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**OUR VIEW**



**A salute to soldiers**

Happy Veterans Day to everyone who spent time in this nation's armed forces — who served our country both at home and abroad.

Even non-veterans get to celebrate a happy holiday weekend, thanks in no small part to the millions of Americans who fought for our freedom and our safety. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

Last year we asked readers to take time to listen to veterans, to hear their stories and seek their input. As we have moved to an all-volunteer service, active military personnel have become a less visible part of our society and their sacrifice no longer equally touches a cross-section of American households. That's dangerous — some demographics and families bear the brunt of the burden while others remain completely unaffected. That breeds division, and not everyone having equal skin in the game.

Yet despite a lower profile, American active duty personnel remain in dangerous outposts around the world. The Afghanistan War is now our nation's longest, and additional troops are planned for deployment there. Service members remain in places like Iraq and South Korea, where danger lurks close by, as well as in lesser-known locales like Niger where four soldiers were killed just last month.

We offer a full pullout in the holiday paper with a cross-section of local veteran stories. It includes a group conversation with four area men who served in four different

wars in four different eras. And go online to find video and audio excerpts of one-on-one interviews as well.

It's useful to read those stories and sit in on those conversations, especially in this hyper-partisan, politicized world. The military is one of the few remaining institutions that Americans of all political stripes

have faith in and support. And that seems critical during a moment when political rivals can't even agree on the same facts or the same media sources, even something as inane as the Americanism of the NFL.

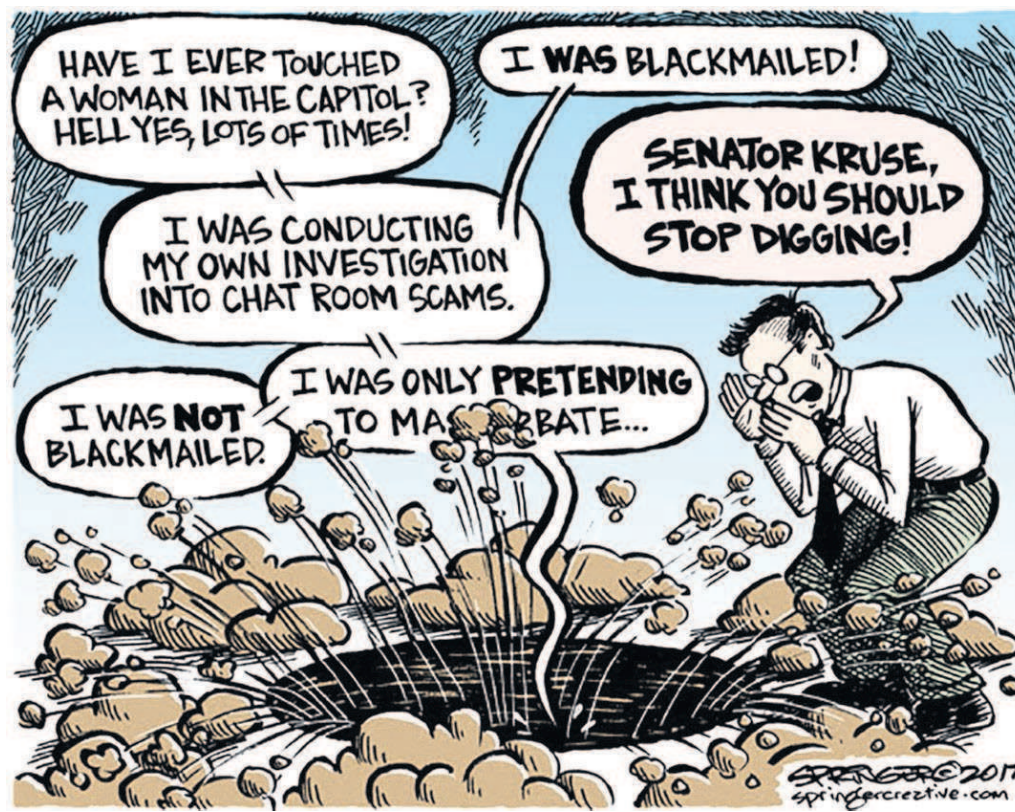
It goes without saying that veterans themselves should be free to give their opinion on everything, especially on military and political matters. Their word carries weight — they should run for office and influence policy. Remember, the First Amendment applies to all of us equally.

But this country has been blessed since its founding with an apolitical military, removed from the winds of Washington, D.C., defended from the constant sniping of political rivals. It must continue that way, with distance — but also with oversight — from a democratic system.

As we celebrate our 99th Veterans Day, we should find ways to appreciate the sacrifice of all veterans of all political stripes, who put their personal feelings second to the good of the country as a whole. Perhaps it will inspire us to do the same in our daily lives and in our communities.

**American active duty personnel remain in dangerous outposts around the world.**

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**

**How to reduce shootings**

It has happened yet again: Inevitably, predictably, fatefully, another mass shooting. On Sunday, a gunman shot dead 26 people in a Texas church. These episodes are peculiarly American tragedies, and what's particularly heartbreaking is that they aren't shocking. People all over the world become furious and try to harm others, but only in the United States do we suffer such mass shootings so regularly; only in the United States do we lose one person every 15 minutes to gun violence. So let's not just mourn the dead; let's not just lower flags and make somber speeches. Let's act. In particular, I suggest trying a new approach to reducing gun violence — a public health strategy.

**America has more guns than any other country**

The first step is to understand the scale of the challenge America faces: The United States has more than 300 million guns — roughly one for every citizen — and stands out as well for its gun death rates. At the other extreme, Japan has less than one gun per 100 people, and typically has fewer than 10 gun deaths a year in the entire country.

**The liberal approach is ineffective. Use a public health approach instead**

Frankly, liberal opposition to guns has often been ineffective, and sometimes counterproductive. The 10-year ban on assault weapons accomplished little, partly because definitions were about cosmetic features like bayonet mounts (and partly because even before the ban, such guns were used in only 2 percent of crimes). The left sometimes focuses on "gun control," which scares off gun owners and leads to more gun sales. A better framing is "gun safety" or "reducing gun violence."



**NICHOLAS KRISTOF**  
Comment

Gun enthusiasts often protest: Cars kill about as many people as guns, and we don't ban them! No, but automobiles are a model for the public health approach I'm suggesting. We don't ban cars, but we work hard to regulate them — and limit access to them — so as to reduce the death toll they cause. This has reduced the death rate per 100 million miles driven by 95 percent since 1921. What would a public health approach look like for guns if it were modeled after cars?

**Only in the United States do we suffer such mass shootings so regularly.**

**There is a shocking lack of research on guns**

One challenge is that for a public health approach, we need careful evidence of what works to reduce deaths, at what cost. Yet there's simply a scandalous lack of research on gun violence, largely because the National Rifle Association is extremely hostile to such

research and Congress rolls over.

**A way forward: On some issues, majorities agree**

It may sometimes seem hopeless to make progress on gun violence, especially with the NRA holding Congress hostage. But I'm more optimistic.

Look, we all agree on some kinds of curbs on guns. Nobody believes that people should be able to have an anti-aircraft gun in the backyard. So the question isn't whether we will restrict firearms, but where to draw the line and precisely which ones to restrict.

*Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, writes op-ed columns that appear twice a week. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.*

**YOUR VIEWS**

**In wolf killing, trust account from hunter in the field**

I read in your newspaper the opinion of a retired biologist of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife doubting the account of the hunter who shot and killed a female wolf while hunting elk in the Starkey Unit.

Evidently, the wolf was shot through the chest as stated in the article. This indicates to me that the wolf was not coming directly at the hunter but was at a perpendicular angle at the moment of the shot. I don't believe that a high-powered round such as those used for elk hunting would deflect a bit going through a body of wolf so that one could come to the same conclusion of the retired biologist.

However, the hunter states that the wolf was coming directly at him at a measured distance of 81 feet — it is not stated how fast the wolf was moving but it couldn't be but a matter of a few seconds before the wolf was upon him if it continued on its path. Under the same circumstances, I would do exactly as he did and shoot. Yelling, whistling or offering candy to dangerous wild animals that may or may not be rabid would be the very last thought that would occur to me.

So how do we re-counsel the hunter's version (by the way, he was the only person there) and the fact of the bullet wound that the wolf was presenting a side view to the hunter when he fired?

Most rifle scopes are of a variable power of magnification — 3 to 9 power is common. The hunter states that all he could see was a furry mass through his rifle scope when he fired. If the rifle scope was set on a higher magnification level that is very plausible.

I surmise that the wolf tried to avoid the hunter and turned 90 degrees at the moment of the shot. This allows the hunter's statement of the incident and the facts of the matter to jibe. May or may not be true but it is better to realize there may be different versions of the same incident.

**Bill Timmermann**  
Helix

**Support for Bellinger to lead Westland Irrigation District**

I am writing to urge patrons of Westland Irrigation District to vote to re-elect Jack Bellinger to the board of directors. Jack embodies attributes that district patrons value.

**Robert Emert**  
Echo

Jack is a second generation Umatilla County farmer and has an informed understanding of the region. As a farmer and business owner raising his own family in the area, he understands the importance of water to sustain the local economy. As a result of his extensive background as an irrigator and director for Westland, his knowledge of water and water law is excellent. He has been a supporter of efforts to secure a long-term water plan for community regeneration for years. Most recently, he supported the Central Project, which would have made valuable Columbia River water available to Westland patrons.

**Michael Atkinson**  
Hermiston

In the face of ongoing litigation, it has never been more important to elect a representative who has a solid knowledge of how Westland is managed and run. At a time when misunderstandings run rampant and there is lack of well-vetted, accurate information being perpetuated by a minority of patrons, it is critical that we elect an individual who has a well-documented track record of making informed and beneficial decisions for Westland.

Jack Bellinger will amplify the truth and insure a continuity for Westland to move forward.

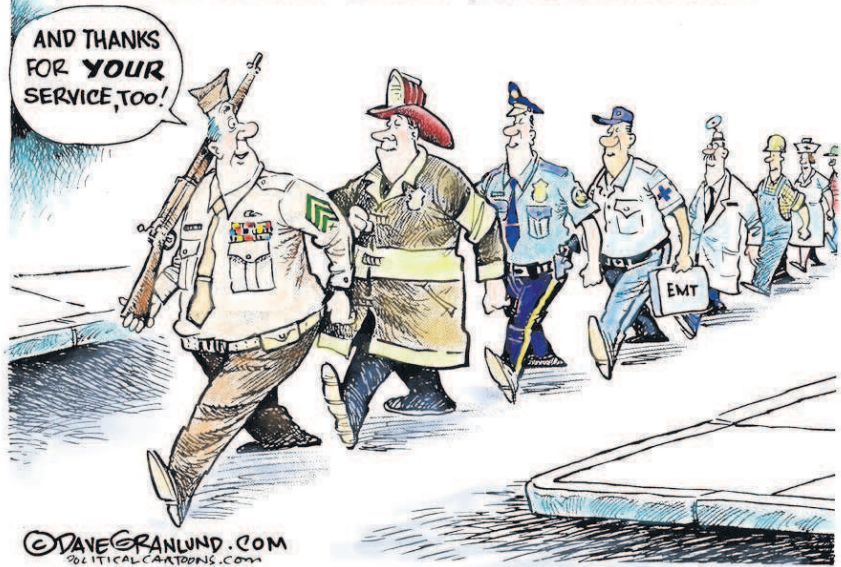
**Dan McCarty**  
Echo

Due to expensive and misguided litigation against the district, Westland needs an experienced, knowledgeable, and honest leader now more than ever.

When the Umatilla Basin Water Commission was testing recharge efforts, Jack Bellinger voluntarily allowed monitoring wells to be drilled on his property. He understood the importance of recharge as a possible supplement to Westland's water supply.

Westland is the only Umatilla Project irrigation district in the Umatilla Basin that does not have access to Columbia River water (Hermiston, Stanfield, and West Extension Irrigation Districts all have Columbia River exchanges in place). Jack has demonstrated interest in securing Westland's future, and has a record of action to back it up.

**VETERANS DAY PARADE...**



**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.