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OUR VIEW

Not good enough for our students

The Pendleton School District is getting three new schools this year — a huge upgrade to the learning environment — yet the construction season will push back the start of classes at those schools by three whole weeks.

Because of union contracts, state rules and that inflexible old Gregorian calendar, students are in danger of not meeting the minimum number of hours Oregon requires students to spend in the classroom.

Losing a few weeks of classes may not seem like much in the grand scheme of a 12-year public education, but for those students who are already behind the eight ball, it can be disastrous. Many teachers need to squeeze the most out of every minute they have, and have an impossible task at that. Subtract a few weeks, and you have a real problem on your hands — a problem that may remain unsolved and even be compounded for struggling students.

And that's the real injustice. While high-achieving students are more likely to bridge the gap during long summers and other breaks, at-risk students are the ones who desperately need that class time to keep up.

Every state sets rules for the minimum number of instruction hours a school must provide. In Oregon, full-day kindergarten programs must offer at least 900 hours along with their elementary and middle school peers. That's a big jump from two years ago, when most kindergartners spent 450 hours in the classroom. High

school students must be provided 990 hours, except seniors, who are allowed to ease out of K-12 with 960 hours.

Those are, however, among the lowest minimum requirements of any state in the union, and pales in comparison to our closest neighbor.

In Washington state, the state must provide at least 450 hours of kindergarten instruction, 1,000 hours for students in grades 4-6 and 1,080 hours for high school students.

Even states at the bottom of the education rankings, like Alabama and West Virginia, require 990 hours for students through all elementary grades and high school.

Oregon is at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the hours students are in school, and this year Pendleton students are in danger of not even clearing that low hurdle.

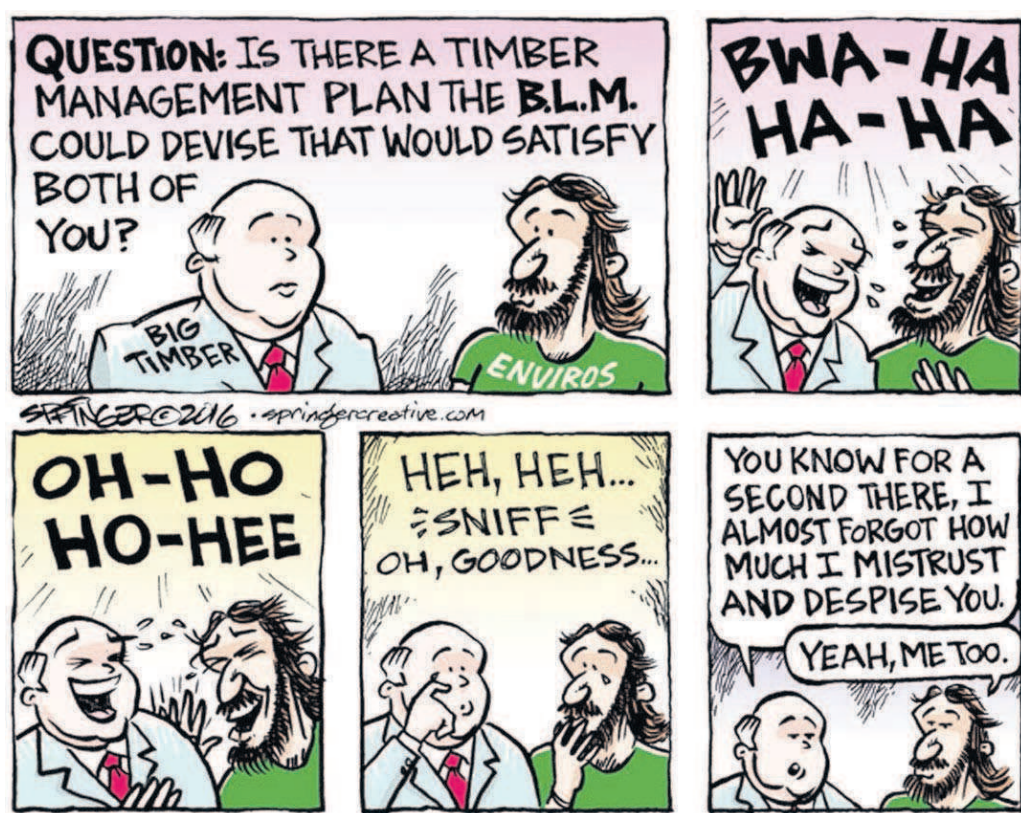
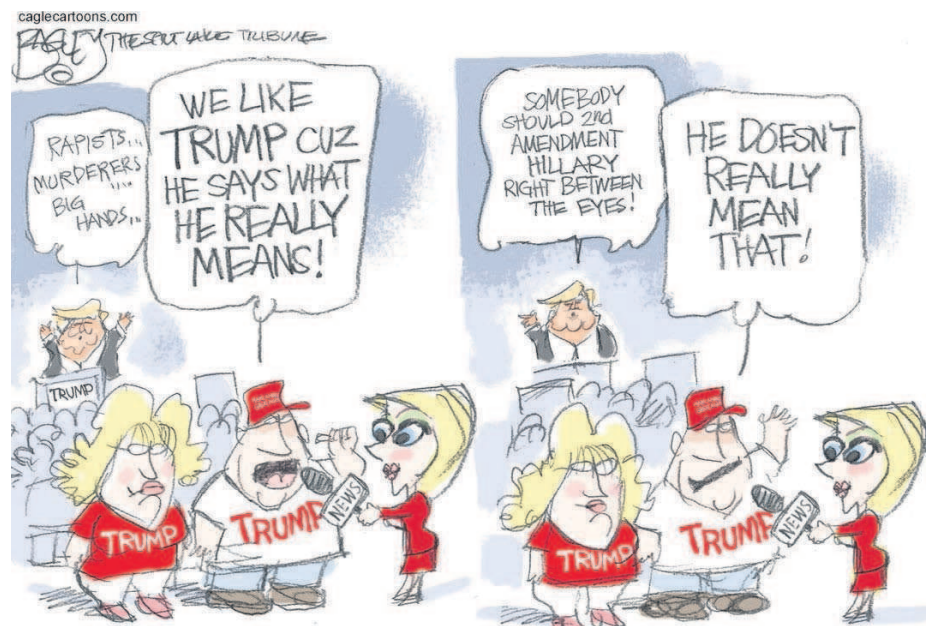
Any way you measure it, Oregon has among the worst education systems in the country. We fund it poorly, and in turn it runs poorly and sets low standards that it barely meets. And the product, when measured by high school graduation rates, shows the defects.

A simple way to start to get better is to keep children in school longer, and increase the number of hours schools are required to operate and teach. Because teachers, while part of the system, are not part of problem.

Yes, it will take more money and effort. But it will be a first step to getting us get off the bottom of the pile when it comes to K-12 education.

Oregon is at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the hours students are in school, and it shows.

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

Trump's ambiguous wink wink to 'Second Amendment people'

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin got assassinated. His right-wing opponents just kept delegitimizing him as a "traitor" and "a Nazi" for wanting to make peace with the Palestinians and give back part of the Land of Israel. Of course, all is fair in politics, right? And they had God on their side, right? They weren't actually telling anyone to assassinate Rabin. That would be horrible.

But there are always people down the line who don't hear the caveats. They just hear the big message: The man is illegitimate, the man is a threat to the nation, the man is the equivalent of a Nazi war criminal. Well, you know what we do with people like that, don't you? We kill them.

And that's what the Jewish extremist Yigal Amir did to Rabin. Why not? He thought he had permission from a whole segment of Israel's political class.

In September, I wrote a column warning that Donald Trump's language toward immigrants could end up inciting just this kind of violence. I never in my wildest dreams, though, thought he'd actually — in his usual coy, twisted way — suggest that Hillary Clinton was so intent on taking away the Second Amendment right to be bear arms that maybe Second Amendment enthusiasts could do something to stop her. Exactly what? Oh, Trump left that hanging.

"Hillary wants to abolish, essentially abolish, the Second Amendment," Trump said at a rally in Wilmington, North Carolina, on Tuesday. "By the way, and if she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks. Although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don't know."

Of course Trump's handlers, recognizing just how incendiary were his words, immediately denied that he was suggesting that gun owners do anything harmful toward Clinton. Oh my God, never. Trump, they insisted, was just referring to the "power of unification." You know those Second Amendment people, they just love to get on buses and vote together.

But that is not what he said. What he said was ambiguous — slightly menacing, but with just enough plausible deniability that, of course, he was not suggesting an assassination. Again, it's just like the Rabin story. When I wrote about this issue back in the fall it was to urge readers to see the new movie "Rabin: The Last Day," by the Israeli director Amos Gitai, timed for the 20th anniversary of Rabin's assassination.

As *The Times*' Isabel Kershner reported from Israel when the film was released, it "is unambiguous about the forces it holds responsible" — the extremist rabbis and militant settlers who branded Rabin a traitor, the right-wing politicians who rode the "wave of toxic incitement against Rabin as they campaigned



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

against the Oslo accords," and the security services who failed to heed the warnings that the incitement could get out of hand.

"Mr. Rabin is almost invisible in the first two hours of the film," she reported. "Benjamin Netanyahu, the opposition leader at the time, is shown in now-infamous historical footage addressing a feverish right-wing rally from a balcony in Jerusalem's Zion Square, as protesters below shouted for the death of Rabin — the 'traitor' — and held up photomontage posters of him dressed in an SS uniform."

Netanyahu, now prime minister, insisted he never saw the posters or heard the curses.

I am sure that is what Trump's supporters will say, too. But Trump knows what he is doing, and it is so dangerous in today's world. In the last year we have seen a spate of lone-wolf acts of terrorism in America and Europe by men and women living on the fringes of society, some with petty criminal records, often with psychological problems, often described as "loners," and almost always deeply immersed in fringe jihadist social networks that heat

People are playing with fire here, and there's no bigger flamethrower than Donald Trump

them up. They hear the signal in the noise. They hear the inspiration and the permission to do God's work. They are not cooled by unfinished sentences.

After all, an informal Trump adviser on veteran affairs, Al Baldasaro, a Republican state representative from New Hampshire, already declared that Clinton should be "shot for treason" for her handling of the Benghazi terrorist attack.

During the Republican convention, with its repeated chants about Clinton of "lock her up," a U.S.-based columnist for Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper, Chemi Shalev, wrote: "Like the extreme right in Israel, many Republicans conveniently ignore the fact that words can kill. There are enough people with a tendency for violence that cannot distinguish between political stagecraft and practical exhortations to rescue the country by any available means. If anyone has doubts, they could use a short session with Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin's assassin, who was inspired by the rabid rhetoric hurled at the Israeli prime minister in the wake of the Oslo Accords."

People are playing with fire here, and there is no bigger flamethrower than Donald Trump. Forget politics; he is a disgusting human being. His children should be ashamed of him. I only pray that he is not simply defeated, but that he loses all 50 states so that the message goes out across the land — unambiguously, loud and clear: The likes of you should never come this way again.

Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for *The New York Times*.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Umatilla County towns should compete for best puncturevine

Pendletonians, let us join forces to claim a Number 1 in Umatilla County. Yes, as an individual, church, business, club or government group, travel to the county fair. Check out the plant exhibits, especially the open class.

Then take a look at Hermiston's puncturevine/goatheads and judge for yourself if ours are the larger, biggest and meanest plants.

Missed going to the fair? Be sure and write the Fair Board to add on open class for a real weed — puncturevine. But stay away

from tumbleweed, as west of Rew Elevator will take it hands down, even though the railroad right-of-way is growing some really nice tumbleweeds. Maybe next year's request or a sure thing is yellow starthistle.

Joseph LaVerdure
Pendleton

A refuge in the ballot measure storm

Now that it has qualified for the ballot, there has been a noticeable increase in public discourse about what is now known as Measure 97, the corporate gross receipts tax measure. This ballot

measure will continue to generate intense interest, with a deluge in advertising from opposing campaigns sure to follow.

Often caught in the crossfire of these high profile ballot measure battles is the average Oregon voter, who finds it increasingly difficult to know where they can turn to obtain factual and unbiased information that they can understand.

For these Oregonians, help is on the way. This month, the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) will take place on the campus of Western Oregon University in Monmouth. The CIR starts by identifying a panel of 24 randomly

selected registered voters, who are politically and demographically representative of Oregon's electorate. These ordinary citizens will come together to learn about Measure 97 from experts and from advocates for and against the measure. After four days of deliberation facilitated by neutral moderators, the panel will draft a "Citizens' Statement" highlighting their most important findings about the measure. This statement is then published in the statewide Voter's Pamphlet distributed by the Secretary of State.

The Oregon legislature established the CIR in 2011 so that voters would have easy access

to clear, useful and trustworthy information at election time. It is administered by the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission, and delivered by the nonprofit organization, Healthy Democracy. The CIR Commission is comprised in part of appointees nominated by both Republican and Democratic legislators, and is the decision-making body that selects which ballot measure is to be reviewed.

The Citizens' Initiative Review is a unique voice in Oregon's political landscape that all Oregonians can be proud of.

Robin Teater, executive director of
Healthy Democracy
Portland