

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Wrong solution for housing pinch

Not content to legislate wages, a Portland Democrat now wants state government to act as Oregon's Chief Landlord. It's one more example of the wave of proprietary governance that began in our largest city and has swept south to our state capital.

Housing already is one of the most regulated industries. And rent controls exacerbate the problems supporters claim they fix: affordability and supply.

No matter, political leaders like Tina Kotek are anxious to exert more control over the private sector. The Speaker of the House, fresh off her victory to raise the minimum wage and salivating over the \$3 billion Measure 97 would generate in higher taxes, has made rental housing her next crusade.

Kotek, who represents northeast Portland, says she will lead an effort next year to repeal the state's ban on rent-control laws. She also pledges to restrict all but "reasonable" increases in rental fees and further restrict the ability of landlords to evict tenants.

"We need to prevent property owners from making excessive profit and protect tenants from economic eviction and displacement," Kotek said. Her solution is to cede more control to state government — the same folks who have wasted billions of dollars on technology boondoggles and recently handed out \$347 million in improper or suspicious energy tax credits.

Oregonians should be encouraged to look at how rent controls have worked in two other bastions of "progressive" politics:

New York City and San Francisco.

The Big Apple has imposed rent controls on and off since World War I. Apartment vacancies have all but vanished as tenants in rent-controlled units renew their leases in perpetuity. In San Francisco, government limits the amount rents can increase each year in an effort to preserve affordable housing.

The policy has backfired. Instead of renting out units at below-market rates, owners offer their apartments to well-heeled visitors as weekend getaways and vacation rentals.

Government-imposed rent controls also discourage construction of new apartments and the maintenance of existing units. There is no incentive for builders to build if they cannot quickly recoup their investment. The resulting housing shortages benefit existing homeowners, but create significant disadvantages for the poor and those seeking to rent.

There's no doubt that Portland is experiencing steep increases in the cost of housing. The booming tech economy and the city's allure for young professionals has created an imbalance between housing supply and demand. Home price increases are among the highest in the nation. Portland also has the 15th highest apartment rents in the country.

But state and local governments can better address the situation by encouraging the supply of new and refurbished dwellings. Let the private sector respond with market-based solutions rather than by government directives that overreach.

Unfortunately, that's not The Portland Way.

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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

# Partnerships will keep BMCC pool open

During the Sept. 7 Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education meeting, the board made a final decision regarding the pool's future: The board committed BMCC to keeping the indoor pool open for two years, until fall 2018. As a community partner, BMCC recognizes that continued operations will afford those who utilize the facility with the necessary time to partner with each other to explore any viable options for the future. Going forward, BMCC is also committed to work in support of those options publicly discussed and may include things like raising additional funds to repair the current facility or perhaps fund a new indoor structure.

It is important to note that during this interim 2-year period, should any major mechanical malfunction occur or any other issue surface that would affect pool users' health and safety, the board has the right to revisit the duration of the pool's continued use.

The overarching reason for the board's position as stated is that general fund dollars do not exist to continue future operations or make the necessary upgrades now for a fully operational status and any attempt to reallocate funding from other college assets would be seen as fiscally irresponsible to the citizens of Umatilla, Morrow and Baker counties who support BMCC for our primary mission of higher education.

We'd also like to thank our partners and stakeholders with the Pendleton Swim Association, the Pendleton and



**CHRIS BROWN**  
Comment

Hermiston school districts, and the city of Pendleton and city of Hermiston parks and recreation departments for their candid feedback, the willingness to work together and understanding of a tough situation.

The college can now work with the aforementioned stakeholders to make necessary immediate repairs to the pool — estimated at approximately \$50,000 — so that it can open for swim team practice by early October 2016 and remain operational for two years.

Again, the board would like to thank all of those in our local communities who took the time to share their opinions and

offer suggestions with regards to the pool. This input was valuable and carefully considered prior to a final decision being made. We also appreciate all of those who generously made donations toward a fund for the pool. Those donations will go towards the new endeavor our stakeholder groups

choose to pursue, with the exception of those funds specifically earmarked for immediate repairs.

BMCC is proud to be a community partner in Umatilla, Morrow and Baker counties, and we look forward to working alongside our community organizations in the future to continue indoor swimming opportunities in our region.

Chris Brown is the chair of the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Education.

## OTHER VIEWS



# Vote like you mean it

Does it make sense to vote for Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate for president? Sure, as long as you believe two things. First, you have to believe that it makes no difference at all whether Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump moves into the White House — because one of them will. Second, you have to believe that America will be better off in the long run if we eliminate environmental regulation, abolish the income tax, do away with public schools, and dismantle Social Security and Medicare — which is what the Libertarian platform calls for.

But do 29 percent of Americans between 18 and 34 believe these things? I doubt it. Yet that, according to a recent Quinnipiac poll, is the share of millennial voters who say that they would vote for Johnson if the election took place now. And the preponderance of young Americans who say they'll back Johnson or Jill Stein, the Green Party nominee, appear to be citizens who would support Clinton in a two-way race; including the minor party candidates cuts her margin among young voters from 21 points to just 5.

So I'd like to make a plea to young Americans: Your vote matters, so please take it seriously.

Why are minor candidates seemingly drawing so much support this year? Very little of it, I suspect, reflects support for their policy positions. How many people have actually read the Libertarian platform? But if you're thinking of voting Johnson, you really should. It's a remarkable document.

As I said, it calls for abolition of the income tax and the privatization of almost everything the government does, including education. "We would restore authority to parents to determine the education of their children, without interference from government." And if parents don't want their children educated, or want them indoctrinated in a cult, or put them to work in a sweatshop instead of learning to read? Not our problem.

What really struck me, however, was what the platform says about the environment. It opposes any kind of regulation; instead, it argues that we can rely on the courts. Is a giant corporation poisoning the air you breathe or the water you drink? Just sue: "Where damages can be proven and quantified in a court of law, restitution to the injured parties must be required." Ordinary citizens against teams of high-priced corporate lawyers — what could go wrong?

It's really hard to believe that young voters who supported Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary think any of this is a good idea. But Johnson and Stein



**PAUL KRUGMAN**  
Comment

have received essentially no media scrutiny, so that voters have no idea what they stand for. And their parties' names sound nice: who among us is against liberty? The truth, that the Libertarian Party essentially stands for a return to all the worst abuses of the Gilded Age, is not out there.

Meanwhile, of course, it does make a huge difference which of the two realistic prospects for the presidency wins, and not just because of the difference in their temperaments and the degree to which they respect or have contempt for democratic norms. Their policy positions are drastically different, too.

True, much of what Trump says is incoherent: in his policy proposals, trillion dollar tax breaks are here today, gone tomorrow, back the day after. But anyone who calls him a "populist" isn't looking at the general thrust of his ideas, or at whom he has chosen as economic advisers. Trump's brain trust, such as it is, is composed of hard-line, right-wing supply-siders — whom even Republican economists have called "charlatans and cranks" — for whom low taxes on the rich are the overwhelming priority.

Meanwhile, Clinton has staked out the most progressive policy positions ever advocated by a presidential candidate. There's no reason to believe that these positions are insincere, that she would revert to 1990s policies in office: What some are now calling the "new liberal economics" has sunk deep roots in the Democratic Party, and dominates the ranks of Clinton's advisers.

Now, maybe you don't care. Maybe you consider center-left policies just as bad as hard-right policies. And maybe you have somehow managed to reconcile that disdain with tolerance for libertarian free-market mania. If so, by all means vote for Johnson.

But don't vote for a minor-party candidate to make a statement. Nobody cares.

Remember, George W. Bush lost the popular vote in 2000, but somehow ended up in the White House anyway in part thanks to the Ralph Nader vote — and nonetheless proceeded to govern as if he had won a landslide. Can you really imagine a triumphant Trump showing restraint out of respect for all those libertarian votes?

Your vote matters, and you should act accordingly — which means thinking seriously about what you want to see happen to America.

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Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999 as a columnist on the Op-Ed Page and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.

## YOUR VIEWS

### PAWS deserves county funding

Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter (PAWS) was established in 2009 with pledged support from the city of Pendleton, the CTUIR and the Umatilla County commissioners. Though the latter two entities have given grants, neither has followed through on their commitment for sustained financial support. The city of Pendleton is doing acceptable support because of the agreement that PAWS will handle unclaimed pound dogs.

PAWS is a countywide shelter, the only no-kill non-profit shelter, and is dedicated to providing programs for spay/neuter and transport, education, and community outreach. Now more than five years into operation with statistics that reveal competency and commitment, it is time for people to come forward to once again call for the humane handling of the critters in this area. PAWS has very few months of funding remaining with which to compensate the employees that keep the shelter up to standard. It needs sustainable funding to cover its payroll, just like its counterparts in other counties receive. Through tireless fundraising efforts and managing its thrift store, PAWS is able to generate funds that cover shelter expenses and utilities, but not payroll.

I wish I could say that our county commissioners follow their peers in other

counties and vote the monthly support for the animal shelter, which would make the difference in its survival. But no, year after year they pass, with the thinking that tax support is not necessary. Wrong! I am convinced that a vast majority of citizens of this county would far rather spend the minor \$12,000 investment in the shelter than having the shelter close and instead use highly paid sheriff's department personnel to deal with "animal issues." A very poor use of staff for sure!

One of the excuses is that there is more than one shelter, so they would need to support all of them. I answer that by stating that no other animal care facility in Umatilla County pursued and received letters of support from the above governmental organizations, and no other effort was founded specifically to be a centralized countywide shelter.

So, taxpayers, I ask that you come forward with comments to your commissioners and light a fire of concern that causes appropriate responsive support for PAWS. Unless we respond as a community, it is quite possible that this important asset will fold and once again our county will have the shame of inadequate/inhumane animal care. Shall we go backwards or forwards? It's in your hands.

Marjorie Iburg  
Pendleton

## 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.