

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

**A tip of the hat to the good work at Pendleton Animal Welfare Service, which was inundated this week with hoarded, and thereby neglected, dogs from a Hermiston-area home.**

While most people have a certain affinity for pets, that love can sometimes end at their own animals. Taking care of high-need animals, especially some who may have been neglected or abused, is a daunting task that requires not only a special interest but a lot of time and energy.

With so much human suffering in our community and worldwide, it can be difficult to fit in care and compassion for our brothers and sisters throughout the animal kingdom.

If the decision comes down to where to give a \$100 donation, it can be hard to justify dropping the cash in the jar for animals instead of one for needy humans.

We'd suggest that it's not an either-or test. Take \$90, or even \$95, of that donation and put it toward a cause that helps people, and save a little bit for PAWS or another place like it to maintain a space that provides a vital service for this area.

You can make direct donations of cash or animal care items, give to the thrift shop, sign up for Amazon Smile, even drop off bottles and cans. And if you're considering bringing a new pet into your home this Christmas, check with PAWS or another shelter in the region to see if they have one that's right for your family.



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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.

**A tip of the hat to Good Shepherd Medical Center for cutting the ribbon this week on a new \$100 million Women's Center in Hermiston.**

Bringing specialized health care to Eastern Oregon is a worthy goal, and women's health is a great place to invest.

One of the ways this center will help is offering treatment and care during high-risk pregnancies, while adding more midwives and nurse practitioners. Hermiston is a young community and growing, making the

need for prenatal care obvious. And being able to draw high-level physicians is key to providing that service.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Fine for Kitzhaber ethics violations needs to sting

The Oregonian/OregonLive

Over the past three years as Oregonians witnessed the spectacular fall of former Gov. John Kitzhaber, it was hard at times to identify moments of clarity in a vast sea of gray.

Last week brought one of those moments. After numerous, forceful denials that he'd done anything wrong, Kitzhaber admitted publicly that he broke state ethics laws when he failed to fully report the entities that paid his fiancée around \$200,000 for private consulting work over a three-year period while he was governor.

In addressing the four violations of state ethics laws, Kitzhaber blamed most of the mistakes on his former general counsel and agreed to pay a proposed \$1,000 fine.

Thankfully, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission took one of its strongest stances to date, voting 7-1 to reject the proposed settlement and its puny, pathetic fine. Members, including the relatively new vice chair, Alison Kean, asked important and pointed questions that led to a rich debate on the proposed settlement. And ultimately, led to the surprising vote.

In doing so, commission members delivered on their job to safeguard the trust that the public has in its leaders.

Oregonians must be able to rely on the government watchdog to detect these abuses, consider them in context and take appropriate measures to be sure they're not repeated. A \$1,000 fine - agreed upon by agency staff, Kitzhaber and his attorney -- would have sent the wrong message to both current and future office holders and undermined the government watchdog's credibility and mission.

We must not forget this was Oregon's highest ranking public official who violated four ethics laws, transgressions that could result in a maximum fine of \$20,000.

In a Nov. 15 Facebook post, published two days before the commission voted on the settlement, Kitzhaber wrote breaking the ethics law was "unintentional." He didn't perceive a conflict of interest in fiancée Sylvia Hayes' work, he wrote, explaining he

thought that she was simply trying to "educate people" rather than "to shape or influence state policy."

But it was his job to know. That's especially true considering Kitzhaber had opened his office to Hayes and named her an adviser, a role covering the very political issues on which her private consulting business focused.

Commission members will return to this issue at their next meeting in January. As they prepare, the commission's nine members should recall how Kitzhaber claimed ignorance over these past problems. He seems to have forgotten that some of his highest-ranking aides voiced concerns at various points about Hayes' involvement in policy work. At one point, his chief of staff pointedly argued that Hayes shouldn't work on state policies addressing issues for which she was paid in her consulting work.

At the time, Kitzhaber simply disagreed.

The commission should also recall that while still serving as governor, Kitzhaber initially attempted to evade their scrutiny. Kitzhaber's emails, which were leaked by a state employee, showed that he and his attorney intended to argue Hayes wasn't a public official and therefore didn't need to follow the rules that forbid her from personally benefiting from her public work. The courts have since established that Hayes was a public official.

Kitzhaber and his attorney also planned to argue that she wasn't a member of his household, meaning he had no obligation to report her income on his ethics forms. Yet Kitzhaber had listed her for years on those very forms as a member of his household.

In the December 2014 email, Kitzhaber wrote about the ethics commission: "We will convey that we are willing to take this all the way and have a strong case for prevailing."

But the end game is not actually to have the complaints dismissed but rather to negotiate a stipulated settlement agreement in which we might acknowledge some minor mistakes we may have made and have the matter resolved at the March meeting. Do I have that right?"

Thankfully for Oregonians, the current commission made sure he did not.



## OTHER VIEWS

# We're all part of Trump's show

If you want to understand the ways in which Donald Trump's presidency is systematically corrupting the American mind, I have a book recommendation for you. It's about Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The book is Peter Pomerantsev's "Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible." It was published in 2014, and it brilliantly tells the story of the (Soviet-born) British author's sojourn as a producer for Russian TV. As the title suggests, at its heart it's the tale of the substitution of reality with "reality," of factual truth with interpretive possibility.

That's also the central task of Donald Trump's presidency.

We were reminded of this again this week, on news that Trump is backing away from his public admission last year that he said what he said on the infamous Access Hollywood tape. Then there was his appalling insinuation Wednesday that MSNBC host Joe Scarborough might have killed an office intern in 2001. And his hallucinatory tweet last week in which he claimed to turn down an approach from Time magazine to make him Person of the Year for the second time in a row.

Before that it was his multiple attacks against his attorney general. Or his tweeting of a video pastiche in which he physically assaults CNN. Or his voter fraud claims. Or the ones about the size of his inaugural crowds.

All this has given rise to the suggestion that Trump is mentally unwell. That's the charitable interpretation. But the president also gives signs that he is perfectly well, can communicate relatively coherently when he wants to do so, and knows exactly what he is tweeting (and subtweeting), and to what effect.

This is where Pomerantsev is so instructive. In one of his book's early scenes, he relates a professional homily from a man he identifies as prominent Russian TV presenter. "We all know there will be no real politics" in Putin's Russia, the man says at a staff conference.

"But we still have to give our viewers the sense something is happening. They need to be kept entertained. So what should we play with? Shall we attack the oligarchs? Who's the enemy this week? Politics has got to feel like ... like a movie!"

This is why there's a Colosseum in Rome, and why public spectacle, theater, cinema, TV and now the internet have always been handmaids of dictators. In Russia, it's all about casting the president as a bare-chested action hero, pumping out anti-Western conspiracy theories and serving up remakes of Western sitcoms and reality shows.

"The new Kremlin," Pomerantsev notes,



**BRET STEPHENS**  
Comment

"won't make the same mistake the old Soviet Union did: It will never let TV become dull." Authoritarian dominion requires effective methods of mass distraction.

Trump isn't a dictator, and his influence over media that isn't Fox or Breitbart is negligible. But Trump does control his Twitter feed, with its 43.6 million followers. And he exerts a deeper level of control simply through his ability to bait hostile media that will with his every seemingly nutty

utterance.

The benefits, for Trump, are threefold: a political opposition that is exhausting itself — and much of the public — with its perpetual state of moral apoplexy; a political base that thrills to his readiness to scandalize the bien pensant; and an effective means of distraction from his electoral, legislative and foreign policy failures.

In other words, the president is conducting a kind of meta-politics, the purpose of which is to erase ordinary standards of political judgment. The question is not "How am I doing?" as the late New York City mayor Ed Koch used to ask. It is, gladiator-like, "Are you not entertained?" Even those of us most aghast at this administration must confess we are.

The Trump news is scarier, funnier, more salacious and more relevant than anything else on TV. It's why the apolitical Jimmy Fallon has floundered in the age of Trump while the hyperpolitical Stephen Colbert has thrived. For a president who cares more about ratings than he does about polls, this is the ultimate vindication. He minds less if you hate him so long as he knows that you're thinking about him.

The truth about Trump is not that he's crazy. He's a narcissist and a neurotic with a feral talent for attracting the attention he craves. In Russia, Putin can compel attention thanks to his complete control over most media and many other aspects of ordinary life. In the United States, citizens can deprive Trump of his political oxygen simply by turning off and tuning out.

But that isn't enough. "For if one part of the system is all about wild performance," writes Pomerantsev of Putin's media calculations, "another is about slow, patient co-optation." Like it or not, we all inhabit the Trump-verse and we all are subject to its consequences.

How do we pay attention without paying him a kind of homage? Can we respond to his outrages without drowning in our own?

■  
Bret Stephens won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2013. He began working as a columnist at The New York Times in April.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Oregon representatives must support net neutrality

I urge our representative to protect net neutrality. Out of all the things this country needs to thrive, the internet is an important one of them.

And if there is a small chance that the internet could be micromanaged and put behind paywalls by greedy companies, this means that their greed could cause a lot of damage to consumers everywhere.

My wheelchair-bound grandfather uses the internet to watch videos and read books. It's one of the only things he can do anymore and it would break my heart to tell him that he may not be able to do that anymore.

I come from a small town and the internet was my gateway to the rest of the world, and it still is. I'm trying to get a small business

going online and if I can't sell my wares or advertise because I can't afford extra fees I won't have a job.

The mental health specialist I see, I see online because there are none in my area that can help me. And I could lose my therapist because of someone else's greed.

Things like this will happen to people all over the country, and even worse things could happen.

So many people make a living online, use the internet to find jobs, get out of harmful situations, find information that can lead them to safety. And if all that is gone, people's lives could be ruined.

Please U.S. Rep Greg Walden, U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden: protect net neutrality.

Dustin Deckert  
Union

## 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 phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

## Clarification

Following up on the Nov. 29 editorial "Round-Up uprising," Pendleton Grain Growers has sold or closed the vast majority of its business and holdings since 2014 to cover debt it could not repay. However, its seed division remains in operation. The co-op has never filed for legal bankruptcy. The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.