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**OUR VIEW**

# We've got 99 problems but this measure ain't one

In Hermiston and Pendleton, outdoor school is an important part of each elementary student's career.

And when the program was threatened by reduced state funding and cutbacks, each community stepped up and leveraged private dollars and volunteer hours. School boards and administrations made it a priority. Together, they ensured the week-long educational program in the Blue Mountains continued, even when dollars were thin.

Other districts have not been so lucky. In some of the state's poorer schools, or in places where administration doesn't see its value, outdoor school has been reduced or it has been excised from the curriculum entirely.

Measure 99 is an attempt to stop that precipitous slide, to preserve and fund a staple of growing up and being educated in Oregon. It takes money from the Oregon Lottery and specifically earmarks it for Outdoor School. It does not raise taxes, but will capture money that could have gone elsewhere in Oregon for education or economic development.

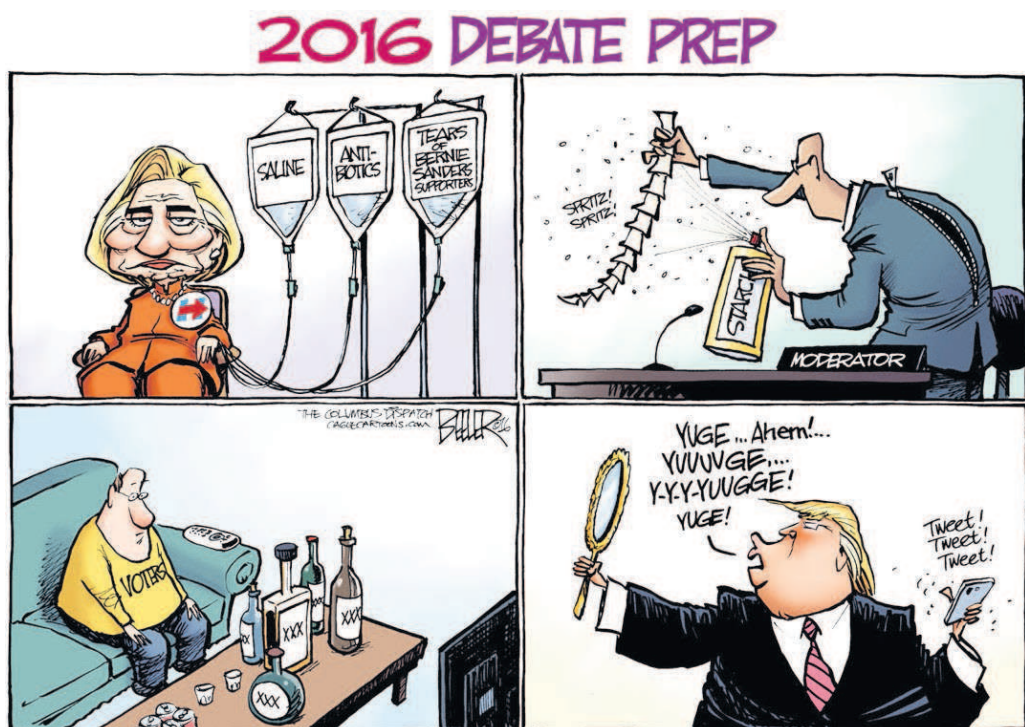
We think it's worth it. Talk to anyone who attended outdoor school and they will tell you it's one of the most memorable, rewarding and educational experiences of their lives. They learned about themselves at an important, if awkward, moment of their lives. They learned more deeply about their classmates and they learned about their planet.

As an editorial board, we're always looking for ways to span the urban/rural divide. This is one way. For rural children, outdoor school helps them celebrate their culture and fall in love with their own back yards, some for the first time. For urban students, this is an opportunity to see what a great big state they live in, and perhaps appreciate the beauty of rural life and the natural world.

When voters created the Oregon Lottery in 1984, it was intended to support, among other things, education and our great outdoors. This measure requires that about \$22 million of the revenue does both. Voters now should support Measure 99.

**Lottery money should go to education and the great outdoors: This measure does both.**

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**

## Dignity and sadness in the working class

A few weeks ago I met a guy in Kentucky who'd lived through every trend of deindustrializing America.

He grew up about 65 years ago on a tobacco and cattle farm, but he always liked engines, so even while in high school he worked 40 hours a week in a garage. Then he went to work in a series of factories — making airplane parts, car seats, sheet metal and casings for those big air-conditioning fans you see on the top of buildings.

Every few years as the economy would shift, or jobs would go to Mexico, he'd get hit with a layoff. But the periods of unemployment were never longer than six months and he pieced together a career.

He's in semiretirement now, but he hasn't been able to take a vacation for four years because he and his wife take care of her elderly mother, who has trouble swallowing. He's saved her life 10 times so far with the Heimlich maneuver, and they have to be nearby, in case she needs it again.

His best job came in the middle of his career, when he was a supervisor at the sheet metal plant. But when the technology changed, he was no longer qualified to supervise the new workers, so they let him go.

He thought he'd just come in quietly on his final day, clean out his desk and sneak away.

But word got out, and when he emerged from his office, box in hand, there was a double line of guys stretching all the way from his office in back, across the factory floor and out to his car in the lot. He walked down that whole double line with tears flowing, with the guys clapping and cheering as he went.

We hear a lot about angry white men, but there is an honorable dignity to this guy.

Some of that dignity comes from the fact that he knows how to fix things. One of the undermining conditions of the modern factory is that the workers no longer directly build the products, they just service the machines and software that do.

As the sociologist Richard Sennett once put it, "As a result of working in this way, the bakers now no longer actually know how to bake bread." But this guy in Kentucky can take care of himself — redo the plumbing at home or replace the brake pads.

He also had a narrative about his own life. It's not the agency narrative you often find in the professional segments of society: I found my passion and steered my own ship. It's more of a reactive, coping narrative: A lot of the big forces were outside my control, but I

adjusted, made the best of what was possible within my constraints and lived up to my responsibilities.

There's honor to that, too. Still, over the past many months speaking with people in these situations, I can't help feeling that society is failing them in some major way, and not just economically.

There is often a sad, noncumulative pattern to working-class lives. In some professions as you get older, you rise to more responsible positions. And that was true under the old seniority-based work rules in factories.

But now there is a stochastic, episodic nature to many careers. As workers get older, potential employers become more suspicious of their skills, not more confident in them. As a result, you often meet people who had been happiest at work in middle age, and then moved down to a series of positions they were overqualified for and felt diminished in.

Furthermore, I often run across people who have gone back to menial work in their 60s and 70s because they just want to get out of the house. When you ask them more questions, you find that they are devoted to home and work, but that they often don't have rich connections outside these spheres.

Many of their friends came through work, but those friendships tend to fade away when the job ends. There are older people who feel unneeded. There are younger people who feel lost. Somehow these longing souls never find each other.

Suburbia isn't working. During the baby boom, the suburbs gave families safe places to raise their kids. But now we are in an era of an aging population, telecommuting workers and single-person households.

The culture and geography of suburbia are failing to nurture webs of mutual dependence. We are animals who can't flourish unless we can't get along without one another. Yet one finds too many people thrust into lives of semi-independence.

These are not the victims of postindustrial blight I'm talking about; they are successful people who worked hard and built good lives but who are left nonetheless strangely isolated, in attenuated communities, and who are left radiating the residual sadness of the lonely heart.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in 2003.



**DAVID BROOKS**  
Comment

**Suburbia isn't working. The culture and geography are failing to nurture webs of mutual dependence.**

**YOUR VIEWS**

### City ponders remedy to deteriorating stairway

The Pendleton City Council will be considering proposals to eliminate the deteriorating stairway on Southwest 13th near the Early Learning Center. Although this could not be verified, proposals include a serpentine path, a tram such as the one at OHSU in Portland, a covered escalator, an elevator or, the most unlikely, a continuation of the new sidewalk up Southwest 15th and Goodwin Lane.

The big question there would be which side of street, since the new sidewalk on the west side contains power poles and would require the cooperation of PP&L to relocate or move underground to make allowances for the handicapped and compliment those new corner handicapped-accessible curbs. That might, however, upset the close relationship the Arts Commission president has had in the past with securing statue grants from the utility.

I have to agree with the lady who is concerned with the power cables and rubber mats present up and down Main Street during the Round-Up. I believe the city was not aware of this safety issue considering the Main Street show is still in its infancy.

I've heard that a consulting agency will be hired to study this very problem, perhaps recommending a permanent electrical system be installed rather

than those rustic-looking plywood temporary service meter centers currently used. This, however, depends entirely on whether the city of Pendleton and the Main Street Cowboys decide to continue the free show during Round-Up.

**Rick Rohde**  
Pendleton

### Eastern Oregon must protect water resources

As I read through the "Draining Oregon" articles in the *Oregonian* my thoughts returned to a quote in the *New York Times* from Thayliah Henry-Suppah, as well as a past comment from Alma Campbell, a Gilliam County rancher.

"Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children."

"I will pass this land on in better shape than when I received it; and my parents left it in good condition."

As a producer, and past Gilliam SWCD chairman, I read the *Oregonian* articles with interest, and in entirety. What is my take, and what would be my ask?

The job of restoring and retaining watershed function (soil health/groundwater, etc.) in Eastern Oregon is not yet complete. Having worked in this arena for the last two decades, this is not a surprise. This effort is an ongoing, forever adjustment to how we look at the land and water resource.

- A 1938 SCS study from

Gilliam County showed 25 percent of the croplands had already lost 75 percent of the topsoil through erosion (wind/rain). Producers have shifted toward conservation tillage/direct seeding; and much work remains.

- As critical water issues developed in the Hermiston/Boardman area, producers moved toward reporting use, managing statics, working to get off of the wells; and much work remains.

- The challenge faced in restoring riparian vegetation to Eastern Oregon streams was significant; and yet the CREP program has returned vegetation to many streams, as discussed with Fifteen Mile Creek; and much work remains.

This was never a long weekend project, and nothing will be gained by focusing blame on any one party, agency, senator, irrigator, etc.

- It is time to bring funding for groundwater research in line with that available for addressing upland and riparian issues.

- It is time to accept that funding for this research will be borne, to an extent, by those benefiting from the resource.

- It is time to prepare for meters on all wells, as well as usage reports.

Balancing of the resource will require these steps; and likely others as well. The alternatives to taking these steps, as shown in the Harney County example; can be far worse.

My ask: The resources being

discussed are held in common by all of us, and should be managed in common, balancing the economic needs of our rural communities with those of the resource.

**Walter Powell**  
Condon

### The world is changing, and confusing to some

I am flummoxed by the current political situation.

We recently commemorated Constitution Day or Citizen's Day.

I was reminded that this nation is a work in progress and that the citizenry have a role in the refinement, progress, outcome, and our place in the world.

A few years ago, Bill Bishop wrote "The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart." In this book he describes how we have contributed to various cultural shifts from religion and politics to economics and geography via our own individual choices.

We have self-sorted into neighborhoods and regions in order to live nearer to people who are more like us.

We seek news sources:

television, print media, social media, blogs, internet sites, and periodicals that confirm or reaffirm our views, perceptions and preconceptions.

We crowd source and simultaneously suffer from confirmation bias.

Demographic and hegemonic shifts are also afoot, from race and gender to age and ethnicity. As such, major political parties are being redefined in ways that we may not have seen in this country since the days leading up to the Civil War.

I am bewildered at my own poor abilities to grapple with issues and choices for which I seem to have little or no preparation.

I am willing to accept responsibility for my choices, but I seem to lack the knowledge to make such a choice.

Drowning in misinformation, biased information, or insufficient information, I find myself flailing about in a sea of naiveté with currents and riptides pulling me this way or that, wondering if I will ever again stand on familiar terra firma.

**Kim B. Puzey**  
Hermiston

**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. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.