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**OUR VIEW**

# Lord willing and the creek don't dry

No one is pleased that the Westland Irrigation District pulled out of the Central Project plan earlier this week.

Dollars that could have enriched members of the district (and local tax coffers) have dried up — for now. The infusion of water that could have greatly increased land and crop values is likely to go elsewhere, if it goes anywhere at all.

And that's what is at stake now for the Umatilla Basin. Decades of work cobbling together votes and funding, data and legal hurdles, is at risk.

J.R. Cook, director of the Northeast Oregon Water Association, said something to the *East Oregonian* editorial board Wednesday that he never thought he'd say: The organization has water and nowhere to go with it.

For years, farmers and developers and political representatives throughout the basin have pleaded: Just let us access some water out of the Columbia River, and we'll make a fantastic return on that investment. We'll grow more and hire more, pay more in property and business taxes, create growth in supportive industries. We'll benefit ourselves and the entire region.

But here we are, water all but in hand, and the window is closing. We have until April 2019 to spend those state dollars.

There is no blaming the bogeyman of environmentalists, nor lamenting that Salem has forgotten our corner of the state, or doesn't

understand the needs of rural agriculture.

Environmentalists are satisfied with the plan. And over a long period of winning over one vote at a time, a majority in the Legislature gave the basin \$11 million to help fund the program. The state stepped up to the plate and they likely won't again, if we don't reward the faith they had in the basin.

The future is in our hands now, and if we fail we have no one to blame but ourselves. A single lawsuit, disputing the

application of water rights in the district, is the project's undoing.

There is risk, of course. Nothing in water or entrepreneurship is guaranteed. It will take a spirit of cooperation, of optimism, of can-do spirit and the desire to see improvement and change. It will take a lot of work. It will take a recognition that relying on the Umatilla River and McKay Reservoir for irrigation will only get worse, and that drawing down our underground water reserves — a finite resource — has the ability to put future growth and sustainability in danger. Milton-Freewater and the Walla Walla basin are learning that lesson the hard way.

That spirit could not be found right now in Westland. We hope for the sake of the region, it can be found in next projects — East and West — that need to start showing progress. If not, we will have squandered a very lucrative opportunity that may not come around again.

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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**

## A tradition of courage, honor and sacrifice

Memorial Day is a holiday rooted in tradition. Every year, thousands of Oregonians participate in ceremonies, parades and other solemn events.

But long before the first Memorial Day processions wound their way down city streets, long before dignitaries across the country took to podiums to honor service and sacrifice, the holiday started, informally, with a much simpler tradition: the laying of flowers upon the grave of a fallen service member.

It was in the wake of the American Civil War that communities began the practice of decorating soldiers' graves with flowers. This military family and community tradition was later formalized as a national day of honor in Decoration Day, and what we now call Memorial Day.

In 1866, no family or community was untouched by the Civil War. America's bloodiest conflict resulted in over 1 million casualties and claimed over 620,000 lives. The impacts of the war were intensely and personally felt across the nation.

Today, over 320,000 veterans call Oregon home. We are a strong and diverse community, spanning four generations across five major wars. With every veteran counted, we must also recognize the sacrifice of their spouses and families, who served on the home front while their loved ones were in uniform.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that today's battles are fought by less than 1 percent of our population. The weight of the most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan has been borne by the few. Most of



**CAMERON SMITH**  
Comment

our citizens today have not been directly impacted by war. The same cannot be said for our Gold Star families, who have lost a loved one in service to our nation.

We can never forget the true cost of war — a cost far beyond dollars and cents. A hundred years ago, in World War I, we lost over 115,000 dedicated service members — almost 1,000 of whom were from Oregon. Those who survived the battlefields in

Europe did not come home to a robust system of veterans' health care and benefits. But they banded together in service organizations and fought to advocate for the nationwide network of support we have today.

Across the ages, from the beaches of Normandy and the Pacific islands to the mountains and jungles in Asia, countless Americans have stood up to serve and have laid down their lives. At the most basic level, they fought to protect the one on their right and the one on their left, but ultimately their fight protects us all and preserves the values we hold dear.

This Memorial Day, as we kick off the start of summer and turn to enjoy Oregon's incredible parks, beaches, rivers and mountains, we must encourage all citizens to pause and honor our fallen and Gold Star families. We stand on the shoulders of all those who came before us and will never forget our veterans' service, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thank you for your support of Oregon's military, veterans and their families.

*Cameron Smith served three tours in Iraq as a Marine and is director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.*

**OTHER VIEWS**



THE PEN IS MIGHTY GRATEFUL TO THE SWORD

## The way they kill now

ARRAS, France — In the springtime of 100 years ago, nations that shared a Christian heritage slaughtered one another over a few miles of mud. In just one battle, the great powers of Europe fought for more than a month outside this magnificently reconstructed medieval city, and suffered 280,000 casualties.

At the same time, French infantrymen began to mutiny after 200,000 of their young men fell — dead, wounded or missing — in another senseless grind of human flesh to the south.

All of that — the poisonous gas, the mowing down of teenage boys in ashen fields, the legless legions of the Lost Generation — is behind us. In its place, a century later, are cowards who kill children in the name of religious perversion.

Manchester, where the 22 died Monday and more than 60 people were injured in the worst terrorist attack on British soil in more than a decade, would seem small by comparison. Some perspective is in order.

But every war is awful in its own way. Manchester was badly bombed during World War II. Those planes were under the command of Adolf Hitler, a corporal in France during World War I, who later reached deeper into the bowels of hell searching for more sophisticated forms of savagery.

The homemade bomb that killed those kids at a concert a few days ago — one victim was an 8-year-old — packed a disproportionate amount of firepower. Old-fashioned war, as the saying goes, is diplomacy by other means. There's a certain warped rationality to it.

What happened in Manchester is unexplainable. The Islamic State called the killer — identified as 22-year-old Salman Abedi, a British-born citizen of Libyan descent — a soldier. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Abedi was a psychopath — dispossessed in a tired part of England, perhaps, and warped by a toxic strain of Islam, but a psychopath nonetheless. The question of the moment is: Are there enough people like him to destabilize Europe? World War I, after all, started with the lone assassination of an obscure Balkan figure.

The child killers of modern Europe have no armies, no tanks or cannons at their disposal. They are stateless murderers plotting from failed-state ghettos like Libya. Their terror comes

from the element of surprise, from turning a pop concert, a national holiday, a Christmas market, into its own peculiar Western Front. They bring an element of lethal menace to everyday life.

When you see the prosthetics on display at the Museum of the Great War in the Somme Valley town of Peronne — fake noses and eyes for faces scraped of their features by artillery — when you try to imagine 630,000 war widows in France in 1919, you can't help but think that we have made progress of a sort.

After all, the Great War, as it was initially called, sucked up lives at rate of almost 50,000 a day at one point. The Germans committed atrocities against civilians in Belgium and reduced the Cathedral of Arras to rubble. The soil of Northern France, pockmarked with war craters, is all one big burial ground for lost souls — the graveyards you see, 410 military cemeteries, and the graveyards you don't see.

When the war ended, after 17 million deaths worldwide, a headline in Britain's Daily Mirror proclaimed: "Democracy Triumphs Over the Last of the Autocrats."

If only. Another hundred-year anniversary now marks the Russian Revolution — the collapse of the czar, power seized by the Bolsheviks, followed by decades of crimes against humanity committed by heartless and autocratic followers of Karl Marx.

The autocrats of modern terror seethe and plot in the shadows, and their control is limited to a handful of fellow child killers. Their design, such as it is, is to sweep away basic democratic values and put Europe in lockdown. Britain just raised its threat alert to the highest level, and the new French president, Emmanuel Macron, is seeking an extension of emergency powers for three more months.

For something stirring to say, President Trump could look to his own passport, and the words of John F. Kennedy embossed inside: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to ensure the survival and the success of liberty."

And what exactly did Pope Francis tell him? Neither side is leaking. Francis is sly, though. He has enough sense of history to know that the wars of today could easily escalate into the wars of yesterday.



**TIMOTHY EGAN**  
Comment

**YOUR VIEWS**

### 'Death Panel' must be put down

The GOP failed to repeal Obamacare, and with that, left in place one of its most destructive pieces. The Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), sometimes called the "Death Panel," is a provision of Obamacare disliked by Republicans and Democrats alike. It was recently triggered to go into effect, but it is not too late to change that.

The IPAB is a board of 15 individuals tasked with the politically difficult goal of reducing Medicare costs. The board frees politicians from accountability for tough decisions, but it does it by making no one accountable.

Membership on the board is limited to "experts," not physicians or those associated with a hospital.

The IPABs recommendations are submitted to Congress to pass into law, but if Congress does not act on the recommended changes, they are automatically implemented by the board. This means 15 unelected technocrats are creating law without any accountability, "laws" that were not enacted by Congress in any way or form.

Board members can be appointed, but not fired, by the President. To who or what the board is accountable is still unknown. The IPAB is so "independent" they are answerable to no one.

Increasing health care costs have triggered the creation of the IPAB, and a resolution to disable it needed to be passed by Congress by February 1, 2017. America now has a board with almost infinite powers in an area where people's lives are at stake.

Never has America seen such flagrant disregard for the rule of law and the procedures by which the people are governed and represented. We vote for our elected officials to create and pass laws on our behalf. That's the definition of a republic. We do not expect, nor do we want, the technocrats in

Washington to create policies and laws for us to live by. Our seniors deserve Medicare as promised by their elected officials. Our members of Congress often run on planks protecting Medicare but the 15 individuals on the IPAB do not promise such protection and are not accountable for their decisions.

Now is the time for leadership. I urge Rep. Greg Walden to go a step further beyond support, and lead his colleagues by co-sponsoring House legislation (HR 849) to repeal IPAB and regain congressional control over Medicare policy.

**Jeff Reynolds**  
Portland

### How will new trail affect traffic?

There have been several articles regarding new projects in Hermiston. Improving turn lanes for trucks, the new senior center project, etc. Today it is stated in the *East Oregonian* that the Highland Trail/bike lane will probably begin in early 2018.

No one has explained how this will affect the 11th Street and Highland church on the corner with beautiful lawn, sidewalk and shrubs and an entrance/exit onto Highland, or the two exits/entrances to the adjoining apartment or to 13th Place and 13th Street. Someone on this committee should spend a day on Westland Avenue and see the "395" traffic 24/7 who have getting through the lights just fine and the use of the apartment accesses for 42 apartments.

All we need all the way on the north side of Westland to the river is foot traffic. Please explain how this will be done for pedestrians and bikes. Also, Highland Avenue is used for produce trucks and to move farm machinery to fields plus other various truck traffic with no problems.

**Jacqueline Hood**  
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. 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.