

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW

Your vote, your voice

Your ballot should have arrived in your mailbox by now. Hopefully you've opened it and looked over the myriad races you have a say in.

The exact number depends on whether or not you are an affiliated voter. Because of Oregon's closed primary, if you are not registered as Democrat or Republican you have many fewer bubbles to choose from.

But if you are feeling overwhelmed by the number of those bubbles, we're here to help. No matter how informed you try to be, it is likely that some races that have snuck by you.

Here's some advice on local issues.

School bonds and levies

We feel a little bit like Meg Ryan in that classic scene in *When Harry Met Sally*. On school levies for the Echo, Milton-Freewater and Athena-Weston districts, we're screaming: **YES, YES and YES.**

And it's not because we're some tax up-tickers and apologists for Oregon's dismal education system — which remains among the lowest-performing states in many metrics.

We support all three because each of these districts is hamstrung by Oregon's tax system, yet they have been gifted opportunities to bring in millions of outside dollars into local school districts. If voters don't approve the levies this time around, those dollars will have to be excised from a much smaller pot — local pockets — the next time around. These districts won lotteries of different sorts. If you vote against, you're just sending those lottery winnings back.

We recommend a vote to have what they're having.

Umatilla County Fire District #1

The district is taking a proactive look at how to keep Hermiston and west-county fire response at the top of its game.

We appreciate its backers have thoughtfully considered the

measure's defeat on the last ballot, and have come back with a lower price point and a more coherent message. This bond will add full-time staffing at the Diagonal Road station, beef up staffing in Stanfield and, as a result, provide better coverage for the rural areas.

Hermiston's department hasn't seen an increase in funding in quite some time, and as a stand-alone district this bond is the best way to keep the firefighters and paramedics best equipped to handle the growing number of emergencies in our growing community. We suggest a **YES** vote.

Pendleton city council

There could be as many as seven new faces on the Pendleton city council in just a few months. This represents a remarkable opportunity to reform and refocus the council and put the city on a new path. The members we'd like to see lead that change is mayor John Turner, Becky Marks in Ward 1, Scott Fairley in Ward 2, Dale Primmer in Ward 3 and Paul Chalmers as an at-large councilor.

Umatilla County Commissioner

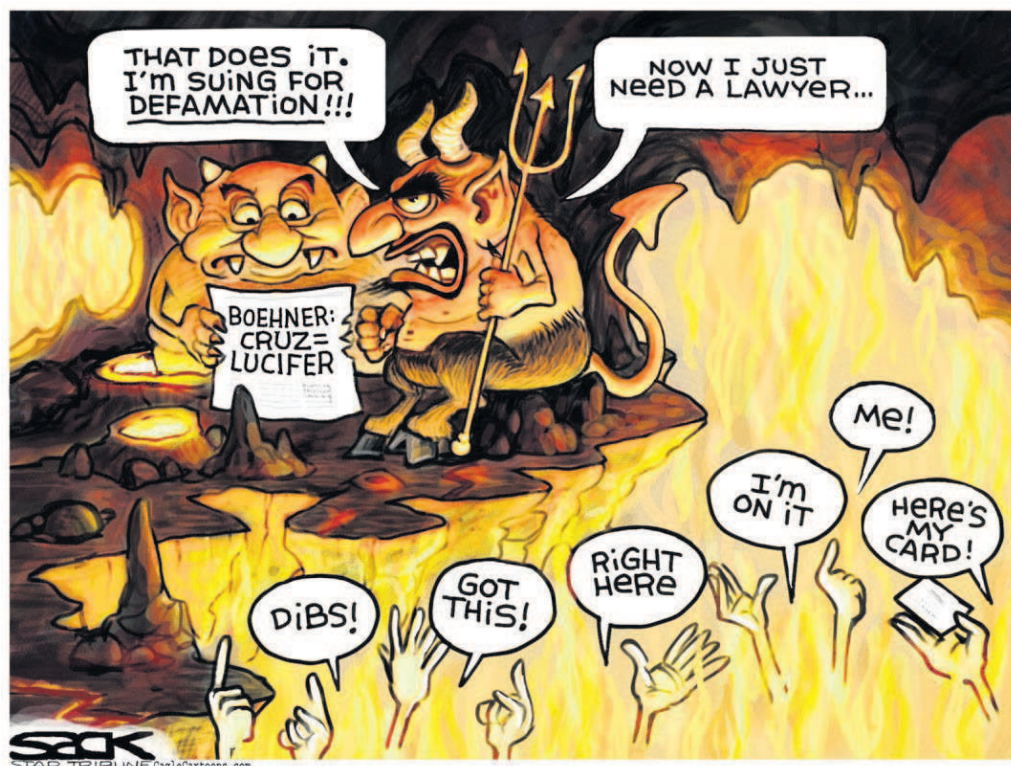
The editorial board chose not to make an endorsement between incumbent Bill Elfering and challenger Tom Bailor.

Circuit Court Judge

We plan to speak with circuit court judge candidates Jon Lieuallen and John Ballard, but won't make an editorial endorsement until we've given them a chance to make their pitch to us. This may be the tightest and most interesting ballot question this year in Umatilla County.

And remember: the ballot is not a standardized test. While we hope voters take the time to educate themselves on the issues and candidates before filling out and returning the ballot, if you feel unsure about a particular race, or just want to vote for a single candidate, your vote will be counted just the same.

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

Pendleton at a tipping point

When I purchased the Brown Building in November of 2005, my wife Gail and I were considering several possible property development locations across the country. We settled on Pendleton because of its immense possibilities — possibilities that I believe continue to exist although the climate has changed in the last 11 years.

I commuted to Pendleton for four years before we actually moved here full-time in September of 2009. Along the way, I also purchased the St. George Hotel and the Bowman Building. During our years in Pendleton, we have had the privilege of renovating and re-purposing all three of those aging but historical facilities. They now have a new life, which will continue long after we have moved on.

Those first years in Pendleton were exciting times and out-of-town developers were applauded for making a difference — particularly along a Main Street that has been struggling to keep the lights on. Those were the years when Hamley's became a major attraction, when storefronts were modernized, and when old buildings came back to life. New entities like the Prodigal Son are further examples of how old buildings can experience rejuvenation.

Pendleton still has a number of major buildings that are vacant for lack of a tenant or empty shells because of fire and decay. Or, in some cases, prime business locations without a business. In a way, Pendleton is at a tipping point like many other communities that are struggling to maintain the status quo while not understanding there is no such thing as the status quo — we either move forward or backward.

While Pendleton has a rich heritage, it is important that in celebrating our past, we do not imperil our future. As Pendleton seeks to define what lies ahead, it is important the community comes together to embrace new ideas, divergent opinions and the importance of welcoming newcomers. There are two societies co-existing here — those who represent four, five and six generations and remain here, as well as those who have consciously chosen to make Pendleton their home. Both groups have something to offer.

I am hopeful the city council will be able to infuse a new sense of direction and excitement into this community. I'm told they intend to start by clearly defining their goals and focus and then sticking to the plan. That's exactly what Pendleton needs — that



AL PLUTE
Comment

and a strong commitment to understanding we are in an era when we have to do more with less. There is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow nor is there a golden egg hidden under city hall. We simply need to tighten our belts and do the best we can with what we have until such time as the community regains trust in city government and commits the funds necessary to improve the streets and other aspects of our infrastructure.

It is always easier to be a spectator than to take the field just like it is easy to identify a problem; it's finding the solution that is difficult. The best way to survive

There is no such thing as the status quo — we either move forward or backward.

in government leadership positions is to keep your head down and avoid change. We need to create an environment in which those with something to offer feel comfortable filing for elected positions while those on the sidelines understand their role is to cheer rather than simply jeer. More and more qualified individuals will avoid running for office if they realize attempts to offer solutions will be met with resistance, risk, recall and rancor.

There is evidence throughout Pendleton that the early leaders of our daily newspaper were once active participants in the process of shaping the community. It too has taken on the role of spectator more prone to lobbing grenades than becoming visible contributors to our collective well-being.

I realize I am an individual with a penchant for pushing the envelope and engaging in spirited conversations on subjects about which I am passionate. As a result, a variety of events have caused our family to conclude our lives would be happier on the banks of the McKenzie River in Springfield rather than in a community we thought once would be our permanent home.

As a result, while I will be returning to Pendleton monthly to handle business matters, as soon as Pendleton completes the budget process, I will be resigning as a member of the city council.

All of that being said, I still believe Pendleton is a city full of possibilities and Gail and I have enjoyed meeting many people who will likely remain lifetime-friends. I am, first and foremost, an incurable optimist and I am confident there are people here who will be able to promote ideas for which I was unable to secure support.

Al Plute is a Pendleton City Council member and a local property owner. He will resign from the city council May 17.

YOUR VIEWS

Circuit court judge needs integrity

Voters in Umatilla County have a crucial decision to make in the upcoming May elections — who should succeed retiring judge Ronald J. Pahl as our next circuit court judge. This position is so important because of the responsibility that comes with deciding the fates of so many people in our community: domestic violence victims, children in dependency cases, those convicted of crimes, parties to contract disputes, adults who are mentally incapacitated, and the list goes on.

Moreover, sitting judges are rarely opposed or defeated in elections so they typically preside until they retire or decide to do something else. For these reasons we should take great care in choosing who will be the next judge to handle these important affairs for us.

You might think about it this way: If you, or a loved one, were

facing a circuit court judge in a divorce, small claims case, restraining order case, or any other legal matter, would you want the judge staring back at you to be one of integrity, fairness, and compassion, or a judge lacking in those important traits?

We are lucky to live in a democracy where we get to choose our local judges, so please vote and choose someone who you believe embodies the personal character befitting a judge.

Arron Guevara
Pendleton

Cimmiyotti the right choice for Ward 3

This is the first time I have written a letter to the editor, but I feel very strongly that Cody Cimmiyotti would be the right person for the Ward 3 seat on the Pendleton City Council. He is very dedicated to whatever he chooses to do as well as a very

hard worker. Cody is the type of person who will speak up and make a difference.

The city of Pendleton needs the younger generation to get more involved and Cody is the right person to do this. I know Cody will be devoted and committed and take this opportunity very serious.

Vote Cody Cimmiyotti — we won't be disappointed.

Kelly Knight
Pendleton

Fire bond necessary to keep up with needs

We have been residents of the Hermiston area since 1975. Over the years I've not only seen the excellent work and dedication of the local emergency services but have been the recipient of their response and emergency care in both fire and medical situations.

They are asking voters to allow them to form a new fire district that will allow them to

increase their tax rate a total of 55 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. As the cost of doing business rises this increase in revenue is necessary to keep up with personnel and equipment needs. The facts are available on the website at www.hermistonfire.org.

The new district will help meet future equipment costs and add needed personnel to staff the station on Diagonal Road 24 hours a day. To make this happen we must vote to dissolve the existing fire district and to form and fund the new district, Umatilla County Fire District #1. I'm voting YES on both and asking you to do the same.

Bryan and Lou Ann Wolfe
Hermiston

Lindsay for Morrow County Judge

We have watched Melissa Lindsay grow up here in Eastern Oregon. Her time spent in

Heppner schools, college, the Bank of Eastern Oregon mortgage department, ranch bookkeeping skills and raising two children has made her who she is today. She can do it all!

Melissa is very open-minded and works well with others. She is a great organizer and whatever job she does, it is 100 percent. Her knowledge of how this county runs is due to her energy and attending meetings for the last year doing research to see what this position involves. She is a great example of what citizen government should look like. She is successful in every endeavor she does and will bring that to the county. We feel she is extremely qualified for the job and would be a huge asset to Morrow County.

Please cast your ballot for Melissa Lindsay for Morrow County Judge if you want to see this county maintain an excellent operation done right.

Marvin and Tanna Padberg
Ione

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.

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