiting theft and destruction of federal property," Olson continued. "There may be several federal firearms statutes that would apply, depending on the nature and permitting of the weapons brought across state lines and the intent in transporting them.

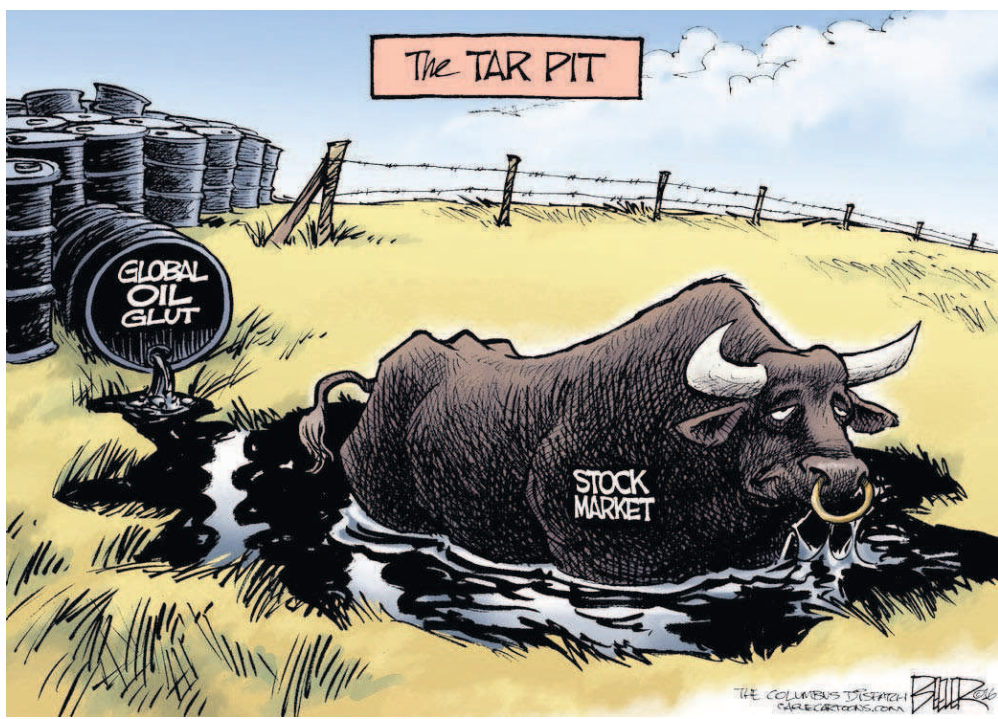
Conspiracy may also tie these acts and defendants together."

Olson is saying that these actions merit serious federal charges with potentially serious consequences. Yet in the past, men wearing cowboy hats and waving guns around have not been prosecuted nearly as severely as environmentalists. That may prove true in the near future, too, depending on what happens once the Oregon standoff ends.

Disagreements over the use of publicly owned land in the West seem to be constant, and passionate protesters will continue to challenge federal rules. That is every American's constitutional right, but let's have justice, too.

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# The anxieties of impotence

In 1936 George Orwell wrote a magnificent essay called "Shooting an Elephant." Orwell had been working as a British police officer in Burma, enforcing colonial rule. An elephant had gone "must," broken its chains, trampled some homes and killed a man.

As Orwell walked, gun in hand, toward the elephant, a crowd of more than 2,000 Burmese gathered behind him. They hated him, but it would be a diverting spectacle to see an elephant shot and they could use the meat. Orwell didn't want to shoot the poor creature, whose "must," or frenzied state, had passed and who was peacefully eating grass. But he felt the pressure of the crowd behind him. They'd laugh at him if he didn't kill the thing.

"I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind," Orwell wrote. And so he subjected the animal to a long and agonizing death.

In his essay nobody feels like they have any power. The locals, the imperial victims, sure didn't. Orwell, the guy with the gun, didn't feel like he had any. The imperialists back in London were too far away.

That's sort of the way much of the world is today. As Anand Giridharadas writes in *The International New York Times*, "If anything unites America in this fractious moment it is a widespread sentiment that power is somewhere other than where you are."

The Republican establishment thinks the grass roots have the power but the grass roots think the reverse. The unions think the corporations have the power but the corporations think the startups do. Regulators think Wall Street has the power but Wall Street thinks the regulators do. The Pew Research Center asked Americans, "Would you say your side has been winning or losing more?" Sixty-four



DAVID BROOKS  
Comment

Nobody feels like they have any power.

percent of Americans, with majorities of both parties, believe their side has been losing more.

These days people seem to underestimate their own power or suffer from what Giridharadas calls the "anxiety of impotence."

Sometimes when groups feel oppressed, they organize by coming up with concrete reform proposals to empower themselves. The Black Lives Matter movement is doing this.

But in other cases the feeling of absolute powerlessness can corrupt absolutely. As psychological research has shown, many people

who feel powerless come to feel unworthy, and become complicit in their own oppression. Some exaggerate the weight and size of the obstacles in front of them. Some feel dehumanized, forsaken, doomed and guilty.

Today we live in a world of isolation and atomization, where people distrust their own institutions. In such circumstances many people respond to powerlessness with pointless acts of self-destruction.

In the Palestinian territories, for example, young people don't organize or work with their government to improve their prospects. They wander into Israel, try to stab a soldier or a pregnant woman and get shot or arrested — every single time. They throw away their lives for a pointless and usually botched moment of terrorism.

In a different way, the American election has been perverted by feelings of powerlessness. Americans are beset by complex, intractable problems that don't have a clear villain: technological change displaces workers; globalization and the rapid movement of people destabilize communities; family structure dissolves; the political order in the Middle East teeters, the Chinese

economy craters, inequality rises, the global order frays, etc.

To address these problems we need big, responsible institutions (power centers) that can mobilize people, cobble together governing majorities and enact plans of actions. In the U.S. context that means functioning political parties and a functioning Congress.

Those institutions have been weakened of late. Parties have been rendered weak by both campaign finance laws and the Citizens United decision, which have cut off their funding streams and given power to polarized super-donors who work outside the party system. Congress has been weakened by polarization and disruptive members who don't believe in legislating.

Instead of shoring up these institutions, many voters are inclined to make everything worse. Plagued by the anxiety of impotence many voters are drawn to leaders who pretend that our problems could be solved by defeating some villain. Donald Trump says stupid elites are the problem. Ted Cruz says it's the Washington cartel. Bernie Sanders says it's Wall Street.

The fact is, for all the problems we may have with Wall Street or Washington, our biggest problems are systemic — the disruptions caused by technological progress and globalization, mass migration, family breakdown and so on. There's no all-controlling Wizard of Oz to slay.

If we're to have any hope of addressing big systemic problems we'll have to repair big institutions and have functioning parties and a functioning Congress. We have to discard the anti-political, anti-institutional mood that is prevalent and rebuild effective democratic power centers.

This requires less atomization and more collective action, fewer strongmen but greater citizenship. It requires the craft of political architecture, not the demagoguery of destruction.

David Brooks, *New York Times*

# Governor's minimum wage compromise a step forward

The (Medford) Mail-Tribune

Gov. Kate Brown's proposed minimum wage increase has already generated opposition from both sides of the issue, which might mean it has an outside chance of passing. That's undoubtedly Brown's intention. Whether she and majority Democratic leaders can push it through remains to be seen, and the debate could have large implications for the November election.

Brown's proposal would set two separate minimums, one for the Portland area and one for the rest of the state.

Outside Portland, the minimum wage would go from the present \$9.25 an hour — already second highest in the nation — to \$10.25 an hour next January, then gradually increase to a high of \$13.50 an hour in 2022, after which it would be indexed to inflation, as is the existing minimum. Portland's wage would go to \$11.79 in 2017 and rise to \$15.52 over six years.

One incentive for enacting a higher minimum this session is to head off planned initiative campaigns on the November ballot, one of which would set a statewide \$15-an-hour minimum starting in 2019. The other, backed by labor unions, would set the wage at \$13.50 and repeal a state-imposed ban on higher local wages.

Opponents of Brown's plan, including Republican legislators and business groups including the restaurant industry, argue the move would cost jobs, especially in restaurants. The lobbying group Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association said the proposal would mean the loss of 55,000 jobs statewide.

In Seattle, which started phasing in \$15 minimum last year, initial figures suggested there might be a slight dip in the number of restaurant jobs, but nowhere near the thousands suggested by the Oregon restaurant group. Overall, the jobless rate in the Seattle area is at its lowest level since 2008.

The restaurant group supports an offset for tipped employees, even under Oregon's existing minimum wage. That's something to consider with this proposal, even if it's obvious most tipped employees are hardly getting rich.

Putting more money in the pockets of minimum wage workers gives them greater buying power, which supports the economy, too. And a sizable percentage of minimum-wage workers are adults, not teenagers living at home. Still, advocates for raising the wage were hardly overjoyed at Brown's plan, which falls short of what they are aiming for.

If the Legislature rejects Brown's proposal and fails to pass a bill, the issue is almost certain to wind up in voters' hands in November. Opponents on both sides should consider what that means: Perhaps an even higher minimum wage, or perhaps no increase at all. We suspect Brown's compromise would look better to the losing side at that point.