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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat;
kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Les Zaitz, the decorated newspaperman who is calling it a career next month.

Zaitz, 61, has reported many of Oregon’s biggest stories over his decades-long career. He covered the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, as well as the occupation of the small city of Antelope by the Rajneeshees. Most recently, he led *The Oregonian*’s coverage of the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. (It’s worth noting that none of these stories took place in Portland.)

Zaitz is a five-time winner of the Bruce Baer Award, which is awarded annually to the state’s top investigative reporter, and he has twice been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.



He also showed there’s plenty of room in an old-school journalist’s tool belt for 21st century technology. During the Malheur takeover his Twitter feed gave an inside look at the reporting process, and showed the work that goes into producing daily news.

It’s not a bad for career for an Eastern Oregon rancher who could write, and refused to be intimidated by whatever power stood in his way. Oregon, and Oregon journalism, will be poorer without him.

A tip of the hat to Blue Mountain Community College and its community partners who found a way to keep the college’s troubled pool open this year and hopefully next.

BMCC’s board voted this week to dole out \$25,000 for emergency repairs, and the Pendleton and Hermiston school districts and the Pendleton Swim Association will chip in another \$25,000.

The most important fixes — capping any lead paint and mold in the facility, and installing a new motor and larger exhaust fan, will help make the pool a sale place to swim and be a spectator.

There are some big questions to ask down the road, but for now everyone deserves credit for finding a way to host a season of competition without breaking the bank or ignoring health risks.



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

Problems continue in
Oregon child welfare system

The (Medford) Mail-Tribune

It’s unsettling to learn that foster children in the care of the state child welfare system wind up sleeping in state offices or motel rooms. But that’s just scratching the surface of a state system that is failing on multiple levels.

A federal study made public in April after a public records request by *The Oregonian* found that state caseworkers failed to meet time limits for investigating allegations of abuse and neglect more than half the time, and in the most serious cases, where workers are required check in within 24 hours, the state met the standard less than two-thirds of the time. That’s rarely an indictment of the child welfare workers involved but rather of a system that gives them unmanageable caseloads.

The state is also failing to protect children from further harm, and has had trouble providing mental health care to children who need it, the study found.

Oregon’s performance slipped from a similar study in 2008, and the number of available foster homes is going down, not up.

In Jackson County, a story in a recent edition of the *Mail Tribune* describes a foster care system that is at capacity. While children have not yet been forced to sleep in state offices here as they have in other parts of the state, the Department of Human Services is installing bunk beds in a foster parent resource room at the Medford office, in preparation for what they know is coming.

There are several reasons why foster homes are in short supply.

Taking on foster children is a big challenge, especially when the children

may exhibit violent or disruptive behavior as a result of the abuse they have suffered. The demand for available placements is especially acute for grade school-age and younger children.

Another factor is foster parents who wind up adopting foster children in their care. That’s great for the children involved, but it can take those parents out of the foster care system.

In addition, foster parents can become frustrated by the rules that say the child’s Court-Appointed Special Advocate and caseworker make all decisions, even though the foster parent is in daily contact and functions as a parent.

Finally, the reimbursement the state pays to foster parents — \$575 a month for children 5 or younger, \$655 for children ages 6-12 and \$741 for children ages 13-20 — may need to be increased to attract more foster parents, especially those with training in handling children with mental illness.

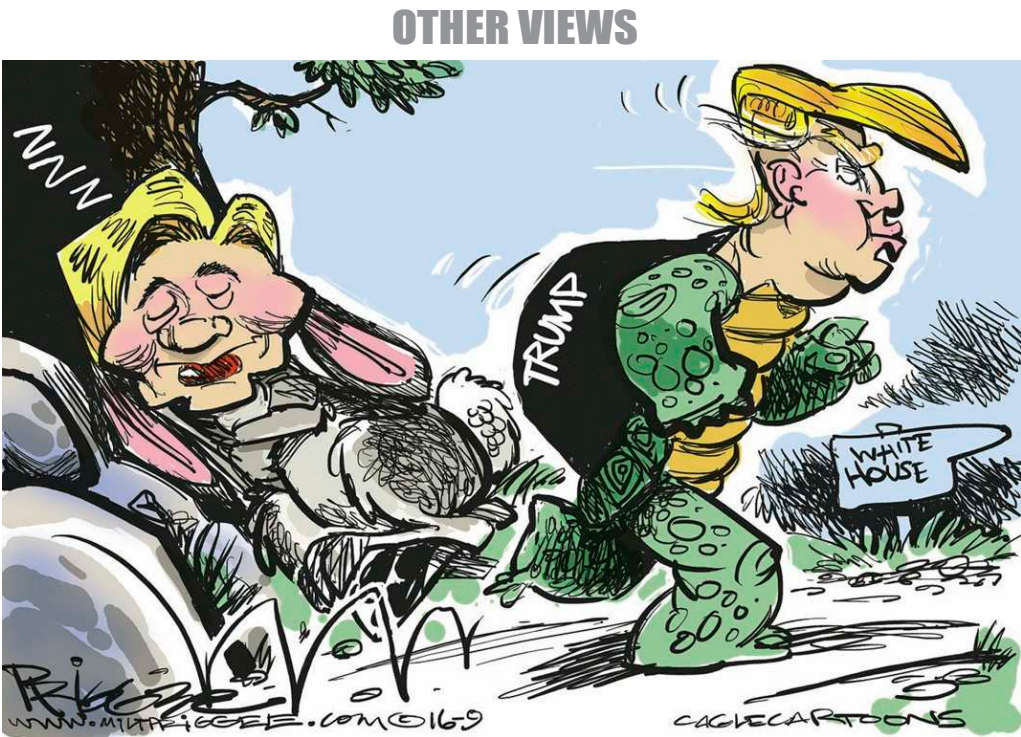
Statewide, nearly 11,000 children spend at least one day in foster care every year, Oregon Public Broadcasting reports. In Jackson County, 400 are in foster care.

Juvenile and family court judges here and across the state have signed a petition calling for emergency funding for the child welfare system — a rare step into advocacy for judges, who usually prefer to steer clear of public policy issues.

Lawmakers will have their hands full when they meet next year to craft a new two-year budget for the state. But a follow-up federal study is expected later this year, and if the state system is still found to be failing, federal funding may be at risk. That’s a consequence the Legislature cannot afford to ignore.

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.



Voters to Trump:
Soften, please

Donald Trump and his top aides can justifiably be satisfied with his stunningly successful trip to Mexico. At the same time, Trump has continued to sow confusion about his stand on immigration — not his overall position but specifically about his intentions regarding the 12 million immigrants who are in this country illegally. Will he soften his stance on deportations?

The text of Trump’s speech last week in Arizona suggested there has indeed been a softening of Trump’s original deport-them-all approach. But it sure didn’t sound like softening. And the change — Trump will allow millions of illegal immigrants to stay in the country and reconsider their status only after new security measure are put in place — was announced in a confusing way that left even fair-minded listeners unsure of what Trump was proposing.

Then, after nearly two weeks of suggesting first that there would be softening in his proposal, and then that there would not be softening, on the morning after the speech, Trump told radio host Laura Ingraham that there would, in fact, be “quite a bit of softening” in his approach.

“Oh, there’s softening,” Trump said. “Look, we do it in a very humane way, and we’re going to see with the people that are in the country. Obviously I want to get the gang members out, the drug peddlers out, I want to get the drug dealers out. We’ve got a lot of people in this country that you can’t have, and those people we’ll get out. And then we’re going to make a decision at a later date once everything is stabilized. I think you’re going to see there’s really quite a bit of softening.”

If that is indeed Trump’s new approach, it is in line with voter sentiment revealed in a Fox News Poll released at nearly the same moment he took the stage in Arizona. The Fox findings suggest that if Trump were to actually soften his position on deportations, he would strengthen his standing not only with the independent voters whose support he is seeking, but with the voters whose support he already has.

First, Fox asked, “What do you think should happen to the illegal immigrants who are currently working in the United States — do you favor deporting as many as possible or do you favor setting up a system for them to become legal residents?” Just 19 percent said deport as many as possible, while 77 percent said set up a system to become legal residents.

That 19 percent is the lowest point — so far — in a decline that has been going on for several years. When Fox asked the same question in 2010, 45 percent said deport as many as possible. Last year, in July 2015, 30 percent gave that answer. That fell to 27 percent in January of this year, and 19 percent now.

Trump is not singlehandedly turning people against deportation — the downward trend began before he ran for president — but he doesn’t seem to be doing his cause much good, either.



BYRON YORK
Comment

The 77 percent who favor setting up a system for illegal immigrants to become legal residents represent a broad consensus. Sixty-six percent of Republicans favor setting up such a system; 76 percent of independents and 87 percent of Democrats agree.

Seventy-five percent of men favor a system for illegal immigrants to become legal residents, as do 79 percent of women. Seventy-four percent of whites and 87 percent of non-whites agree.

Sixty-nine percent of the much-discussed whites without a college degree favor a system, as do 80 percent of whites with a college degree. All age groups favor it by huge margins, as do people who make less than \$50,000 a year and those who make more than \$50,000 a year. Sixty-nine percent of conservatives favor a legalization system, as do 88 percent of liberals.

Then Fox asked specifically about Trump: “If Donald Trump were to soften his position on handling illegal immigrants living in the United States, would you be more or less likely to vote for him?”

(One could argue that the question was leading, but on the other hand, Trump had used the word “softening” himself, and it is reasonable to ask voters about a candidate’s own statements.)

Here’s the interesting thing. Among people who don’t support Trump, 27 percent said a softening would make them more likely to support him. Thirty-four percent said it would make them less likely — that is probably the group that would not like anything Trump did. (Thirty-six percent said it wouldn’t matter.)

Among people who already support Trump, 48 percent said a softer position on immigration would make them more likely to vote for him, while just 15 percent said it would make them less likely to vote for him. (Again 36 percent said it didn’t matter.) In other words, the vast majority of Trump’s voters would like to see him soften his position or at least wouldn’t mind it if he did.

The poll suggests that Trump could loosen up a little and help himself with his own voters, as well as the more moderate voters he’s hoping to attract.

Forty-one percent of men said a softening would make them more likely to vote for Trump, as did 31 percent of women. Thirty-eight percent of whites said the same thing, as well as 29 percent of non-whites. (Again the lower numbers for women and non-whites are probably due to the fact that relatively fewer of them would support Trump under any circumstances.)

Forty-five percent of voters under the age of 35 said a softening would make them more likely to support Trump, as well as 39 percent of voters age 35 to 54. Forty-three percent of evangelicals would also welcome a softening.

So that’s why Trump is pledging a softening, even if he hasn’t made it perfectly clear. It’s what a lot of voters want to see.

■

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

YOUR VIEWS

Lehnert understands Umatilla County’s drug problem

Ryan Lehnert is an outstanding candidate for Umatilla County Sheriff. Ryan is not only extremely intelligent and professional, he has compassion and a drive to stop chasing problems and prevent the trouble.

Ryan Lehnert is the change Umatilla County needs. And as citizens, we have to stand up and acknowledge Umatilla County needs change.

Even though Umatilla County was named worst meth county in all of America in 2006 by CNN, our drug treatment programs provide no medical opiate drug treatment for withdrawal, which is standard care.

Medical detox is the removal of a toxic chemical from a compromised system that has become dependent on it. Medical opiate withdrawal detox is based on the fact that getting sober isn’t about character, it is about chemistry.

Whether citizen, police officer or judge, pursuing services through Umatilla County Drug Treatment Program over months and now years leaves you feeling a deadening sense of powerlessness dealing with the outdated doctrinaire and counter-productive policy.

This drug treatment program is in need of a significant overhaul. Through Ryan’s leadership, it can be done. Ryan is well-read, knows that National Drug Control Policy is now based on the most current scientific research and is the one to change the system.

Ryan has experienced the journey of many addicts and families seeking help and knows the areas where change could prevent trouble. Under Ryan Lehnert’s leadership, Umatilla County again can return to a safer county to live in.

Please vote for Ryan Lehnert for Umatilla County Sheriff.

Sally Walden Sundin
Walla Walla