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KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

MARISSA WILLIAMS
Regional Advertising Director

MARCY ROSENBERG
Circulation Manager

JANNA HEIMGARTNER
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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the volunteers who spent a rainy afternoon this week picking up other people's trash.

It's no secret that Umatilla County has its share of illegal dump sites. The area on Theater Lane in Hermiston had become enough of an eyesore that the Kiwanis Club decided to do something about it. A dozen volunteers took a few hours to toss refuse into a donated dumpster.



There are surely many reasons people have for throwing their soiled mattresses, broken televisions, blown out tires and rolls of carpet into empty lots on the edge of town, but none are good.

We don't suspect a kick in the pants to the inconsiderate litterers would carry much weight. If you don't have the decency to take care of your own garbage, a chiding from the newspaper probably isn't going to change your mind. But if cost is truly the barrier, we'd suggest hauling your trash next week to Hermiston Sanitary Disposal Station on North Highway 395. Most items can be left there for free during the first week in April as part of Spring Cleanup Week, and the city is also sponsoring a recycling event in the Umatilla Electric Cooperative parking lot on April 8.

A tip of the hat to Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley for their support of the Essential Air Service subsidy, which is a major factor in keeping commercial flights at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

As we reported earlier this month, President Donald Trump's budget blueprint calls specifically for the end of the EAS program. The cut would be \$2.3 million, and would likely end regular service to Pendleton.



Some argue that the federal government should not be in the business of propping up untenable services. If the market could bear air service to Pendleton, a business would come along to provide it.

We would argue that is exactly the federal budget's purpose, though

admittedly it must be wise about where it spends the dollars. As John Oliver pointed out on his HBO show "Last Week Tonight," cutting the subsidy would literally turn much of the rural United States into flyover country, Pendleton included.

If the goal is to add economic life to rural communities, cutting this mode of transportation is the wrong step. We hope to see Rep. Greg Walden take a stand for essential air service.

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

Yes for 21st century Fire Station 1

A lot has changed since 1959. We've sent men (and women) into space and even landed someone on the moon. Something called the Internet was invented. We fought one of our longest wars to date in Vietnam. We elected a black president. The only thing that hasn't really changed in all that time is Pendleton's Fire Station 1.

I was recently reminded that after all those years, the roof still leaks. Oh, and we now have women firefighters and paramedics to house. A lot has indeed changed since 1959. It is time we moved our firefighters into the 21st century. It's a little bit embarrassing and ironic that Fire Station 1, built in 1959, does not meet current fire and building codes.

As our Pendleton homes get older and older (mine was built in 1930), I for one would like to know that my fire department has the latest training, the newest equipment, and a quick response time to save my home should it catch fire. Additionally, by upgrading our fire station, we'll be showing people and businesses considering moving here that we are a committed community — for bucket brigades are what originally brought neighbors together — to ensure their investments in their homes were protected. This eventually lead to fire insurance as we know it today.

This bond measure is an investment in Pendleton and our future — it brings us into the 21st century with our firefighting capabilities and creates a beautiful new and efficient building on an empty piece of land at a very reasonable cost.

Join me in voting YES to replace Fire Station 1.

Dave Fiore
Pendleton

School bond gives best bang for buck

Is there wisdom in the Hermiston school bond that would tear down Highland Hills and build a new one?

The bond would replace Rocky Heights Elementary, fix infrastructure problems at Sandstone Middle School, add onto the high school, and replace Highland Hills Elementary. I recognize that Rocky is a relic and needs replacing. Sandstone has major structural and safety concerns, and the high school

is bursting at the seams. But why replace Highland Hills when most of us remember when it was built?

Because tearing it down and building an entirely new building is the financially prudent decision over the long-term. It gives us more bang for our buck. The building is structurally unsound, regular maintenance costs are high, the design is not safe for the children or staff, and the capacity is smaller than every other grade school.

Tearing it down and building a new, higher-capacity school with better, longer-lasting materials is the prudent choice and will save our community far more dollars than continually patching up the current building. Join me in voting yes for the Hermiston school bond.

Sally Anderson Hansell
Hermiston

Promises coming up hollow for Trump

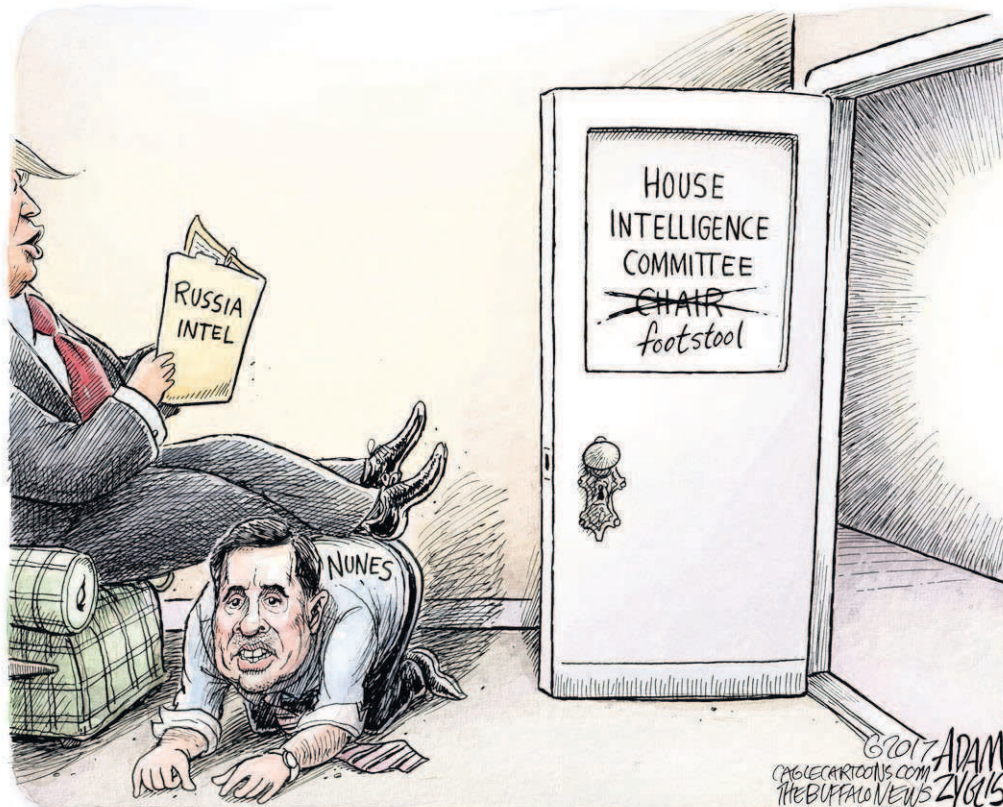
My gosh! I haven't been able to stop laughing long enough to write this letter pertaining to Trump's colossal health care debacle. The Art of the Deal? More like the Art of the Scam. It's taken Trump 70 days to sink to a Gallup poll low of 35 percent approval rating. The next shortest streak? Harry Truman at 564 days.

His only ability? To scrawl on executive orders he's no doubt not even perused and then hold them up to the camera like a proud toddler showing a crayon drawing to his kindergarten teacher. His empty promise to the coal industry, not even knowing that the market demand is what drove the industry down in the first place. His promise to use American steel to build the Keystone pipeline when in fact it will come from overseas. The list of falsehoods and outright lies is almost endless.

Jeb Bush was correct when he stated during the campaign that Trump is a chaos candidate and would be a chaos president. I predict that in six months it will be easier to find Bigfoot than it will be to find someone who will admit to having voted for this monstrous clown. Can we now all see that you can't run a government like a business? Be careful not to sprain an ankle or blow out a knee jumping off of this clown car.

Dave Gracia
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS



Devin Nunes is dangerous

Rep. Devin Nunes obviously fancies himself Jason Bourne. To sneak onto the White House grounds for that rendezvous with an unnamed source last week, he switched cars and ditched aides, vanishing into the night.

But Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., looks at him and sees a different character. Graham said on the "Today" show on Tuesday that Nunes was bumbling his way through something of an "Inspector Clouseau investigation," a reference to the fantastically inept protagonist of the "Pink Panther" comedies.

I salute Graham's movie vocabulary. I quibble with his metaphor. While Clouseau was a benign fool, there's nothing benign about Nunes' foolishness.

As chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Nunes, R-Calif., is a principal sleuth in the paramount inquiry into whether members of the Trump campaign colluded with Russia, and from all appearances, he either doesn't want to know the answer or has determined it already — in President Donald Trump's favor.

Democrats are rightly calling on him to recuse himself. They've been joined in their alarm by Graham and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. As Graham summoned the specter of Clouseau, McCain said on "CBS This Morning" that "something's got to change."

"Otherwise," he continued, "the whole effort in the House of Representatives will lose credibility."

But Nunes was defiant when asked by reporters on Capitol Hill on Tuesday whether he would continue to guide that effort, saying, "Why would I not?"

Oh, many reasons.

Let's start here: The Intelligence Committee isn't supposed to be a partisan arm of the majority party (though it has behaved that way in the past). And any collusion with the White House is a betrayal of its special oversight role.

But Nunes is so deep in the tank for Trump that he needs scuba gear. With his words and deeds, he has labored mightily to redirect attention from Trump's alleged wrongdoing to his claims of persecution, recasting villain as victim. It's Trump's gratitude that he's after, not the truth.

When politicians on both sides of the aisle upbraided Trump for his baseless accusations about the wiretapping of Trump Tower, Nunes swooped in to say, "I don't think we should attack the president for tweeting." But Twitter was hardly the issue. The president's paranoid hallucinations were.

When James Comey, the FBI director, appeared before Nunes' committee to confirm



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

his own agency's investigation into Trump-Russia ties, Nunes changed the subject to the media's acquisition of classified information, going on about leaks, leaks, leaks. He sounded more like a plumber than a politician.

And when Nunes gathered reporters around him two days later, it was to say that he'd seen secret documents suggesting that people around Trump may indeed have been subject to surveillance by our government.

This was Nunes at his most irresponsible. To the casual listener, he was insinuating that Trump's wiretapping charges weren't so very far from the mark. But they were, and Nunes had to acknowledge that as he clarified his remarks. He was talking about the surveillance of Americans who happened to be in contact with foreign players whose communications were the real subjects of concern. He had no evidence — zilch — of any eavesdropping that targeted Trump.

This week we learned that Nunes got that information during that rendezvous, details of which he has not provided to his fellow committee members, just as he failed to share the information itself with Democrats on the committee before he went public with it.

All of this is irregular enough to peg him as a puppet of the Trump administration or a complete boob. Either way, he has surrendered his investigation's integrity — and his own.

A Republican insider who once worked closely with him described him to me as an "overeager goofball" who can't see "the line between ingratiating and stupid." The insider said that Nunes crossed that line with John Boehner, the former House speaker, who gave him the committee chairmanship but grew weary of Nunes' indiscriminate pep and constant bumbling of his cigarettes.

Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, complained to reporters Tuesday afternoon that "if the president puts Russian salad dressing on his salad tonight, somehow that's a Russian connection."

Spicer is right that we're obsessed with Russia, wrong that it's as random as condiments. We're obsessed because every signal from the administration and its allies is that they don't want us looking any further or any closer, and Nunes' Bourne identity is the most glaring signal of all.

If Trump and his associates have nothing to hide, why all the cloak and dagger? And why such clumsiness?

Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995 and has ranged broadly across its pages. He has been both a White House correspondent and the chief restaurant critic.

Bottle bill ready to be tossed out

The Bend Bulletin, March 25

Oregon's famed bottle bill has seen the percentage of containers redeemed decline for several years, and now lawmakers should consider ending it altogether.

That's a better option than what could happen: The deposit on returnable bottles will double April 1, and beginning next year a slew of new bottles will require deposits as well, without a substantial change in consumer behavior.

The deposit increase, to 10 cents per bottle from the current 5 cents, is a sure thing. A 2011 law requires the increase if bottle redemptions fall below 80 percent for at least two years, and the state has been below that mark since 2014. In 2015, for example, only about 64.5 percent of returnable bottles were redeemed. Some other percentage was recycled, however.

Meanwhile, starting January 1, Oregonians will have to pay deposits not only on beer, soda and water bottles, but on everything from orange juice to kombucha and coconut water. A measure in the Oregon Legislature, House Bill 3349, would delay expanding the bottle bill's reach until there are enough redemption centers to handle all the returnables that come in.

Today there are only 21 redemption centers

in the state, with just three in Southern Oregon and four east of the Cascades, according to the Oregon Bottle Drop website.

The price increase may persuade some to be more conscientious about redeeming bottles, but there's no guarantee of that. The process for many Oregonians is both messy and smelly, and putting cans and glass into curbside recycling bins feels like a reasonable alternative. Grocery stores hate having to deal with frequently dirty, smelly returnables, which must be stored until they're picked up by distributors. And, as the redemption center program lags, grocers are stuck with a redemption business they'd rather not have.

With curbside recycling available to the vast majority — about 80 percent — of Oregonians, it makes little sense to keep the bottle bill alive. DEQ officials argue redeemed bottles are easier to deal with: They need not be separated from other recyclables, including paper and some plastics that are routinely part of what's in curbside co-mingled recycle bins. But what's easy for those who send Oregon's returnables on for further use is not necessarily easier for consumers, and in the end, that's what counts. Without consumer buy-in, even a 10-cent deposit will accomplish little. Better to rely on recycling and let the bottle bill go.

LETTERS POLICY

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