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OUR VIEW

Hard to get the measure of 97

Aside from electing the next leader of the free world, Measure 97 is the most important decision Oregonians will have to make on the November ballot.

And it will be a hard one.

The measure, if passed, would bring in nearly \$3 billion a year to state coffers. Depending on your outlook, it will either solve many of Oregon's chronic problems or be a crippling weight thrown over residents and the state economy.

And that's really at the heart of the disagreement: If you trust government and the legislature's ability to spend that money wisely — to revamp Oregon's flagging education system, to improve health care in our state, to solve a serious crisis in funding state employee

retirements — then Measure 97 is a no-brainer.

But if you're more suspicious, this looks like the largest tax increase in Oregon history, a bureaucratic cash grab with no defined plan for how to spend the windfall.

The measure itself is quite simple, which is part of the design and also part of the problem. It would impose a 2.5 percent tax on all corporate sales in the state above \$25 million, regardless of actual profits.

That means the big out-of-state corporations that make billions in profits and sell expensive things in Oregon would pay more taxes — companies like Intel and John Deere, say. But so too will Safeway and Pacific Power, Wal-Mart and Walgreen's and Powell's Books.

Increasing taxes on those companies is likely to get passed along to the consumer in some form or in full, increasing the cost of living for everyone and costing middle-class private sector jobs, too.

As an editorial board, we are reluctantly standing against the measure.

We know schools in Umatilla County are not adequately funded,

and our students are suffering for it. And we know that without a major overhaul, the state will never have the steady revenue stream required to continue improving, instead of constantly being mired in a cycle of cuts and temporary hires.

We know health care costs will continue ad infinitum, and we know that the state signed a contract

— an unaffordable one, perhaps, but still a contract — with state employees.

The state needs to find ways to increase and stabilize revenue streams, but a big no-strings-attached money dump is not the answer.

Tax policy is terribly complex. The bluntness of Measure 97 will hurt Oregon, and the corresponding help is not quantifiably better. What Oregon should do is defeat this measure, then hold legislators and the governor accountable for getting business and labor together. Once at the same table, they shouldn't get up until we have a plan for stable funding for Oregon schools and health care programs. Measure 97 isn't it.

If you trust government and the legislature, Measure 97 is a no-brainer. If not, this looks like a cash grab without a plan to spend the money.

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

When a crackpot seeks office

One of the mental traps that we all fall into, journalists included, is to perceive politics through narratives.

President Gerald Ford had been a star football player, yet somehow we in the media developed a narrative of him as a klutz — so that every time he stumbled, a clip was on the evening news. Likewise, we in the media wrongly portrayed President Jimmy Carter as a bumbling lightweight, even as he tackled the toughest challenges, from recognizing China to returning the Panama Canal.

Then in 2000, we painted Al Gore as inauthentic and having a penchant for self-aggrandizing exaggerations, and the most memorable element of the presidential debates that year became not George W. Bush's misstatements but Gore's dramatic sighs.

I bring up this checkered track record because I wonder if once again our collective reporting isn't fueling misperceptions.

A CNN/ORC poll this month found that by a margin of 15 percentage points, voters thought Donald Trump was "more honest and trustworthy" than Hillary Clinton. Let's be frank: This public perception is completely at odds with all evidence.

On the PolitiFact website, 13 percent of Clinton's statements that were checked were rated "false" or "pants on fire," compared with 53 percent of Trump's. Conversely, half of Clinton's are rated "true" or "mostly true" compared to 15 percent of Trump statements.

Clearly, Clinton shades the truth — yet there's no comparison with Trump.

I'm not sure that journalism bears responsibility, but this does raise the thorny issue of false equivalence, which has been hotly debated among journalists this campaign.

Here's the question: Is it journalistic malpractice to quote each side and leave it to readers to reach their own conclusions, even if one side seems to fabricate facts or make ludicrous comments?

President Barack Obama weighed in this week, saying that "we can't afford to act as if there's some equivalence here."

I'm wary of grand conclusions about false equivalence from 30,000 feet. But at the grass roots of a campaign, I think we can do better at signaling that one side is a clown.

There are crackpots who believe that the earth is flat, and they don't deserve to be quoted without explaining that this is an, er, outlying view, and the same goes for a crackpot who has argued that climate change is a Chinese-made hoax, who has called for barring Muslims and who has said that he will build a border wall and that Mexico will pay for it.

We owe it to our readers to signal when we're writing about a crackpot. Even if



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

he's a presidential candidate. No — especially when he's a presidential candidate.

There frankly has been a degree of unreality to some of the campaign discussion: Partly because Hillary Clinton's narrative is one of a slippery, dishonest candidate, the discussion disproportionately revolves around that theme. Yes, Clinton has been disingenuous and legalistic in her explanations of emails. Meanwhile, Trump is a mythomaniac who appears to have systematically cheated customers of Trump University.

Clinton's finances are a minefield, which we know because she has released 39 years of tax returns; Trump would be the first major party nominee since Ford not to release his tax return (even Ford released a tax summary).

And every serious analyst knows that Trump is telling a whopper when he gleefully promises to build a \$25 billion wall that Mexico will pay for.

Then there's the question of foundations. Yes, Clinton created conflicts of interest with the family foundation and didn't fully disclose donors as promised. But the Trump Foundation flat out broke the law by making a political contribution (which may have been a bribe to avoid an investigation, but that's another story).

It's also worth avoiding moral equivalence about the work of the two foundations:

The Clinton Foundation saves lives around the world from AIDS and malnutrition, while the Trump Foundation used its resources to buy — yes! — a large painting of Trump, as a gift for Trump (that may violate IRS rules as well).

The latest dust-up has been health care. Neither candidate has been very open about health, but Clinton has produced much more detailed medical records than Trump, and an actuarial firm told *The Washington Post* Fact Checker that Clinton has a 5.9 percent chance of dying by the end of a second term in office, while Trump would have a 8.4 percent chance.

So I wonder if journalistic efforts at fairness don't risk normalizing Trump, without fully acknowledging what an abnormal candidate he is. Historically we in the news media have sometimes fallen into the traps of glib narratives or false equivalencies, and we should try hard to ensure that doesn't happen again.

We should be guard dogs, not lap dogs, and when the public sees Trump as more honest than Clinton, something has gone wrong.

For my part, I've never met a national politician as ill informed, as deceptive, as evasive and as vacuous as Trump. He's not normal. And somehow that is what our barks need to convey.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a farm in Yamhill. A columnist for *The New York Times*, he won the Pulitzer Prize twice.

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

Main Street Cowboys put themselves, others at risk

To the Main Street Cowboys:

While waiting for the music to begin during the Round-Up, my husband and I decided to go shopping. We left the stage near Byers Avenue. We proceeded down Main Street on the east side of the vendors. We came back to the stage on the west side. Just before entering the audience area, the scooter I use due to my multiple sclerosis suddenly started to flip to the left. As I envisioned my head hitting the pavement, my husband quickly pushed his forearm against my head which pushed my body and scooter back to an upright position.

We noticed that I had traveled over a large cord covered by a rubber mat. My husband noticed how the rubber mat was bunched up in one place. I noticed that the street in that area was not level.

This letter is to inform you how lucky you are. Last night was a perfect combination of problems that could have led to a major medical injury for me and a million dollar lawsuit for you and the city of Pendleton. The thoughtless and haphazard arrangement of materials needed for the Main Street show screams out for immediate compliance with common sense.

There was no warning that a large mountain of rubber and wire was in the street. There was no extra light in the area and it was dark. After seeing me fall a man pushing his daughter in a wheelchair told me that he almost flipped the chair over in the same spot. There is no need to put strollers, wheelchair users, elders with walkers, and the general public at risk with the numerous wires and rubber mats that form a difficult and dangerous obstacle course for many of us.

There is no way to access the numerous food vendors, clothes vendors, etc., without riding into the area with the wires. Access to all events in a public place is guaranteed by federal law. Safety for all customers is something the community

expects, even at Round-Up.

The way you have organized Main Street during Round-Up is not working. There but for the grace of God I went home in a car, not an ambulance. There but for just dumb luck you have survived another year out of the Umatilla County Courthouse.

Please address this problem before someone gets hurt.

Renee Caubisens
Pendleton

Inflammatory politics should not be allowed on Main Street

Shame on the Main Street Cowboys. The flag vendor on Main Street displaying and selling offensive material has a buck to make in our community, but the Cowboys should have had a policy in place to restrict displays of racial hatred.

Take a step backwards, Cowboys. Admit you were wrong. Apologize to those in the community that are offended and get busy writing your vendor's statement for next year's Main Street.

As any student of First Amendment rights knows, our country assures freedom of speech, with the provision that this can be regulated with regard to time, manner and place.

The classic example of this is that we cannot yell "fire" in a crowded theatre because interfering with freedom of speech "right" interferes with the health and safety of others. Same with the requirement for parade permits, etc.

The Round-Up is not the time to display symbols of racism. Main Street Pendleton is not the place. And a display of large flags, offensive to many, is not the manner for political discussion.

If that flag is a symbol of your beliefs, by all means, display it in your home as often as you wish. Write letters to the editor about white lives mattering. Express your frustrations with modern society by joining a political party of your choice and voting your conscience.

Do all these things. And more.

But keep inflammatory politics off of Main Street during Round-Up.

Let's reserve our politics for a real discussion at the proper time, in the proper manner and in the proper place.

Janet Groat
Pendleton

Klansmen already have their Confederate flags

I think you all need to give it a rest. That means any of the *East Oregonian* staff that feels the need to stir the proverbial pot.

So some people are selling Confederate flags during Round-Up. Is this the first time that this has occurred? Is the sale of said flag illegal? Could we perhaps do a bit of research and understand that it is actually the Battle Flag of Northern Virginia? The actual Confederate flag looked closer to the original American flag ... but I digress.

This isn't about facts; this is about some smalltown rag with nothing better to do than pick on an unsuspecting veteran. Pendleton City Hall is so corrupt that you should have an abundance of material to select for your headlines. Why are Confederate flags for sale newsworthy?

Confederate flags for sale on Main Street do not affect me in the least. Before I read the story, I owned exactly zero Confederate flags. After your headline, I still own zero Confederate flags.

People in town who aren't already inclined to purchase memorabilia from a failed attempt at secession still don't own a single banner. Local Klansmen? They already had theirs, but your tip probably caused them to go out and purchase a backup, in case their battle flag became tattered.

Thanks you all! I don't know what we would do without you!

James Tibbets
Pendleton

Re-elect Terry Rowan as Umatilla County sheriff

I believe that Terry Rowan, our county sheriff, deserves another four years as our Umatilla County Sheriff. I have known Terry for many years and I know he does a good job as sheriff.

He works very hard for the people of our county. He works with the public. Not only does he return calls from the public, he visits them. He does not sit behind a desk and run the sheriff's department. He works the streets alongside his deputies.

He believes in law and order. He is a straight shooter. I have known him to be a man of his word. He was never demoted, nor has he been in any scandal. He works with all the police departments in each of the cities in Umatilla County. He works hard with the commissioners to hold down costs of his department and ensure the safety of us, the citizens of Umatilla County. He has done a fine job as sheriff.

That's why I am asking you to retain this fine God-fearing young family man. Our county and our country need more people like Terry Rowan, our county sheriff.

Jack McWhinnie
Umatilla

Beware allowing EPA into Columbia River management

In regards to the *EO* story "Columbia River added to water package" (A1, Sept. 15): People, pay attention!

First why do we want to put any part of this in the hands of the EPA? It will create new bureaucracies and tons of business and agriculture restrictions. Why can't we allow the Columbia River Keepers and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to continue to do what they have been doing without overburdening us tax ayers, businesses and in general the economy, killing progress and restricting growth by initiating more EPA suppression?

Frank Vincent, Hermiston