

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

**A kick in the pants to U.S. Army's Base Realignment and Closure Division, which has once again failed to meet its deadline for handing over land that was formerly home to the Umatilla Chemical Depot.**

This latest postponement is six months — from December 2017 to May 2018 — but we've little faith that the Army bureaucracy will meet the latest goal it set for itself either. Their history speaks for itself: continuous missed deadlines on the property, one after the other, since 2013.

This government inaction is having negative effects on the Eastern Oregon economy. The land in question is prime industrial real estate, and over the last four years major investments have been turned away because of the slow-footed handover process. Instead of being in government hands and off the tax rolls, these 17,000 acres could be bringing significant revenue to Umatilla and Morrow counties, the state of Oregon and the federal government.

But we've learned not to hold our breath. Five years of delays have taught us that. That the Army can give no reason for the constant delays is just added insult — an icing of contempt on a cake of ineptitude.

**A tip of the hat to Elaine and Kevin Anderson, Pendleton residents who were attending the country concert in Las Vegas last weekend when tragedy struck.**



help others. Elaine also helped others get to safety.

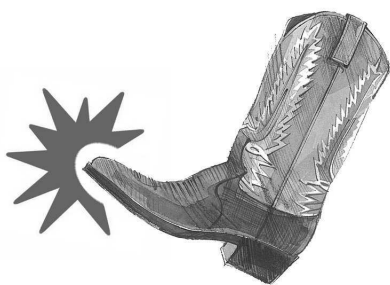
The couple is a reminder that when in the worst moments, some people are at their best. We appreciate and tip our hat to those who are.

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.

We all know the story by now, and the grisly aftermath of what happened: 59 people died in the worst mass shooting in modern American history and hundreds more were injured.

But people like the Andersons saved lives, and there are countless stories of others like them who behaved with heroism.

Kevin Anderson has medical training and has been a first responder for more than 30 years. He made trip after trip into the scene, putting his own life at risk to



## OTHER VIEWS

### Enforce new distracted driving law

By Corvallis Gazette-Times

Nationally, the number of fatal car wrecks is on the rise, and that trend also is true in Oregon. No one knows for sure the reasons for the increase, but everyone has a pretty good guess: It's because we're distracted as never before when we buckle ourselves into the driver's seat.

So the timing seems just right for Oregon's new distracted-driving law, which went into effect on Sunday.

Under the new law, it's illegal to hold phones or other electronic devices while driving. That means no texting and no phone calls unless your vehicle has a hands-free system in place.

The new law, House Bill 2597, also closes loopholes in the current law by addressing all types of electronic devices, not just cellular phones.

Rep. Andy Olson of Albany was the chief sponsor of the legislation. Olson, a former Oregon State Police officer, knows firsthand about the damage caused by distracted drivers — damage that simply doesn't have to happen if drivers stay focused on their first responsibility.

"Nationally, one in four vehicle accidents involve distracted driving," Olson said last week in a news story about the new law. "It's a major concern."

"The law doesn't say you can't use them, you just can't have them in your hand," Olson said. "You can still swipe something on or off. We just don't want you holding the device. That's the key."

So, for example, you can still use your smartphone as a navigation device, but be sure to type in the address before you start your vehicle. While you're on the road, it's strictly hands-off.

It has been illegal to text or use a cellphone without a hands-free device while driving in Oregon since 2009. (Drivers under the age of 18 cannot use any cellular device while driving, even if it is hands-free.) The new law adds some teeth to all that.

Which is why area law-enforcement

officers say they aren't interested in giving drivers the benefit of a grace period in enforcing the law: They're ready to write tickets when they catch that tell-tale glow emanating from inside your vehicle.

Linn County Sheriff Bruce Riley likely was speaking for many mid-valley law officers when he said: "We are done warning folks. Done educating folks about this. We are going to enforce this law."

First-time offenders are looking at a fine of \$160. Why, that might cover a month or two of data charges on your smartphone, and that's the point: The fine is designed to catch your attention and to leave a bit of a mark on your pocketbook.

A third offense committed within a 10-year span could end up costing you \$2,500 and could include up to six months in jail.

The idea is to make people think twice about driving with one eye on the road and one eye on their smartphones. That driving technique is a recipe for disaster. It's best just to set the device aside while you're driving; in fact, some phones now have "do not disturb while driving" features that drivers may want to consider activating.

Just a second or two of inattentive driving can be enough to trigger a wreck: Lt. Brad Liles of the Albany Police Department said distracted driving is a common culprit in rear-end accidents. "It's especially noticeable at stoplights, when they don't see brake lights for a second or two," he said.

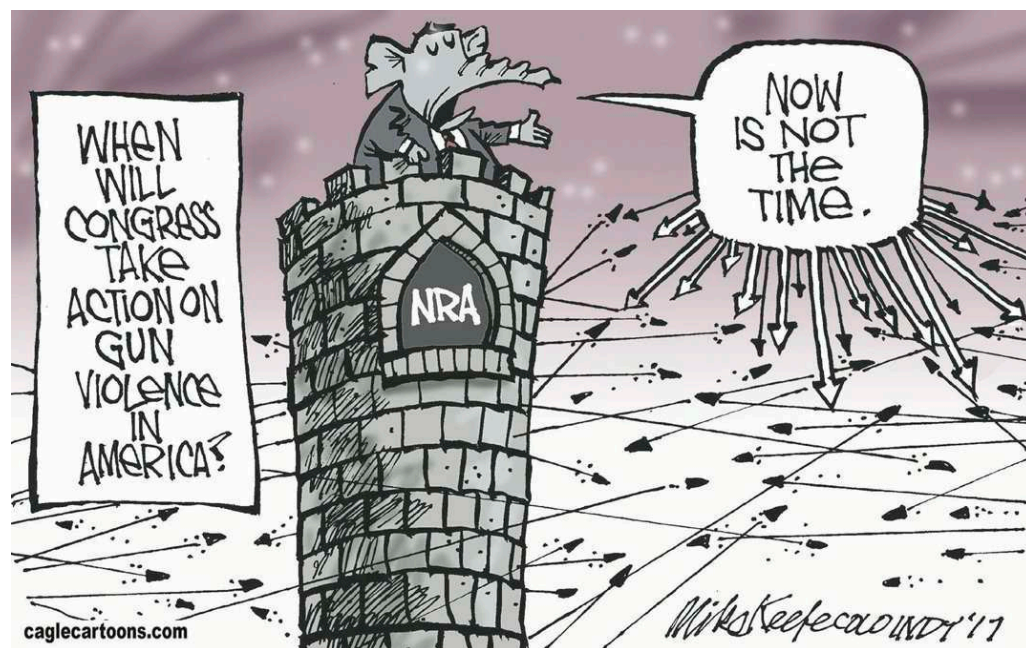
It's not as if we don't have enough distractions while driving even without our devices: Just last week, for example, news stories reported about new electronic billboards that will be able to send personalized messages as vehicles approach them. We are not convinced that this constitutes a major advance for civilization.

But may we suggest a message for those new billboards? How about this: "Eyes on the road, partner. Hands on the wheel."

## 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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

## OTHER VIEWS



### Why gun control loses, and why Las Vegas might change that

After mass shootings like the nightmare in Las Vegas, there are always complaints that we don't talk enough about gun control in America, that we need to actually have the debate about guns and mass murder that the National Rifle Association and the Republicans supposedly keep shutting down.

I don't think this is right. We do keep having a debate over guns in the United States; it's just that the side that's convinced that new regulations will prevent another Newtown or Orlando or Las Vegas keeps on losing the argument.

Twenty years ago, you could argue that gun rights was a strictly minority cause that thrived because of its partisans' intensity and its lobby's clout and money. But that's no longer true. Despite the best efforts of Barack Obama, Democratic politicians and a raft of activists, celebrities and talk-show hosts, despite a dramatic leftward shift on many other social issues and despite wall-to-wall media coverage of mass shootings, gun control is substantially less popular than it was in the 1990s — and gun rights is one of the few issues where the Republican Party is actually in touch with what many Americans seem to want.

Why is gun control losing? One answer is structural. Gun ownership is a form of expressive individualism no less than the liberties beloved in blue America, and it makes sense that a culture that rejects erotic limits would reject limits on self-defense as well. Especially since the appeal of gun ownership is also linked to individualism's dark side — to distrust of your neighbor and your government, to the decay of communities and families, to a sense of being unprotected and on your own.

But the gun control cause also has a more specific political problem. Anti-gun activists seize on the most horrifying acts of killing, understandably, and use them as calls to legislative action. But then the regulatory measures they propose, even when they poll well, often lack any direct connection to the massacres themselves.

If you go back through the list of recent mass atrocities, for instance, you don't see many killers buying guns through the supposed "gun show loophole" or without a background check. Instead you see examples of why, in a well-armed country, legal barriers to gun ownership don't necessarily prevent lunatics and fanatics from getting them: Some of the killers passed background checks with flying colors, some passed them because of human and bureaucratic errors, and others simply used someone else to acquire their weaponry, circumventing legal and regulatory obstacles entirely.

The diversity of weapons used in the massacres, too, has made it hard to claim that reviving the Clinton-era assault weapons ban (whose likely effect on murder rates was nil) would make deadly spree much rarer. James Holmes and Adam Lanza used high-powered rifles, but Nidal Hasan, Jiverly Wong and Dylann Roof were all extremely deadly just with handguns. Aaron Alexis was prevented



ROSS DOUTHAT  
Comment

from buying an assault rifle; he killed a dozen people at D.C.'s Navy Yard with a shotgun. In a free society, madmen and monsters find a way to kill — as the killer in Vegas, a man of means and no significant criminal history, almost certainly would have even with tighter gun regulations and stiffer background checks.

But there is one way in which the latest massacre could be different. If, as it seems right now, there was a link between the sheer scale of the Las Vegas killer's spree and his apparent use of a "bump stock" that lets a semi-automatic weapon fire at the rate of a machine gun, then gun-control advocates could make a more-direct-than-usual case for making such stocks illegal in response.

**We do keep having a debate over guns in the United States; it's just that one side keeps losing the argument.**

Right now tight regulations on fully automatic weapons are a settled part of our gun laws, and as restrictions go they seem relatively effective; no recent mass killer has acquired or used a machine gun. A new law banning "bump stocks" could still be flouted, of course, but it seems like a plausible extension of the principle that our machine-gun laws already enshrine. If you

can't manufacture automatic weaponry and you can buy only an old automatic under strict conditions, you shouldn't be able to make a nonautomatic weapon fire like a machine gun by simply adding on a legal part.

Would this be a meaningless gesture, given that no recent mass killing before this one has involved automatic fire? Not necessarily: Remember that mass killings are a form of social contagion, whose perpetrators copy their predecessors and seek to construct what Ari Schulman, the editor of *The New Atlantis*, has described as "a crafted public spectacle, a theater of violence in which we are the unwitting yet compliant audience."

This reality has led Schulman to urge media organizations to reduce their coverage of the killers' personalities, plans and alleged grievances. But it also suggests that when a mass murderer pioneers a new form of satanic performance art, like the hail of automatic-seeming fire that fell on concertgoers in Las Vegas, others will seek to imitate his methods. So moving pre-emptively to block a specific means of imitation isn't necessarily fruitless; it might be an entirely reasonable precaution against some dark ambition that's just now taking shape.

Seeking a modest precaution after such a monstrous bloodletting will no doubt strike gun control advocates as a hopelessly insufficient goal. But a cause that has been losing ground for 20 years can't be picky in the victories that it seeks.

Las Vegas seems to offer a clear case for a particular kind of gun regulation. I'm provisionally convinced. So let's study the facts, have the argument and see how it turns out.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at the *Atlantic* and a blogger for *theatlantic.com*.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Removing Confederate flags a crusade on Pendleton history

Encouraged by their successful campaign banning the sale of the "stars and bars" on city property, local vigilantes vow to continue their crusade to cleanse the city's conscience of past misdeeds. They hope to convince city officials to stand aside as the Underground Tours program is dismantled, filling the basements with concrete, erasing any sign of the historic oppression of the local Chinese population. An additional program could remove those upper floors of buildings formerly used as brothels as well as that despicable Stella Darby statue that glorifies the degradation of women forced into a life of prostitution.

Once the transformation of the downtown is complete, it's off to the library to burn those books, erasing any mention of the sordid "Pendleton" name from the history of the city, rodeo, wool products and whiskey. It seems our city was named after a pro-slavery senator from Ohio. Of course Lee Street will have to be renamed.

Some, ashamed of the city's past, will then celebrate the beginning of a new era, a clean slate, with a march down Main Street, and then begin the process of abolishing the

First Amendment. You might know it as the one that guarantees freedom of speech for everyone, even people you don't like or agree with.

What's next, the Stars and Stripes? How does the story end? That's the beauty of living in the USA — you can write your own.

Now for the real news. Yup, it's downtown parking. After studies and surveys too numerous to count, the parking problems are apparently only perceived — perceived by those pesky customers, you know the type, those Walmart, Safeway and Melanie Square shoppers.

The mayor, in fact, has "a hard time seeing a sense of urgency or outrage on the part of downtown residents or merchants." It looks like city hall definitely has a finger on the parking issue, or do they? Apparently that Pendleton Development Commission administrator has a trick or two up his sleeve. He's contacted a consultant that's worked on parking studies for Portland and Bend, two cities that mirror ours, to develop a "brand" for our parking program. I've heard "Lot" and "Place" are the two top favorites with "No" a close third.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton