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OUR VIEW

High hopes for expanding drone industry

It should come as no surprise to our readers that drones are soon expected to quite nearly fill the skies.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced Monday it expects 600,000 drones used for commercial enterprises to be in the air in the coming year. They'll be used in everything from agriculture to mapping to package delivery to journalism. It's quite an increased from now, when they are flown almost exclusively by hobbyists and the military.

Pendleton has been angling for years to become the "Silicon Sky" of the industry, boasting wide open spaces where developers can test and refine their products as the demand grows exponentially in new directions. Jeff Lorton, a creative director of an advertising firm and one of the creators of the Pendleton UAS Range Future Farm, even compared the recent Drone Rodeo as a Kitty Hawk moment for the industry, hearkening back to the monumental first manned flight by the Wright Brothers more than a century ago.

There's no doubt Pendleton is playing a role in this new world of technology. Pacific Northwest National Laboratories — the Richland-based researcher with a greatest hits list including radioactive cancer treatments and compact discs — is using the Pendleton airport range to test unmanned aerial systems.

And Pendleton has the unique advantage of being allowed to test large drones at high altitudes. Right now commercial drones must be less than 55 pounds and fly lower than 400 feet, but soon companies are going to want to spread their rotor-propelled wings and take full advantage of the skies.

We've been covering the development for years, including economic development director Steve Chrisman's pitches to the city council and the state's funding of the range. We've also asked what the

end game is.

In a perfect world, Pendleton truly becomes a drone tech hub. Developers have such a positive experience in our little Western town that they set up permanent shop here, pay their employees a healthy salary and join our effort to make Pendleton the best town it can be. They even decide to manufacture their systems here, creating family-wage jobs and making good use of the industrial park located conveniently right next to the airport/UAS range.

But just as the FAA requires drone users keep their machines in their sights at all time, we don't want to lose track of what's feasible. We know that manufacturers require a skilled and able workforce, adequate housing and capable infrastructure. Studies by Umatilla County and the city of Pendleton showed that workforce and housing are in short supply, and Chrisman has explained that prime industrial land is still a few million dollars away from having the minimal infrastructure for such a development.

Progress isn't achieved by counting the hurdles and then turning around and going home. And there is undoubtedly a huge drone industry about to take off, with billions and billions of dollars up for grabs.

But we need to know where Pendleton fits. If we want to be an accommodating place for developers to test their aircraft, we're on the right track. We're doing that well. But if we want to be a brand name associated with drone development (like we are with Round-Ups and Woolen Mills), we've got some big problems to solve first.

If the city spends millions to build infrastructure that no one in the drone industry is asking them to build, we could solve one of those problems. But we could then be looking at another piece of infrastructure that sits idle and empty in an industrial park that attracts nothing but cobwebs.

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OTHER VIEWS

Weak Oregon law helps in Oracle case, hurts public right to know

The Bend Bulletin

Nobody should know better the weaknesses in Oregon's public records law than Gov. Kate Brown.

Those weaknesses just helped her office win a public records case with the software company Oracle.

The state of Oregon and Oracle are battling over who's to blame for Cover Oregon's failure. Oracle wants access to emails by former Gov. John Kitzhaber as part of that case.

Kitzhaber used three email accounts to conduct official business. There was an official email account and two personal accounts. The state archived some of those records. Oracle argued the state violated the public records law by not disclosing the emails.

Circuit Court Judge Mary Mertens James dismissed that specific claim earlier this week. The broader case of the blame for Cover Oregon continues.

But look closely at this week's decision. The real loser is the public

because of the law.

The decision says the law does not give a court the ability to review how swiftly a public agency responds to a request.

The decision says the public doesn't have much recourse if a public agency doesn't do a good job of keeping records or searching for them.

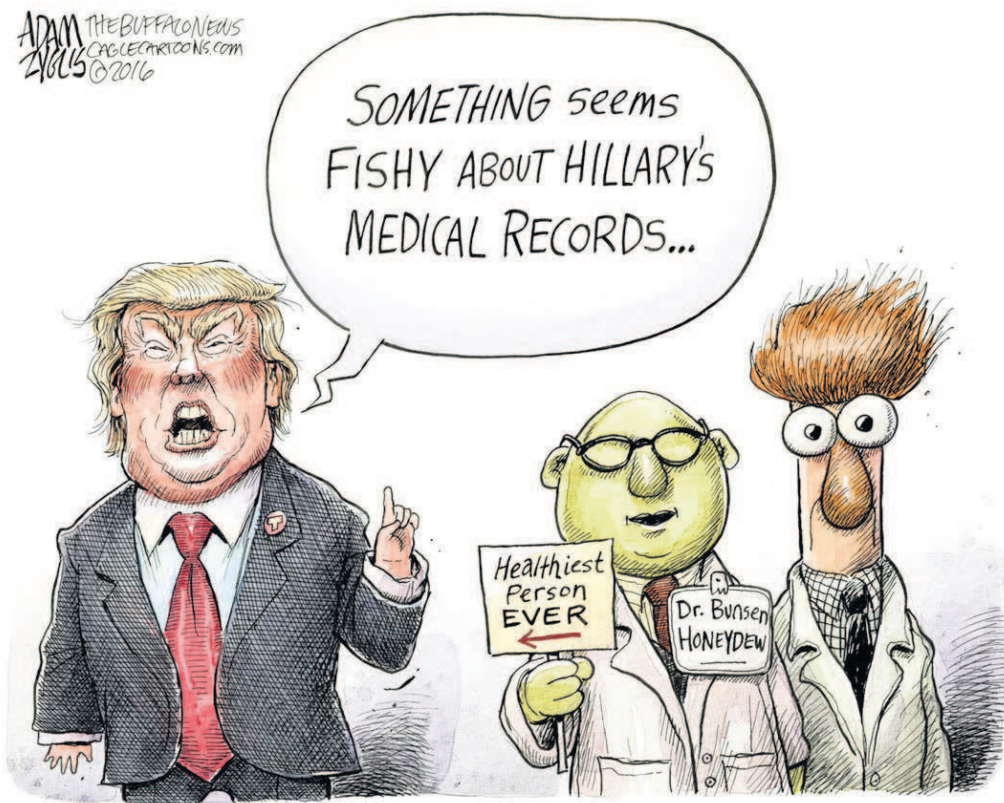
The decision says an elected official can shield campaign-related activities from disclosure. That makes sense to an extent. It could also be abused.

Kristen Grainger, a spokeswoman for Brown, called the decision "a double win."

"Governor Brown is fully vindicated and Oracle is foiled yet again in its repeated desperate attempts to burden and harass the state and waste public resources," Grainger wrote in an email to *The Oregonian*.

But Brown's office won this case by arguing some of the weaknesses in the very public records law she has pledged to strengthen. When is she going to get around to fixing the weaknesses?

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OTHER VIEWS

The dumbed down democracy

Are you smarter than an immigrant? Can you name, say, all three branches of government or a single Supreme Court justice? Most Americans, those born here, those about to make the most momentous decision in civic life this November, cannot. And most cannot pass the simple test aced by 90 percent of new citizens.

Well, then: Who controlled the Senate during the 2014 election, when control of the upper chamber was at stake? If you answered Dunno at the time, you were with a majority of Americans in the clueless category.

But surely now, when election news saturation is thicker than the humidity around Lady Liberty's lip, we've become a bit more clue-full. I give you Texas. A recent survey of Donald Trump supporters there found that 40 percent of them believe that ACORN will steal the upcoming election.

ACORN? News flash: That community-organizing group has been out of existence for six years. ACORN is gone, disbanded, dead. It can no more steal an election than Donald Trump can pole vault over his Mexican wall.

We know that at least 30 million U.S. adults cannot read. But the current presidential election may yet prove that an even bigger part of the citizenry is politically illiterate — and functional. Which is to say, they will vote despite being unable to accept basic facts needed to process this American life.

"There's got to be a reckoning on all this," said Charlie Sykes, the influential conservative radio host, in a soul-searching interview with *Business Insider*. "We've created this monster."

Trump, who says he doesn't read much at all, is both a product of the epidemic of ignorance and a main producer of it. He can litter the campaign trail with hundreds of easily debunked falsehoods because conservative media has spent more than two decades tearing down the idea of objective fact.

If Trump supporters knew that illegal immigration peaked in 2007, or that violent crime has been on a steady downward spiral nationwide for more than 20 years, they would scoff when Trump says Mexican rapists are surging across the border and crime is out of control.

If more than 16 percent of Americans could locate Ukraine on a map, it would have been a Really Big Deal when Trump said that Russia was not going to invade it — two years after they had, in fact, invaded it.

If basic civics was still taught, and required, for high school graduation, Trump could not claim that judges "sign bills."

The dumbing down of this democracy has been gradual, and then — this year — all at



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

once. The Princeton Review found that the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 were engaged at roughly a high school senior level. A century later, the presidential debate of 1960 was at a 10th grade level. By the year 2000, the two contenders were speaking like sixth-graders. And in the upcoming debates — "Crooked Hillary" against "Don the Con" — we'll be lucky to get beyond preschool potty talk.

How did this happen, when the populace was so less educated in the days when most families didn't even have an indoor potty to talk about? You can look at one calculated loop of misinformation over the last two weeks to find some of the answer.

Most Americans cannot pass the simple test aced by 90 percent of new citizens.

A big political lie often starts on the Drudge Report, home of Obama-as-Muslim stories. He jump-started a recent smear with pictures of Hillary Clinton losing her balance — proof that something was very wrong with her. Fox News then

went big with it, using the Trump adviser and free-media enabler Sean Hannity as the village gossip. Then Rudy Giuliani, the internet diagnostician, urged people to Google "Hillary Clinton illness" for evidence of her malady. This forced Clinton to prove her stamina, in an appearance on "Jimmy Kimmel," by opening a jar of pickles.

The only good thing to come out of this is that now, when you Google "Hillary Clinton illness" what pops up are scathing stories about a skeletal-faced terrormonger named Rudy Giuliani, and a terrific Stephen Colbert takedown of this awful man.

But what you don't know really can hurt you. Last year was the hottest on record. And the July just passed was earth's warmest month in the modern era. Still, Gallup found that 45 percent of Republicans don't believe the temperature. We're not talking about doubt over whether the latest spike was human-caused — they don't accept the numbers, from all those lying meteorologists.

Of late, almost half of Floridians have done something to protect themselves from the Zika virus, heeding government warnings. But the other half cannot wish it away, as the anti-vaccine crowd on the far left does for serious and preventable illnesses.

I'm sorry that my once-surging Seattle Mariners dropped two out of three games to the New York Yankees recently. I just prefer not to believe it. And look — now my guys are in first place, no matter what the skewed "standings" show. In my own universe, surrounded by junk fact and junk conclusions, I feel better already.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for The New York Times, first as the Pacific Northwest correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.

Better watch for Kids...



Because they're NOT watching for you!

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LETTERS POLICY

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