

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to voters in Wheeler and Grant County for coming out in high numbers to have their say in two important recall elections.

The results differed: In Wheeler County, voters replaced their top county official, judge Patrick Perry. In Grant County, voters kept longtime county commissioner Boyd Britton.



But both elections had something in common: high voter turnout.

Wheeler County, Oregon's least populated, is often among state leaders for voting percentage. A solid 65 percent of eligible voters returned ballots in Monday's election, not a bad mark for a one-question ballot.

In Grant County, unofficial turnout numbers were similar: 63.4 percent of eligible voters had their say.

And in that case, we think that voters made an important point, pushing back against a loud, radical minority that does not seem to understand that their views aren't shared by a majority of their fellow county residents. Britton isn't perfect, but he's working for solutions in the best interest of a majority of county residents, not a select and loud few.

In both cases, it's a reminder of who has the power in the democracy. Not the people sitting in office. Not even the people at home on their couch. It's the people that turn in their ballot and vote.

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

### Lighten 2025 vehicle fuel mandate

The Detroit News

Despite huge gains in fuel efficiency, automakers need relief from future stringent standards.

The fuel standards automakers are supposed to meet by 2025 are likely unattainable, according to a Technical Assessment Report that was recently released on the automotive industry's progress in this area.

The report's findings were no surprise, but they underscore the need for the next administration to revisit the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for 2021 to 2025 at the official review next year.

Automakers need relief, whether in less stringent standards or delayed deadlines, from a goal that technical costs and consumer demands will make impossible to achieve.

Auto executives have been jockeying to revise the standards based on their observations of the industry. Though auto manufacturers have made massive improvements in fuel economy and huge advancements with electric vehicles and hybrids, they're approaching a critical point where future improvements will be much more costly and fuel gains more difficult to achieve.

Improvements to pure gasoline engines won't be enough to meet the fleet standard — currently at 54.5 mpg in nine years. Compliance will require more hybrids, which are more expensive to make, and which consumers aren't buying in sufficient numbers.

In the first six months of this year, sales of the Toyota Prius — considered the gold standard of hybrid vehicles — were down 27 percent over last year. And in 2015, the average fuel economy of vehicles sold fell 0.1 mpg from 2014, according to a study by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.

Gasoline prices remain comparatively low, and the oil glut will keep them that way for a while. That renders inaccurate the government's projections in 2012 that increasing CAFE standards would

save motorists as much as \$5,700 over a vehicle's life, and justify the \$1,800 higher sticker price caused by the mandates. The assumption that gasoline will be at \$4 a gallon in 2025 is unreliable.

Automakers now say the technology cost will exceed the \$1,800 estimate. Additionally, the fuel standards were based on projections that almost two-thirds of vehicles on the road

would be cars, and just one-third would consist of SUVs, pickups and crossovers.

That fleet breakdown looks very different now, just four years later, with the market almost equally split between cars and SUV/trucks. At the current mix, the fleet average will be closer to 51 mpg by 2025, according to the

technical report.

Given abundant fuel supplies and emission improvements, that ought to be enough.

Regulators at the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have signaled they think automakers can still meet the demands, and would like to see them upheld.

Automakers disagree and are asking for relief in the mid-term review. The manufacturers can only manipulate consumer demand so much. They still have a marketplace to please.

The standards can't stubbornly assume changes will happen in the market, or that more technological breakthroughs are ahead.

They should be made fluid enough to account for a changing market, the country's petroleum supply and the limits of technology.

At this point, automakers are down to stripping more weight out of vehicles to improve fuel economy, a trade-off that risks making cars and trucks less safe.

Automakers have made huge strides in fuel economy, and will continue to do so.

But they merit some relief from mandates that were put in place when their market looked vastly different.

### Given abundant fuel supplies and emission improvements, 51 mph by 2025 ought to be enough.

## OTHER VIEWS



### What if my dog had been a Syrian?

Last Thursday, our beloved family dog, Katie, died at the age of 12. She was a gentle giant who respectfully deferred even to any mite-size puppy with a prior claim to a bone. Katie might have won the Nobel Peace Prize if not for her weakness for squirrels.

I mourned Katie's passing on social media and received a torrent of touching condolences, easing my ache at the loss of a member of the family. Yet on the same day that Katie died, I published a column calling for greater international efforts to end Syria's suffering and civil war, which has claimed perhaps 470,000 lives so far. That column led to a different torrent of comments, many laced with a harsh indifference: Why should we help them?

These mingled on my Twitter feed: heartfelt sympathy for an American dog who expired of old age, and what felt to me like callousness toward millions of Syrian children facing starvation or bombing. If only, I thought, we valued kids in Aleppo as much as we did our terriers!

For five years the world has been largely paralyzed as President Bashar Assad has massacred his people, nurturing in turn the rise of ISIS and what the U.S. government calls genocide by ISIS.

That's why I argued in my column a week ago that President Barack Obama's passivity on Syria was his worst mistake, a shadow over his legacy.

The column sparked passionate disagreement from readers, so let me engage your arguments.

"There is nothing in our constitution that says we are to be the savior of the world from all the crazies out there," a reader in St. Louis noted. "I cannot see any good in wasting a trillion dollars trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again. Bleeding hearts often cause more harm than good."

I agree that we can't solve all the world's problems, but it doesn't follow that we shouldn't try to solve any. Would it have been wrong during the Holocaust to try to bomb the gas chambers at Auschwitz? Was President Bill Clinton wrong to intervene in Kosovo to avert potential genocide there? For that matter, was Obama wrong two years ago when he ordered airstrikes near Mount Sinjar on the Iraq-Syria border, apparently averting genocidal massacres of Yazidi there?

Agreed, we shouldn't dispatch ground forces to Syria or invest a trillion dollars. But why not, as many suggest, fire missiles from outside Syria to crater military runways and ground the Syrian air force?

A reader from Delaware commented, "I hear ya, Nicholas, but so far every Middle East

venture has not turned out good for the world." Likewise, a reader in Minnesota argued, "Surely the George W. Bush experience taught us something."

Let me push back. I opposed the Iraq War, but to me the public seems to have absorbed the wrong lesson — that military intervention never works, rather than the more complex lesson that it is a blunt and expensive tool with a very mixed record.

Yes, the Iraq War was a disaster, but the no-fly zone in northern Iraq after the first gulf war was a huge success.

Vietnam was a monumental catastrophe, but the British intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 was a spectacular success. Afghanistan

remains a mess, but airstrikes helped end genocide in the Balkans. U.S. support for Saudi bombing in Yemen is counterproductive, but Bill Clinton has said that his worst foreign policy mistake was not halting the Rwandan genocide.

And even if we eschew the military toolbox, what excuse do we have for not trying harder to give Syrian refugee children an education in neighboring countries like Jordan and Lebanon? Depriving refugee kids of an education lays

the groundwork for further tribalism, poverty, enmity and violence.

I grant that cratering runways or establishing a safe zone — even educating refugees — won't necessarily work as hoped, and Obama is right to be concerned about slippery slopes. Those concerns must be weighed against the lives of hundreds of thousands of children, particularly now that we have asserted that genocide is underway in Syria.

One reason past genocides have been allowed to unfold without outside interference is that there is never a perfect policy tool available to stop the killing. Another is that the victims don't seem "like us." They're Jews or blacks or, in this case, Syrians, so we tune out.

But, in fact, as even dogs know, a human is a human.

I wonder what would happen if Aleppo were full of golden retrievers, if we could see barrel bombs maiming helpless, innocent puppies. Would we still harden our hearts and "otherize" the victims? Would we still say "it's an Arab problem; let the Arabs solve it?"

Yes, solutions in Syria are hard and uncertain. But I think even Katie in her gentle wisdom would have agreed that not only do all human lives have value, but also that a human's life is worth every bit as much as a golden retriever's.

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 two times, in 1990 and 2006.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF  
Comment

### Past genocides have been allowed to unfold because there is never a perfect policy tool available to stop the killing.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Owyhee Canyonlands do not need monument protection

We Oregon citizens should be aware that special-interest groups are pressuring President Obama to declare 2.5 million acres of land in Eastern Oregon a federal monument. I agree with many others that everyone should have a voice in such a decision. We don't need to stoke President Obama's already massive ego.

The area looked at for a new 2.5 million-acre monument is already protected by multiple layers of regulation, so the designation is unnecessary and goes too far. The Owyhee Canyonlands are currently protected by federal laws, rules and regulations that are specially designed to preserve and enhance unique features and values. Ten federal laws already work to protect federal lands in the region, as well as other layers of protection, including the National Environmental Policy Act because the canyonlands are part of and adjacent to Gowen Field's Air Force training range.

I believe that the "monument" designation

would promote the desires of special-interest groups and lock out local experts like farmers and ranchers, who have responsibly cared for the land for generations. Although the special-interest groups will deny it, this monument designation would virtually shut down public use, as happened in Utah some time ago on the Escalante Staircase Monument area.

My information shows that a recent advisory vote by Malheur County citizens resulted in 90 percent of voters being opposed to a monument designation. Our governor, Kate Brown, and our federal senators are in favor of this decision, which leads me to question sarcastically: "Did we elect them to go counter to our will without a vote?"

I encourage readers to look at the information I am eager to share; just call 541-676-5382 to request it. And I encourage everyone to reach out to our state and federal representatives and senators, as well as President Obama, to stress the wisdom in not changing the Canyonlands into a national monument.

Dan Brosnan  
Heppner

## 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.

