

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

A holiday for all of us

In this bipartisan time, we rarely have opportunities to truly come together.

There's Christmas, but apparently there's a war raging around it. We all watch the Super Bowl, but only half are satisfied with the outcome. Thanks to the never-ending political calendar, this country finds itself divided on a daily basis.

Memorial Day is an opportunity to step back from this division — to unite in remembrance and respect for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for this country. It is also an opportunity to remember why they gave that sacrifice. What about this country and its principles makes it worth fighting for?

No one gives their life for the Democratic or Republican party, or for their favorite sports team, or for a single law or politician. Those

that join the military defend all Americans — our lives, our land, our culture and our traditions.

It can be easy to forget, so far from the battlefield, what that sacrifice means. That there are nearly 7,000 young men and women who have been killed in combat since 2001. And it was for their hometown as well as ours, for their family and yours.

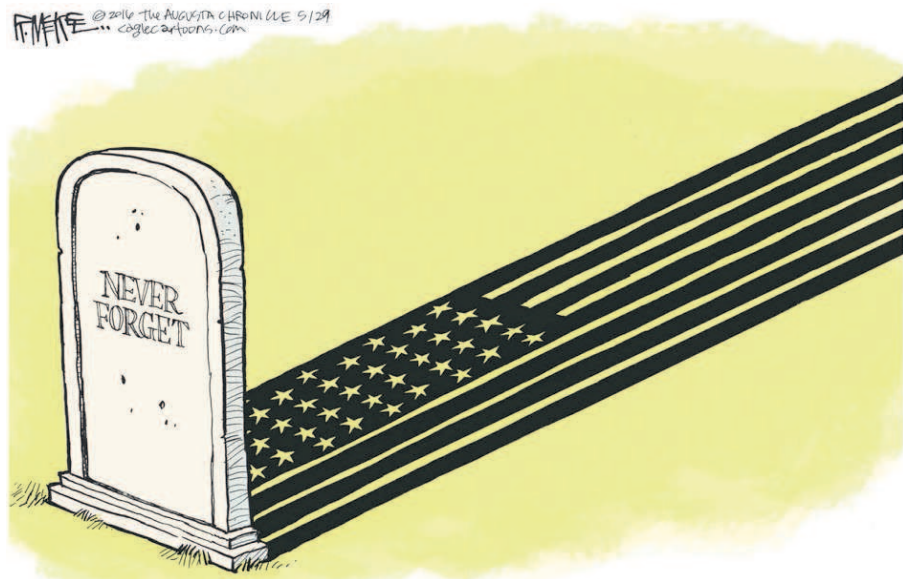
We understand the impulse to spend the long weekend at the barbecue, car sale, camping or waiting in endless TSA checkpoints at the airport. And we hope you do enjoy the day off work.

But we also hope you take a few minutes to look out at your cemetery, over to your neighbors, to the less fortunate, at the incredibly blessed, onto our bountiful lands. They are what we all have in common.

No one gives their life for the Democratic or Republican party.

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



Never forget the true cost of war

By CAMERON SMITH
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

This year will mark 150 years since the first local ceremonies decorating the graves of veterans after the end of the Civil War. This military family and community tradition was later formalized as a national day of honor in Decoration Day, and what we now call Memorial Day.

In 1866, no family or community remained untouched by the Civil War — America's bloodiest conflict resulted in over 1 million casualties and claimed over 620,000 lives. The impacts of the war were intensely and personally felt across the nation.

Today, there are over 320,000 veterans across Oregon. We are four generations strong across 5 major wars, plus all those who stood guard over our peace and served in smaller conflicts around the world. With every veteran counted, we must also include recognition of their spouses and families who served in their own way on the home front while their veteran was in uniform.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that our nation's battles today are fought by less than one percent of our population. The weight of the most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan has been borne by the few.

Most of our citizens today have not been directly impacted by the wars. The same cannot be said for our Gold Star families who have lost a loved one in

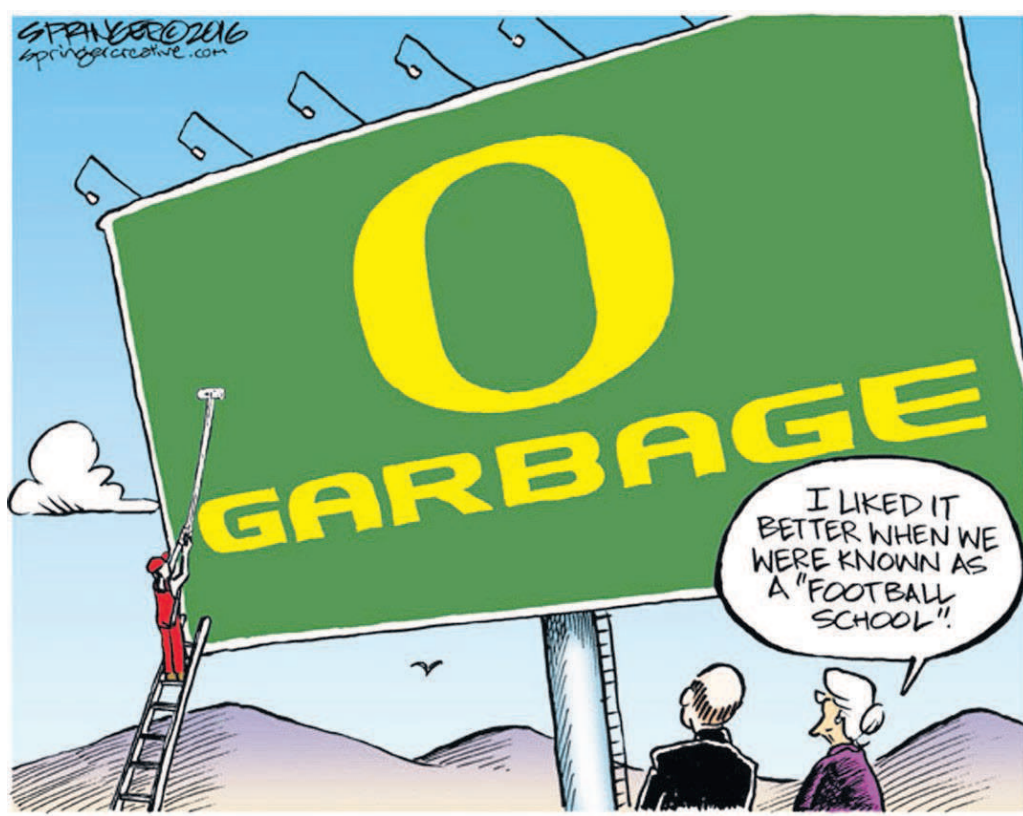
service to the nation. We must never forget the true cost of war — a cost far beyond dollars and cents. Fifty years ago in Vietnam, we lost over 58,000 dedicated service members whose names are now immortalized in polished black granite at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Across the ages, from the beaches in Europe and on Pacific islands to the mountains and jungles in Asia, countless Americans have stood up to serve and have laid down their lives. At the most basic level, they fought to protect the one on their right and the one on their left, but ultimately their fight protects us all and preserves the values we hold dear.

This Memorial Day, as we kick off the start of summer and turn to enjoy Oregon's incredible parks, beaches, rivers and mountains, we must encourage all citizens to pause and honor our fallen and their families. We thank all veterans for their service in uniform and their continued service in using their leadership, skills and experience to enrich our communities across the state.

We must continue to share the stories of our military's service and most importantly share the stories of all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Thank you for all of your support for Oregon veterans and God Bless all those still serving overseas.

Cameron Smith served three tours in Iraq as a Marine and is the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.



OTHER VIEWS

Memorial weekend ranting

Summer is upon us, and we are facing important travel decisions. Such as who to blame when we get stuck in interminable airport lines.

So many options. There's the government, but how many times can you complain about Congress in the course of a lifetime? There's the public — air traffic up 12 percent since 2011. But really, people, don't blame yourself.

Let's pick a rant that's good for you, good for me, good for the lines in security: Make the airlines stop charging fees for checked baggage.

Seems simple, doesn't it? Plus, if you do manage to make it to your flight, these are the same people who will be announcing there's a \$3 fee if you want a snack.

The largest airlines charge \$25 for the first checked bag, thus encouraging people to drag their belongings through the airport, clogging the X-ray lines and slowing the boarding process as everybody fights to cram one last rolling duffel into the overhead compartment.

The idea that travelers should be hit by an extra charge for, um, having luggage began in 2008, when the cost of fuel went through the roof. We understood the airlines' pain, sort of. Maybe. But now fuel prices have fallen into the cellar. The airlines are taking in stupendous profits — last year nearly \$26 billion after taxes, up from \$2.3 billion in 2010.

Yet the baggage fees are still with us. In fact, they've gone up by about two-thirds. Last year, the nation's airlines made more than \$3.8 billion off what I believe it is fair to call a scam. It's also an excellent way to make your prices look lower than they really are when people surf for the cheapest ticket, a number that never includes details like the special fees for bags, food, canceling a reservation, booking by phone, sitting in a minimally more comfortable emergency row or, in some cases, requesting a pillow.

Shouldn't the airlines offer up the baggage fee as a token of solidarity with their miserable passengers? The idea has come up. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson asked the airlines to "consider possibly" this modest bow to air travel sanity. Two U.S. senators, Edward Markey of Massachusetts and Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, wrote a letter to the airlines asking them to just drop the fees during the high-traffic summer months.

We pause now for the sound of silence and crickets chirping.

The airlines have maximized profits by making travel as miserable as possible. Boeing found a way to cram 14 more seats into its largest twin-engine jetliner by reducing the size of the lavatories. Bloomberg quoted a Boeing official as reporting that "the market



GAIL COLLINS
Comment

reaction has been good — really positive." We presume the market in question does not involve the actual passengers.

But the industry is so powerful that it seems to be able to get away with squishing people into smaller and smaller spaces. Last month, Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York offered an amendment to a bill reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration that would have imposed a moratorium

on reductions in seat size and space between rows. It failed, 54-42.

Nobody spoke out against the proposal, but only one Republican, Susan Collins of Maine, voted for it. We salute Susan Collins, who has been, for a number of years, virtually the entire population of the Moderate Republican Caucus.

When Schumer flies, his first move is to empty the seat pocket in front of him.

"I take out the magazine and the airsickness bag so I have an extra eighth of an inch," he said in a phone interview.

It's a matter of some passion — when the presidents of three airlines visited Schumer's office for discussion of a totally unrelated issue, he moved the coffee table so it was an inch from their knees. "I said: 'OK, now you know how it feels.'"

But about the bags. Rather than reducing the number of bags in security lines, the airlines would like the government to deal with the problem by adding more workers to screen them. And the perpetually beleaguered Transportation Security Administration is going to spend \$34 million to hire more people and pay more overtime this summer. Which, it assured the public, is not really going to solve much of anything.

(Who, you may ask, pays for the security lines anyway? For the most part you the taxpayer do. Also you the passenger pay a special security fee on your tickets. Which Congress tends to grab away from the TSA for use in all-purpose deficit reduction. I know, I know.)

A spokesman for Delta Air Lines, which took in more than \$875 million on baggage fees last year, told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that bowing to the extremely modest Markey-Blumenthal request for a summer suspension of the baggage fee wouldn't "really help alleviate a lot." It would also, he said, require a "considerable change to the business model."

Heaven forfend we mess with the business model.

Gail Collins joined *The New York Times* in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the *Times's* editorial page.

The plight of the endangered farmer

The (Bend) Bulletin, May 21

Central Oregon farmers should not be allowed to become an endangered species.

If the Endangered Species Act is going to require big or small changes in how irrigation districts take water from the Deschutes Basin, Congress needs to provide the money to protect the farmers from being threatened.

It's encouraging to see that Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, has taken a step toward making money available. The Senate agriculture appropriations bill contains some \$50 million in new funding that is more specifically aimed toward fixing the kinds of problems Central Oregon has. The money has criteria attached to it that fits the region's irrigation districts — a need to make improvements to conserve water, improve efficiency or otherwise improve habitat.

It doesn't mean the districts are going to get \$50 million. The language would have to survive intact on a journey through Congress and be signed into law. Local districts would still have to apply. They would have to compete with other applicants that face similar challenges. But it would be new money

available. Think of it as a nonearmark earmark in the post-earmark era.

A key issue in the Deschutes Basin is using water better. Nearly 90 percent of the streamflow from the Deschutes River in Bend is diverted during irrigation season to irrigation canals, according to the Deschutes River Conservancy. The change is particularly noticeable in the winter when water is stored. Just below Wickiup Dam, flows in the Deschutes River can drop to 20 cubic feet per second starting in the fall, compared to as much as 1,500 cfs in the spring.

There may be partial solutions that can be done for no money. One analysis suggested more water could simply be let through the Wickiup Dam in most years, as much as 100 cubic feet per second more. There's also an ongoing study of the Deschutes Basin that will attempt to identify other fixes.

Most solutions cost money. Piping canals conserves water, but it's expensive. For instance, piping all of Central Oregon Irrigation District's main canals could save as much as 400 cfs for the Deschutes River. It might cost more than \$300 million.

That's why it's so important for Oregon's congressional delegation to look for ways for the federal government to help.