

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW

We're not clowning around

All clowns are creepy, everybody knows that.

But we're a newspaper — not a Stephen King novel — and we're not going to write about made-up things that give people the heebie-jeebies.

And we're not the only media company who has come to its senses — if belatedly — about perpetuating this hoax.

Mark Hanrahan, a KREM 2 television anchor in Spokane, posted an opinion piece this week titled: "Let's stop giving clowns so much attention."

Hanrahan said the outlet "will only report on credible 'creepy clown' threats that are being actively investigated." We'll do the same.

Because this is clearly a media and social media-driven hoax that has been blown wildly out of proportion.

Reports of clowns have popped up in dozens of states, and "journalists" have dutifully reported on each supposed sighting and thus helped spawn the next one.

The only fact that really matters, however: There have been many more people charged with passing false reports to police about clowns than clowns have been charged with crimes, or been the victim of a crime. Quite simply: The reports are untrue, the rumors are untrue, the threats are unfounded.

Untruths presented as facts is the problem of the moment — this age when valuable internet clicks are earned by shocking and entertaining an online audience, when viral marketing is a powerful

force and when many Americans are connected to an online web of people they don't really know or care about. It's an age when the old "telephone game" can be magnified to a worldwide audience, and when the context of photos and videos can be morphed and hidden.

Media companies, flailing to keep up with the times, try to report on these "memes of the moment" that flash through the social media sphere. Last month it was "Pepe the Frog," a sad-eyed poorly drawn cartoon that media organizations now wrongly label as racist.

This month it's these dumb clowns. And in trying to report about what people are seeing on their Facebook or Instagram page, respectable media organizations lend credence to what is not a newsworthy fad.

Police departments in Hermiston and Pendleton lent their own kind of credence to the issue too, posting with their tongue-in-cheek on Facebook, or allocating resources to deal with completely illogical rumors that "creepy clowns" were going to terrorize schools. Now those departments will have to deal with the fallout, as the scanner crackles with more "sightings."

We're not going to play the game and perpetuate the myth.

Sure, it's possible that someone dressed as a clown could commit a heinous crime, or even a misdemeanor. If that happens, we'll report it. But we're not going to cause panic for no reason, and we're not going to promote a sort of mass hysteria.

We're a newspaper, not a Stephen King novel.

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

Disguised sales tax would harm Oregon

The Yamhill Valley News-Register

What's the good of working to increase graduation rates, only to send newly minted alumni out into a job market devastated by Measure 97? Why invest in expanded services to seniors, only to force them into paying more at the gas stations, grocery stores and pharmacies under this disguised sales tax?

And how can we promise \$3 billion a biennium in new revenue would be spent on "public early childhood and K-12 education, health care, and services for senior citizens," as the measure's union sponsors claim, when it would actually feed a general fund Oregon politicians can allocate any way they wish?

These are questions voters must consider when making their decision on 97, easily this election's most contentious ballot measure. For the sake of Oregon, we are confident that would persuade them to join us in voting no.

The deceptively titled Oregon Business Tax Increase Initiative, created and financed by organized labor, would exact a 2.5 percent tax on C corporation gross sales exceeding \$25 million. Yes, sales, not income, thus serving to punish two elements of the economy disproportionately — consumers and high-volume, low-margin retailers, such as grocery stores.

Backers claim the tax would be largely limited to greedy out-of-state corporate goliaths, whose CEOs are capable of jetting off to exclusive island retreats any time they wish. In fact, it would also hit homegrown retailers like Wilco and Bi-Mart, who aren't capable of simply brushing it off, as Walmart might.

What's more, manufacturers, distributors and retailers would each build the increase into their

price structure and pass it on to the maximum extent possible. Given the multiplier effect, the consumer would end up bearing a big portion of the burden in the end.

A report released in May by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office estimated Measure 97 would cost the average Oregonian \$600 a year, or \$2,400 a year for a family of four. It estimated public-sector job gains at 18,000, dwarfed by private-sector job losses predicted at 38,000.

A counter study, commissioned by Measure 97 supporters, estimates a loss of 17,000 private-sector jobs and gain of 30,000 public-sector jobs. But even that scenario has a downside, as it would further stress a public employee retirement system already facing a \$22 billion shortfall.

The timing for a record-breaking, tradition-defying sales tax couldn't be worse, as Oregon has enjoyed two straight years of strong economic growth. It is finally approaching a full recovery from the Great Recession, and Measure 97 would toss a grenade into that.

If enacted, Measure 97 would surely dominate the upcoming Legislative session. Petitions for relief and pleas for funding would trigger endless debate. There are too many pressing needs in our state for our elected officials to get bogged down in such a political quagmire.

We have no quarrel with the premise that corporate America is getting a free ride in Oregon, and that needs to end. Putting the best face on it, perhaps the current proposal could serve as a framework for a better-conceived measure to address that inequity.

Enacting an Oregon sales tax promises to create a lot more harm and havoc than good.

OTHER VIEWS



Ominous signs for Trump in post-debate poll

A new Fox News national poll suggests Donald Trump suffered real damage in his first debate with Hillary Clinton — not just losing the debate, but sliding in some key measures of voter confidence in his ability to serve as president.

Compared to the same poll's results before the debate, Clinton's standing improved relative to Trump's in three important areas: which candidate would best handle the economy, which candidate has the temperament to serve as president and which candidate is honest and trustworthy.

First, the overall numbers. In the poll, conducted last Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 58 percent of likely voters said Clinton won the debate, versus just 19 percent who said Trump won, 11 percent who said it was a tie, and 12 percent who said they didn't know. That's three times as many voters who thought Clinton won as thought Trump won.

Democrats, by a 91 percent to 4 percent margin, thought Clinton was the victor. Republicans, by a 35 percent to 26 percent margin, thought Trump won. (Nineteen percent of Republicans thought it was a tie.) Among independents, Clinton won by a 46-22 margin.

So voters think Clinton won, which is the same result as other polls in recent days. But the larger question is what effect, if any, the debate had on the overall course of the race.

In the horse race, Fox found Clinton leading Trump among likely voters 43 percent to 40 percent in a four-way contest, with Gary Johnson at eight percent and Jill Stein at four percent. In the last Fox poll, taken September 11-14, Clinton led Trump by 41 percent to 40 percent in the four-day race, with Johnson at eight percent and Stein and three percent.

The Fox pollsters found more change in the head-to-head race among likely voters, with Clinton now leading Trump 49 percent to 44 percent. In the pre-debate Fox poll, Trump led Clinton 46 percent to 45 percent — so that's a six-point net change before and after the debate.

So there has been an insignificant change



BYRON YORK
Comment

Trump suffered real damage in his first debate with Hillary Clinton.

in the four-way race and a significant change in the two-way. It's not clear which is more meaningful.

But other numbers are clearly ominous for Trump.

Before the debate, Trump had a 51 percent to 44 percent lead when Fox asked likely voters who would best handle the economy. After the debate, Trump's lead was down to 49 percent to 47 percent — a seven-point lead cut to a two-point lead.

Before the debate, Fox found 59 percent of likely voters said Clinton had the temperament to serve as president; after the debate, the number went to 67 percent. Trump's temperament number stayed nearly the same, 38 percent before the debate to 37 percent after. Clinton's 21-point pre-debate lead on the question became a 30-point post-debate lead.

Before the debate, 39 percent of Fox respondents said Trump is honest and trustworthy. After the debate, that number fell to 31 percent. Clinton's honest and trustworthy rating remained virtually the same: 34 percent before the debate versus 35 percent after the debate. That's a nine-point net change. Before the debate, more likely voters saw Trump as honest and trustworthy than saw Clinton as honest and trustworthy. Post-debate, it's the other way around.

The debate didn't change likely voters' views on Clinton's email problem or Trump's tax returns. There have been a lot of polls, methodologically sound and otherwise, since Monday's presidential debate. But it takes a while for the effect of a debate to percolate through the electorate. Voters who watched the debate think about what they've seen, discuss it with family and friends, and watch and read news coverage. Voters who didn't watch form opinions from coverage and word of mouth. It all takes a few days.

Now the first real effects of the debate are becoming clear. And they are not good news for Donald Trump.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

YOUR VIEWS

Eastern Oregon delegate proud to support Clinton

As a longtime supporter of Hillary Clinton, I was honored to represent Eastern Oregon as a Hillary delegate at the Democratic National Convention in Denver in 2008.

I feel just as strongly now, in supporting her, as I did then. She is the right person at the right time to serve as our president and commander in chief.

Having known her for so long, I know she has the intelligence, experience and wisdom to serve as president. Likewise, I know that she is an ethical person who knows wrong from right, and she will make wise decisions based on her strong Christian faith.

Unfortunately, the Republican Party has put forth a candidate who is completely unqualified and without the temperament or demeanor to serve as our president. As a retired teacher and principal, I question how we could ever put forth Donald Trump as a role model to our children, should he be elected president. The childish name-calling he has shown for the last year and a half would be an embarrassment for the American people. Students in any school at which I was principal would be sent to the office for disciplining were they to call people names in the way he does.

Hillary Clinton is the candidate who has the intelligence, background and integrity to serve as our president from the day she is elected.

Don't embarrass our country! Elect Hillary Clinton our president.

Jack Lorts, vice chair, Wheeler County Democrats former mayor retired Superintendent of Schools Fossil

Chicago's hellish conditions an American tragedy

As has so often been the case over the past 100 to 120 years, Americans these days are hearing a great many homicide-related horror

stories from the savage streets of Chicago. The metropolis in days long ago gave us the 1886 "Haymarket Riots" and Al Capone's gruesome "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" in 1929 is managing to shock the rest of the world in 2016 with what seems like a virtually limitless spate of youth gang killings. Perhaps, rather than "Windy City," the place ought to be nicknamed "Bloody City." Even as Los Angeles and New York City manage to keep their levels of deadly violence in check, Chicago keeps getting worse.

Associated Press reporter Don Babwin is perfectly right to term what is taking place in mid-America's largest metropolis the "Chicago slaughter." Ninety-one people were slain there in August alone, and thus far in 2016 more people have been murdered in Chicago than in Los Angeles and New York City combined. For all practical purposes, sad it is to say, violent crime in Chicago is out of control and stands as a major public health emergency.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the city of Chicago's "powers that be" have simply given up trying to bring the situation under control. They've washed their hands of it, one suspects, and have effectively consigned certain neighborhoods to the sort of earthly "perdition" they've largely brought on themselves. It is extremely hard to see at this juncture what measures would halt the massacre. It has taken on a grim life of its own. Chicago's homicide problem is akin to warfare.

Chicago has always had a huge amount of potential, but this potential has been stunted by the city's propensity for violence and social chaos. Public safety concerns act as a drag on the Chicago economy.

Chicago could be an earthly paradise. It has plenty of material resources. Instead, in many of its neighborhoods, conditions are downright hellish.

Frank W. Goheen
Vancouver, Wash.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication. 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.