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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Dwight Johnson, Jeremy Keene and the rest of the emergency response team in Pendleton that pulled a naked and combative Steven Burton from a tree Saturday morning.

The photo, captured by a curious bystander, has made the rounds and surely given glee to many. But the reality of the situation is not lost on us.



At a glance, the photo is a pretty solid argument against doing drugs. The story by reporter Kathy Aney tells even more, including the fear felt by the homeowner when a nude Burton walked into her house and gave her a hug, and the difficulty faced by law enforcement trying to rescue a man not in his right mind as he fought against them.

We also realize, from the picture and what we heard from people on the scene, that this

could have ended even worse for Burton. It could have ended with a hearse instead of a jail cell.

Every day our public safety log, published on the records page, describes in broad strokes law enforcement's difficult task of keeping the peace. Stories and photos like the one we published this week draw a clearer picture of how awkward that work can be, but also how important it is to have well-trained personnel to do it.

A kick in the pants to public agencies dragging their feet into the 21st century, especially when it comes to public records.

Whether it's intentional obfuscation or simply bureaucratic ineptitude, when a taxpayer-funded office can't provide a basic record to a taxpayer efficiently and affordably, it makes the system appear less trustworthy.

News organizations like the *East Oregonian* make more requests than the average citizen, and we deal with the long delays and odd pricing differences on a more regular basis. But now that files are stored digitally, having access to them should be easier and cheaper than ever.

The recent move at the Umatilla and Morrow county courts to transmit digital court files for a base fee of \$3, regardless of the size of the digital file, is a good one. We realize it takes a few minutes of work to find and send a document by email, and a nominal fee makes sense. Charging per digital page does not.

Next week is national Sunshine Week, a celebration of our ability to access public information. That's not a given most places in the world, and we shouldn't let any clouds dampen the sunshine here.

A tip of the hat to the 14 candidates running for seats in Pendleton city government.

We knew a shakeup was coming, with several Pendleton councilors planning to step down, and were hopeful for campaigns instead of coronations.



It looks like we got our wish. Over the next two months, the candidates will make their pitch to voters about which direction the city should go, and how they will play a part in that. We'll sit down with each of the candidates and hope to facilitate a forum where the public can come out and meet them, too.

When ballots got out, the people will get to decide who they want to entrust with Pendleton's big decisions.

We hope the future leaders of Hermiston are watching, and getting ready to throw their hats in the ring this fall when four seats are up for grabs.

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.

Congress should refuse to ratify the TPP

I read with interest the *East Oregonian's* endorsement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. It included an impressive list of potential business advantages for the agricultural industry, always a good thing and not just locally.

Much like NAFTA and its disastrous effect on middle-class American jobs, though, TPP has flaws that outweigh the advantages.

One major flaw is well-summarized by author Thom Hartmann: "The TPP would also let corporations sue countries in international courts owned and run by corporations, with judges handpicked from corporate law firms. In other words, if a corporation doesn't like a regulation, or thinks it'll diminish their profits, they can sue your town, state, or our federal government over it — and that would gut environmental and financial rules without any input from "We the People" or our elected representatives in Congress."

A second major flaw ensures Americans will pay painfully high prescription prices, and deprives millions of foreign citizens the medicine on which they depend because they won't be able to afford the increased cost — Doctors Without Borders estimates

about a half a billion people. TPP does this by preventing the manufacture of generic versions of brand name drugs.

Regrettably, Congress surrendered authority to amend the TPP, instead approving "fast-track" status to TPP consideration. Fast-track status requires a simple "up or down" vote. Given these flaws, I hope Congress will refuse to ratify TPP.

Bill Young
Pendleton

Support Hermiston fire bond, local responders

First and foremost, I support our community. Where we live, work and play is important to all of us. The support that local businesses, families and even large corporations put back into the community each year is outstanding.

A great example of this is the Hermiston Fire Department. They are often doing things to better the community we all love. They are the ones raising the flag at the return of our troops, driving Santa to local events for the children, and supporting local sports teams. They are also the ones that we all call when we need help. Be it a medical need, fire, car wreck, or just a question, they are always there when needed.

For the first time, they are asking us for help. Never before in their history has the fire department

asked for funding from the public. Their rates were locked in 1995. Could you survive with your income from 1995? For them and all of us, the answer is no.

Funding the reformation is not free and it will increase taxes in the county while reallocating funds in the city. City residents will not see this cost increase as their taxes are at their state max. Those in the county, like me, will see a slight increase in our taxes. This small increase will get us more firefighters, faster response times, and the station on Diagonal Road staffed full-time. The increase in cost is small when it's my family's safety I am paying for.

I trust the fire department to respond to fires and I trust them to do what is right to ensure these services are not decreased. Please vote yes, and support our first responders.

Matt Fisher
Hermiston Fire
and Emergency Services
Hermiston

Oregon's driver card bill isn't done yet

Wake up Oregonians: In 2013 our Oregon legislature passed Senate Bill 833, which authorized the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue driver cards to those who can't prove their legal presence in the U.S. It was signed into law in May 2013.



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OTHER VIEWS

'Every parent's nightmare'

W e as a society derided the Roman Catholic Church as an accessory to child sexual abuse, and we lambasted Penn State for similar offenses.

Yet we as a society are complicit or passive in a similar way, by allowing a popular website called Backpage.com to be used to arrange child rape.

Consider what happened to a girl I'll call Natalie, who was trafficked into the sex industry in Seattle at age 15.

"It was every parent's nightmare," Natalie's mother, Nacole, told me. "It can happen to any parent. Fifteen-year-olds don't make the best choices. I dropped her off at school in the morning, I was expecting to pick her up after track practice in the afternoon, and then I didn't see her for 108 days." The girl ran off to a bus station, was found by a pimp, and within days was being sold for sex on Backpage.

Backpage has classified ads for everything from antiques to boats, but it makes its money on escort ads. It has about 80 percent of the U.S. market for online sex ads in America, mostly for consenting adults but many also for women who are forcibly trafficked or for underage girls. Children in at least 47 states have been sold on Backpage, by one aid group's count.

"We were an everyday, average family," Nacole said. "Our children were involved in sports. She played the violin. She was on the soccer team. And she made a stupid decision one day that forever changed her life. And Backpage facilitated it."

The girl was eventually rescued by the police, but by then she had been beaten and threatened by her pimp and endured innumerable rapes. "She's forever changed," her mom said. "Her siblings are forever changed. Today she struggles with life."

If there were a major American website openly selling heroin or anthrax, there would be an outcry. Yet we Americans tolerate a site like Backpage.com that is regularly used to peddle children. We avert our eyes, and the topic tends not to come up in polite society.

"I had no idea how much juvenile trafficking goes on until my family became a victim of it," Nacole said.

Thousands of children are trafficked for sex each year in the United States, but there are no solid numbers. What is clear is only that it's a big problem that gets minimal attention; it's essentially never mentioned in the current political campaign.

Yet a few forces are coming together to put pressure on Backpage. One is a lawsuit in Washington state against Backpage by Natalie and two other girls who at age 13 were



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

also sold on the website; one of the 13-year-olds said that she was raped 20 times a day.

Another is decisive action by credit card companies to stop processing fees for sex ads on Backpage, disrupting its business model.

Then there is the prospect that the Senate this month will adopt a Contempt of Congress resolution, the first by the Senate in 21 years (the last involved the Whitewater investigation), and this time it's

bipartisan and the target is Backpage. The aim is to force Backpage to comply with subpoenas from the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is looking into the company's role in sex trafficking.

Children in at least 47 states have been sold on Backpage.

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, who leads the panel, told me that he expects the Senate to vote next week on the resolution and he doesn't know of anyone planning to vote against it.

At a time when Congress seems gridlocked and dysfunctional, it's nice to see the Senate moving in a bipartisan way to address an issue that affects America's most vulnerable.

The subcommittee has already uncovered disturbing information about Backpage, including the way it edits ads to reduce law enforcement scrutiny and does not retain photo data that could be used to find missing children. And Senate investigators uncovered an instruction to the Backpage staff that seemed to suggest erring on the side of letting girls be sold: "only delete [ads] if you really very sure person is underage."

The Senate panel found that Backpage was worth hundreds of millions of dollars and in 2014 had an Ebitda margin, a measure of profitability, of 82 percent, compared with an average of 9.3 percent for online services companies.

Yiota Souras of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children notes that the issue is not adult prostitution or sex among consenting adults: "That's totally removed from what we're focusing on here, which is children sold to be raped."

Whatever we think about the presidential race, whatever our political party, we should be able to agree to act to stop the exploitation of children. It's wrong when the Catholic Church hierarchy looks the other way, when Penn State averts its eyes, and also when we as a society do the same thing.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. A columnist for The New York Times since 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize twice.

YOUR VIEWS

Subsequently, several organizations collected enough signatures to file Referendum #301 to put the issue directly to the voters.

This initiative appeared on the 2014 general election ballot as Ballot Measure 88. The voters of this state resoundingly and directly (66 percent) rejected the original strategy of Senate Bill 833 and prevented the law from being implemented.

Story over, right? Wrong. Now, a group of residents here illegally and two nonprofits are suing the state of Oregon saying their "constitutional rights were violated" when voters struck down Senate Bill 833.

Bizarre? It gets worse. Apparently the Oregon Attorney General's office has volunteered arguments in its brief on this matter that support illegal immigration. The AG's office has also made statements supporting the race baiting allegations that the plaintiffs have based their case on.

Let that sink in for a moment.

The state of Oregon is being sued by immigrants because they don't like something that the legal citizens of this state have done. And the Attorney General's office is supporting the plaintiffs. Your tax dollars at work.

In addition, at least one of the nonprofits representing the plaintiffs is using federal grant money. You are being double-taxed to fund the efforts of people who are here illegally to shove something down your throats that you already overwhelmingly rejected.

If you ever needed an example of how meaningless your vote and your voice are, look no further. Regardless, you should contact your senator and representatives and express your opinion on this issue. The AG's office also has a mechanism online where you can provide comments, though I haven't received a response for anything I have submitted to them. Wonder why?

Gordon Graham
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.