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**OUR VIEW**

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

**A tip of the hat to Helix students — members of the Griswold High School Euro Club, to be exact — who have continued the tradition of Wreaths for Remembrance for another year.**

Earlier this week, the club laid 200 wreaths on military veterans' graves at Olney Cemetery in Pendleton. The club has been doing that for eight years, and they hope to grow and soon be able to adorn the more than 1,000 veterans' graves at the cemetery each year.

Community members make a \$20 donation for each wreath.

Veterans or not, it's wonderful to

celebrate and remember a person who has passed away. And we think for school-age students in particular, a trip to a cemetery can be a rewarding, impactful experience.



**A kick in the pants to the repeal of net neutrality on Thursday by the Federal Communications Commission.**

The decision was opposed by much of the population, and even many corporate interests — except for the interests who own the internet pipes and now stand to make a lot more money.

That money will come out of the wallets of consumers, and out of the budgets of startups and small companies both online and off.

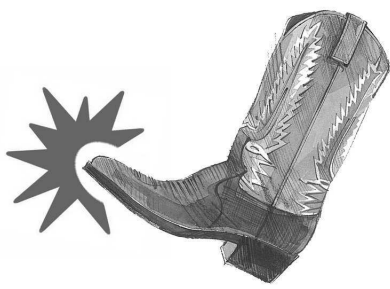
The FCC decision was hailed by the likes of AT&T and Comcast, who had been found to be slowing the speed of competing traffic before the current neutrality rules were hammered into law.

There's no way around it: new rules will make the internet more expensive, less open and less free.

We're not naive about this issue. It's clear that the days of the wide open internet have already disappeared. And it's us consumers who chose to cede control of the content we see to Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Netflix and others.

When was the last time you accessed a website, shopped online or searched for information without those corporations guiding you?

They — and a few others like them — control almost all of the traffic that had once traveled down the wide-open internet superhighway. Now we have just ceded just a little bit more of that control, this time to internet service providers.



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**

## Interference in OHA audit stains all of Oregon government

*The Coos Bay World*

State officials went to great lengths to stymie an audit of the Oregon Health Authority.

That is the most troubling aspect of the audit, which state auditors were able to complete after Gov. Kate Brown appointed a new director for the beleaguered agency.

The audit report, which Secretary of State Dennis Richardson delivered Nov. 29 in a highly politicized announcement, found that the agency inadvertently misspent millions of state and federal dollars. That is not a big surprise, as news about the agency's missteps has dribbled out for months. However, the audit also showed that the health authority is above average nationally for its handling of federal Medicaid money.

In that sense, the audit report contained both bad and good news regarding Oregon's \$9.3 billion-a-year Medicaid program. New Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen, who on Friday marked his 90th day on the job, agreed with the auditors' recommendations and said the agency already was implementing some of them.

The report states that the health authority previously had impeded the auditors' work but goes on to say, "OHA's new management has been more proactive and transparent in addressing these issues."

Audits are an integral part of cost-effective governance. Brown ousted former health authority Director Lynne Saxton this summer, but it's disconcerting that until then, the agency

aggressively interfered with what could be considered a routine audit.

That interference included hiring an outside auditing firm as an intermediary between the health authority and the state Audits Division. That seems unprecedented in state government. Allen said he canceled the outside firm's \$200,000 contract as soon as he learned about it.

According to the audit report, the health authority also had monitored what its staff was telling auditors, potentially creating a chilling effect, and ordered front-line workers to go through management instead of communicating

with auditors.

"Preventing direct follow-up slowed our work, potentially limited our access, and created a bottleneck for both us and OHA. We had questions that staff could answer in minutes, but were instead required to ask managers, who sometimes provided incorrect information because they lacked the same level of familiarity as staff," the report says. In addition, "OHA delayed answering requests and at times provided incomplete or erroneous information."

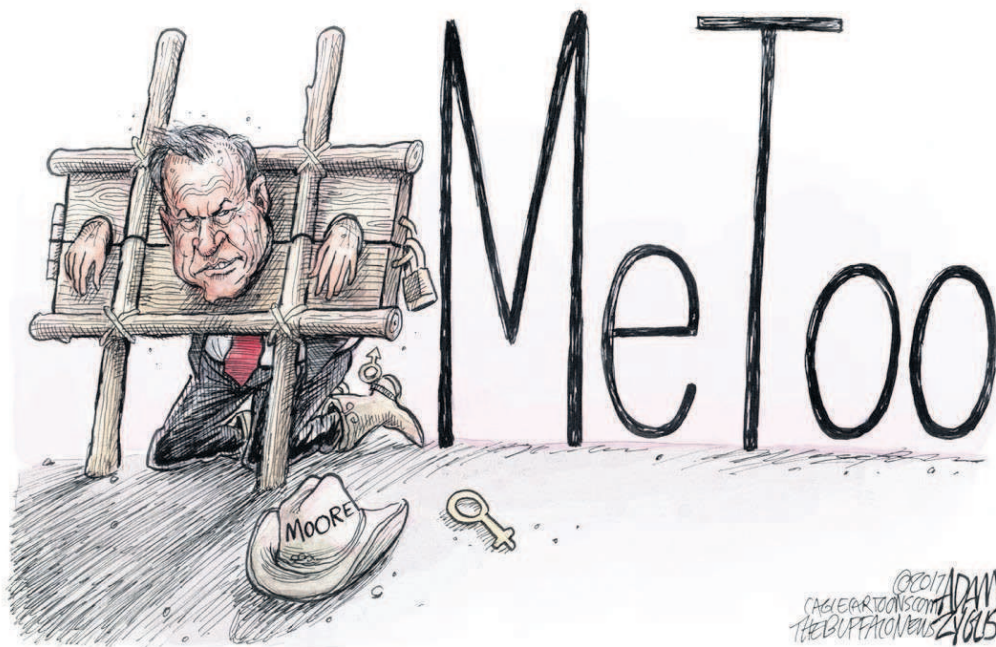
Such interference, regardless of where it occurs in government, is outrageous. Republican Richardson, who oversees the Audits Division, and Democrat Brown, who oversees the Oregon Health Authority and other agencies in the executive branch, should have known about the problems and promptly worked together to ensure a thorough, forthright audit.

Their failure to do so creates a stain on state government.

**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**



## Donald Trump's gift to women

On the day before the Alabama election, I found myself explaining that I needed to get to work despite the bombing at my subway station because there were women coming in to talk about having been sexually assaulted by the president.

Really, we live in interesting times.

The bombing — in which no one was seriously hurt but the bomber — has already faded from the memory of New York's hardened mass transit riders. But the rest of the story is reverberating. We're in the middle of a women's uprising that really does feel like a new wave, maybe the one that could actually get the country within shouting distance of power equality.

Think about it. This week Roy Moore got skunked in Alabama, thanks in great part to female voters who went for the Democratic candidate instead. Then the U.S. Senate got ready for another female member — Minnesota Lt. Gov. Tina Smith is going to replace Al Franken, who is resigning in the sexual harassment scandal.

We have a revolt against sexual harassment that's running through the political, entertainment, restaurant and communications worlds. And we're finally trying to focus on the Donald Trump sleaziness sagas that the nation didn't deal with in 2016. Trump is really behind everything — his election jarred and frightened women so much that there was nothing to do but rebel and try to change the world.

"I think it's very much because of President Trump," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. "For me the Women's March was still the most extraordinary political moment of my lifetime." Gillibrand is a leader of the anti-harassment campaign in Congress. This week, as some of the women who had stories about Trump's own hands-on history were talking to the media, she called on the president to resign.

Trump responded — as only he can — with a Twitter attack, calling Gillibrand a political "lightweight" who used to come to him "begging" for campaign contributions "and would do anything for them."

"I think it was intended to be a sexist smear, and it was intended to silence me and every woman who challenges him," Gillibrand said in a phone interview.

The White House retorted that only a person whose mind was "in the gutter" would think the president was talking about anything but the way political fundraising means "special interests control our government."

What do you think, people? Perhaps we could just do a calculation on how much time Trump has spent in his public life discussing girl-grabbing versus campaign finance reform. Also, no one in Washington seems to



**GAIL COLLINS**  
Comment

have missed the fact that when the president tweeted, Gillibrand was at a congressional Bible study meeting.

It's for sure that when Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton it triggered a visceral response in masses of U.S. women, and that trauma may be turning into a political uprising more powerful than the Tea Party. Female voters delivered Alabama for Democrat Doug Jones — 57 percent came down on his side. The critical mass actually came from the African-

American community, where women vote more faithfully than men, and virtually all of

them went for Jones. (Hard to know what triggered their outpouring — Roy Moore's creepy sexual history or his enthusiasm for the good old days of strong families and slavery.)

"I see black women as the heart of the Democratic Party," said Gillibrand.

Other women aren't exactly standing still. A new Monmouth University poll has Trump's job approval rating down to another new historic low, 32 percent. The decline, Monmouth said, came mostly from Republican and independent

women. All in all, women

gave the president thumbs-up only 24 percent of the time. He's their political equivalent of overcooked broccoli.

We truly could be seeing a new wave of feminist reform. The United States has had moments when it looked as if women were finally taking their rightful place in the public world. But things had a way of stalling. After suffrage wars, politicians were worried about pleasing their new female constituents. But they then concluded that women were going to pretty much vote like their male relatives and lost interest. The "Year of the Woman" in 1992 added four more U.S. senators to the pair of women who were already there. But now, in the 21st century, the Senate still has only 21.

There could be a lot more if this revolution continues. And while we have no earthly idea who the Democratic presidential candidate will be in 2020, it's likely that a bunch of women are going to be in the mix — Gillibrand probably among them.

Think about it. The only Democratic woman who's ever been a top-of-the-pack presidential contender was Hillary Clinton, a former first lady. And I can remember being around when it was a big deal that Margaret Chase Smith got her name put into nomination at the Republican convention after a campaign dominated by dissection of her muffin recipe.

It's not necessarily bad when the times get interesting.

*Gail Collins joined The New York Times in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the Times's editorial page.*

**YOUR VIEWS**

### Hermiston shouldn't have cut and killed old cedar tree

A western red cedar was cut down in the park and placed into the asphalt on Northeast Second Street in Hermiston recently. This western red cedar was one of only three of this species, age and size in Hermiston. Now there are only two.

This tree was located in Victory Square Park and dates back to World War II, when the land was originally owned by the federal government for housing during the construction of the munitions depot and was commonly known as Turtle Town.

Trees provide historic value to the past. Old trees, especially ones from WWII, are regarded as important because they have lived through eras with which we have few other connections.

Almost everyone knows that trees are valuable and contribute to the environment — such as air, noise, wind, soil, storm water and climate control. The benefits this tree provided because of its size and age, both environmentally and monetarily, are irreplaceable.

Being a licensed arborist with the Pacific Northwest Chapter and the International

Society of Arborists, it is my hope for the future of trees in Hermiston that this appalling act is never repeated.

**Doug Bennett**  
Hermiston

### Merkley should say yes to presidential run in 2020

Social media is abuzz encouraging our U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley to consider running for President in 2020.

It may seem early, but to really be off and running when the time comes, candidates are getting prepared. And now is the time for Democrats to consider their options.

Merkley would bring his progressive ideas and his unquestioned integrity to a splintered party and could help heal the party. The only senator to support Bernie Sanders in 2016, following the primary he became an ardent advocate for Hillary Clinton in the General Election.

He's the right man at the right time to bring both the party and our country together. Get out there and support Jeff Merkley.

Run, Jeff, run!

**Jack Lorts**  
Fossil