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**OUR VIEW**

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

As Thursday's editorial "How best to spend \$397,000" was being written, Umatilla County Commissioners were meeting with members of the Umatilla Special Transportation Advisory Committee and citizens who were concerned with the committee's disbursement of funds.



The gist of yesterday's editorial was imploring commissioners to do just that.

In the meeting, commissioners heard public concerns and sent the committee back to consider alternatives, as we hoped they would. The committee will bring back a new proposal to commissioners March 8, and they have new guidelines for how best to do that.

**We tip of our hat to commissioners for doing the additional work necessary to make sure a sizable sum of tax dollars are spent wisely.**

**A kick in the pants to reticence on the part of the Milton-Freewater City Council to accept free money to bring clean water to a local trailer park.**

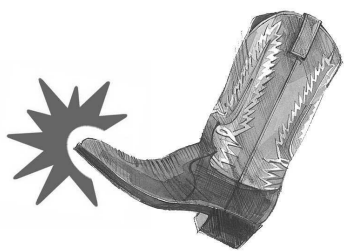
"We need to find a way not to be a gift to a person who has made an art form of externalizing costs," councilor Ed Chestnut said at a meeting last week.

Trailer park owner Nancy Shaw responded: "As far as I'm concerned you can stay out of my park. ... I'm just offended with your adverse comments and adverse remarks."

It's clear that the disagreement between the city and the trailer park owner has become personal, which is inhibiting a solution that benefits all involved.

Shaw would get clean water to her property, which is desperately needed. The city gets significant, expensive infrastructure at little cost that can benefit Milton-Freewater well into the future.

And while it's clear that doing something for someone who may be undeserving can sting, each side has something to gain from looking past some things and taking advantage of an offer too good to refuse.



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.

**YOUR VIEWS**

## First Amendment is first for a reason

Recently there has been a national trend towards limiting free speech from the political right. This movement manifests in a broad array of circumstances, including national and regional politics, state organizations, nonprofits and personal conversations.

It seems that wherever one looks there is evidence of the need of social conservatives to prevent people from expressing their minds. A few examples would include the President's outrage over 'fake news'; internet trolls attacking factual accounts of peaceful public protests, and local politicians threatening to withdraw support from organizations whose members they simply disagree with. And of course Tuesday's letter to the editor in this newspaper calling for "penalties provided on reporting in such a biased and untrue method."

The authors of the United States Constitution were students of the enlightenment and understood that free speech is both a bulwark against tyranny as well as a path towards scientific progress.

They knew that no tyrant can long survive the bright light of the truth, and scientific insights require open, unfettered communication. Every person who uses a cellular phone owes a debt not just to the capitalist who sold it to them but also the scientists and engineers who built it using information and conversations which were not limited by the government.

And also, of course, we should note that those governments and groups that the United States claims to oppose universally hold that free speech should be limited or outright forbidden. So the more we oppose free speech, the more we begin to look like our sworn enemies.

Finally, here's the first amendment as a reminder:  
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

**Andrew Picken Pendleton**

## Bad press the response to bad policies

In response to the Feb. 13 letter from James Tiede:  
No one is really at war with Donald

**Amy van Saun Portland**

Trump. I remember back in the old days I used to think just like you do, that the big bad ol' local newspaper is doing us all a disservice by printing their own opinions on clearly marked opinion pages.

But I've learned my lesson, and I must say thanks for not just smashing me out of the gate *East Oregonian* staff.

The fact of the matter is that in the United States there exist laws that protect media from the government. The only time that does not apply is in cases of libel, but in our great state of Oregon, an affirmative defense (the one that always works) to charges of libel is the truth.

The office of the president has been doing things that many of us realize are more than a bit unconstitutional. It doesn't matter who you voted for, the constitution is the bar by which we judge government actions.

If Trump shapes up, the bad press will cease.

**James Tibbets Pendleton**

## Why tie farmers' hands when it comes to GMOs?

Response to "Preemption of local GMO regulations must remain"

While admitting harms from GE contamination, the *East Oregonian* wants to leave farmers' hands tied to prevent contamination.

GE crop contamination is undeniable. It jeopardizes the livelihoods of farmers whose markets reject the technology, like organic and (not mentioned) conventional crops for export — and this paper's editors admit that. They also admit that the victimized farmers' fears are reasonable, and that some regulation is needed to prevent such cross-contamination.

Why then would these same editors not advocate for the rights of farmers and local communities — the people who have experienced these harms directly — to protect themselves? Do Oregon farmers and voters have an emotional investment in the issue?

Absolutely, and that is precisely why they can and should be trusted to decide what is best for their local agricultural economy.

Sometimes good neighbors can work out conflicts, but multinational chemical corporations who engineer and sell GE crops have proven that they are not good neighbors. It is disturbing that our editors seem to be on their side, and want to continue to tie hands of Oregon farmers.

**Amy van Saun Portland**

**OTHER VIEWS**



# Well, Trump watchers, things could be worse

I know a lot of you were saying in December that this administration wouldn't last a month. But I'll bet you didn't actually have "worry about collapse of the government" written down on your schedule for February.

Americans who went into a state of shock after the election are now floating in new, hitherto-uncharted realms of worry. We've learned that Donald Trump's national security adviser, Michael Flynn, talked with the Russians before the inauguration. And, sources told *The New York Times*, other Trump associates also talked with Russian intelligence officers during the campaign.

What about Trump himself? Any chance that he encouraged Flynn to chat with the Russian ambassador about policy before he was president? Wouldn't that be, um, super-illegal?

Wow. If you thought a successful President Trump was the worst possible scenario, imagine an egomaniac who feels threatened with being a "loser," back to the wall. In the interest of public tranquility we will not dwell on the nuclear codes in his office.

From the start, the Trump administration was a dark combination of mean and inept. But it was, on occasion, at least sort of mesmerizing. For instance, on Wednesday the nominee for secretary of labor went down the drain. Because somebody thought it was a good plan to go for a Cabinet member with a history that includes employing an unauthorized immigrant housekeeper and an ex-wife who once went on "Oprah" to talk about spousal abuse.

Things are so dire, people are feeling sympathy for Kellyanne Conway. Did you see that poor woman trying to answer questions about Flynn on the "Today" show? She looked as though she'd been hit over the head with a skillet.

Back in the good old days last week, Kellyanne was in trouble for violating the rule against federal officials giving endorsements. ("I'm going to give a free commercial here: Go buy it today, everybody. You can find it online.") It was a pretty good crisis, actually. The kind of thing we could have complained about at dinner parties for a month without losing our appetites.

The majority of American voters who didn't support Donald Trump used to watch him on TV with a kind of cynical amusement as he bragged about fake election results and crowd sizes. Now every time it happens you can't help thinking — wow, is this guy really unhinged? On Wednesday, in the middle of a news conference with the prime minister of Israel, Trump responded to a question about anti-Semitism in America by immediately pointing out he had won 306 Electoral College votes. ("We were not supposed to crack 220.")

And the president was so out to sea he



**GAIL COLLINS**  
Comment

couldn't come up with a consistent cover story for why Flynn left. His press secretary said Trump had requested Flynn's resignation due to a "trust issue." But when Trump showed up in person, he seemed to believe the whole thing was orchestrated by "the fake media" and a different chief executive from another planet.

"It's really a sad thing that he was treated so badly," the president told the press conference. "People are trying to cover up for a terrible loss that the Democrats had under Hillary Clinton."

Being stuck with a loony, unqualified president seemed less threatening when we were under the assumption that he'd be surrounded by at least some people who knew what they were doing. Now, the more of them

we meet, the less secure we feel. Trump has a senior policy adviser, Stephen Miller, who sounds like a really unpopular college sophomore complaining about his grades. He had a national security adviser who said he couldn't remember for sure whether he talked with the Russian ambassador about American sanctions before the inauguration.

Well, at least the National Security Council still has Steve Bannon.

So how do we keep our cool when our world is overheating? Try reminding yourself that there are things in this world that are not Donald Trump's fault:

- A) Beyoncé losing the Grammys.
- B) Collapse of Chipotle stock.
- C) Playboy half brother of North Korean dictator murdered in possible assassination by poison-needle-wielding women.

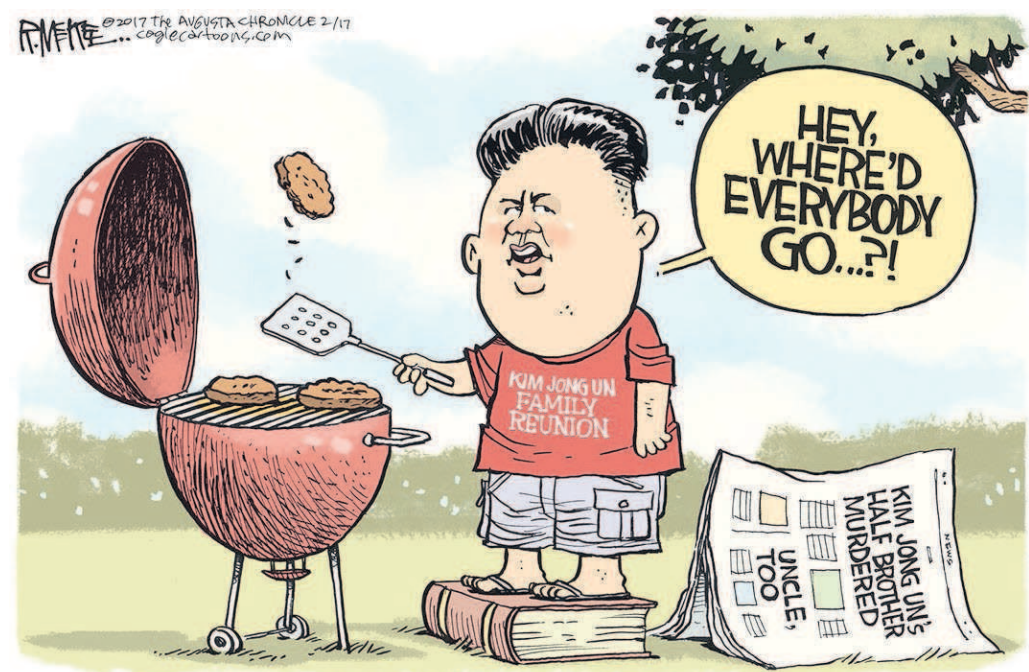
Life could always be worse. You could be related to supreme leader Kim Jong Un. And you can't pin North Koreans on the Trump administration yet. Except for the part where our president dealt with the crisis over their new ballistic missile while dining at Mar-a-Lago in front of throngs of resort guests and their Facebook friends.

It is true that Trump and Kim Jong Un both share an affinity for peculiar haircuts and public shows of adoration. And if the North Korean press were allowed to actually report stuff, the people there would undoubtedly also be holding their heads in their hands and moaning, "Oh God, what next????"

But let's dwell on the positive. At least Trump doesn't have any half brothers. And did you hear the German shepherd won the Westminster dog show? How about that "La La Land"?

No fair mentioning there are only three years and 44 weeks to go.

Gail Collins joined *The New York Times* in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the *Times's* editorial page.



**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.