

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

A safe place for kids

There is no foolproof plan for keeping children safe from harm all the time. It's a hard fact of life, but children are vulnerable. There is no fence, lock, seatbelt, vaccine, helmet or training that guarantees trouble will stay away. As they learn about life, children are open to its risks but without the maturity to know how to handle them. But we do owe them our best when it comes to safety, to watch for danger as it arises and to train them to see it for themselves, too. Through the month of March, the *East Oregonian* will be reporting on schools' roles in keeping our children safe. It's a big job. In Umatilla and Morrow counties, thousands of students from thousands of different homes and families enter the buildings every day. Some schools are brand new, others have been around since before their grandparents were in kindergarten. Some pupils come from a healthy home full of support and love, others don't know where they're going to sleep each night. Some students are expected to bring home As on their

report cards and join a handful of clubs and activities. Others don't believe graduation is within their reach and would rather go unnoticed by teachers and counselors. Keeping them safe is more than just putting up a higher fence and crossing our fingers that no one jumps over with ill intent. It's more than running drills or hiring armed guards or arming teachers. School safety isn't just about preventing a moment of terror and violence. That is highly important, and where we begin our series in today's paper, but the solution to better protecting our children must be holistic. It means reaching out to the children on the margins, and showing their peers how to do the same. It means teaching them the importance of healthy decisions outside of the school walls. It means taking threats to their safety very seriously, not just from their fellow classmates but from the adults whom we trust to be mentors to them. It means knowing the signs of depression, suicide, abuse and neglect — and knowing how to act. For those of us not on the front lines in the schools, it means being willing



A student heads back to school at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., Wednesday. With a heavy police presence, classes resumed for the first time since several students and teachers were killed by a former student on Feb. 14.

to fund the necessary work of not just teaching academics, but educating young people about how to keep themselves and others safe and secure. And, yes, sometimes building that taller fence, better lock or newer building. We can talk policy and procedure until we're blue in the face, and strategize on how we'll respond if worst comes to worst. That's appropriate. But while we're doing that, we must

also realize that the biggest threats to schools are inside the building all along. We must think prevention — not just to avoid a front page tragedy, but to ensure a better society going forward. School is still among the safest places for children to be. But it's also a microcosm of society. And in order to make that society better, we must be willing to invest time, care and funds in all our students and schools.



YOUR VIEWS

Group should purchase 'worthless' property

The request and attached packet of letters asking the city to donate the property at the bottom of NW 7th to the Riparian's was quite impressive. "A very professional job," states the mayor. However, if you actually read the material, it becomes readily apparent many of the facts are distorted or misrepresented. A claim that the quality of our drinking water would be affected was actually quite humorous. With what fish, wildlife, kids and goats do in the river, I'm kind of glad our drinking water comes from wells rather than pumped from the river. The claims that the levee, walkway and tourism would be adversely affected should the property be developed were also a bit ridiculous. The walkway is crackling and crumbling. Blaming this on activity north of the river would be stretching it. I would suggest that the riparians pony up and purchase that worthless piece of property from the city, though I suspect it's much more valuable than they claim. It kind of makes you wonder if anyone actually read the complete packet before making a decision. With a critical housing shortage claimed by the mayor, and budget issues looming ahead caused by a rapidly escalating PERS liability according to the city manager, it makes little sense to give away valuable property to a small special interest group.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Resenting paying taxes when the president is corrupt

As I work on my taxes for this year, I am reminded that I have been paying taxes for 70 years, since I was 17 years old. I recognize that taxes are necessary as the price of civilization, including police and fire departments, roads, clean air and water, education, protection from disease, promoting the advancement of science (computers and massive food production). I always felt good about paying my fair share of taxes for the privilege of living in a country where citizens, at least, get a chance to succeed. I also felt good about serving our country in the U. S. Navy for four years, in the U. S. Peace Corps for two years and as a teacher for 45 years. But this year, I resent the glaring unfairness in tax-paying, when I think of President Donald Trump, who has never served our country in any capacity. A person who has used the loophole of a physical ailment, a bone spur, to avoid the military, and who uses tax loopholes to avoid paying taxes. As far as anyone knows, he has probably never paid his fair share of taxes, and I resent it. I doubt that any one of us in Eastern Oregon has been able to get away with such flagrant, if not criminal, behavior. I know it is not politically correct to criticize our President, but for the first time, I really resent paying taxes while this rich guy is taking us all for suckers.

Clem Falbo
Joseph

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. SENATORS
Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office: 541-962-7691
Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

202-224-3753
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
Greg Walden
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

OTHER VIEWS

Fights worth having

For my money, the best op-ed published in *The New York Times* this week was Mona Charen's Feb. 25 barn-burner, "I'm Glad I Got Booed at CPAC." Charen is a movement conservative who worked for Nancy and Ronald Reagan and is a longtime contributor to *National Review*. One of her books is titled "Do-Gooders: How Liberals Hurt Those They Claim to Help." A Bernie Sanders progressive she is not.

But Charen is also a NeverTrumper who chose to speak her mind during a panel discussion on the #MeToo movement at this year's Conservative Political Action Conference. Asked by the moderator to discuss feminist hypocrisy, Charen reframed the question.

"I'm disappointed in people on our side," she replied. "For being hypocrites about sexual harassers and abusers of women who are in our party. Who are sitting in the White House. Who brag about their extramarital affairs. Who brag about mistreating women. And because he happens to have an 'R' after his name, we look the other way, we don't complain."

She wasn't done. She slammed the Republican Party for endorsing Roy Moore. She said it was "a disgrace" that CPAC invited National Front scion Marion Maréchal-Le Pen to speak. She was jeered. She was accused of "virtue signaling." She had to leave the building under escort.

And she showed it was still possible to disdain partisan fashion, look a wretched thing in the eye, and say: Not I. Not this. Not ever. Not for nothing did a fellow panelist approach her after it was all over to say, "That was so brave."

Liberals tend to admire NeverTrumpers, because they see them as conservatives with a moral sense and, perhaps, a brain. By contrast, MAGA Republicans — whether of the fully or merely semi-Trumpified varieties — detest NeverTrumpers with an animus they can scarcely extend to liberals or progressives. Reacting to Charen's CPAC appearance, one right-wing writer for *Red State* called her "a new voice in the wilderness of insignificance" — and then devoted 1,000 words to underscoring that insignificance.

This is not, at root, ideological critique. It's the sign of a bad conscience. The 2016 primaries showed that NeverTrumpers were never much of a political force in the GOP. They are even less so today, when the president has an 85 percent approval rating among Republicans. What few NeverTrumpers remain in the party's senior ranks are either leaving politics or leaving the earthly estate.

But as even minimally sentient Trumpified Republicans know, what Charen said at CPAC was true. NeverTrumpers haunt the conservative movement the way Polish or Czech dissident intellectuals such as Czeslaw Milosz and Vaclav Havel haunted that segment of Central European intelligentsia that made its peace with Stalinism after World War II. The Trumpers (and Stalinists) traded



BRET STEPHENS
Comment

conscience for power; the NeverTrumpers and dissidents chose the reverse. Conscience can be made to suffer, but in the end it usually wins. That's why NeverTrumpers matter; why the Trumpers know they matter (which they prove every time they feverishly assert the opposite); and why progressives who dismiss NeverTrumpers as politically irrelevant are wrong. The United States is going to have a right-of-center party in one form or another, and it matters a great deal whether that party is liberal or illiberal, capable or incapable of shame. Credible conservatives like Charen can still make a positive difference in that respect, in a way that people like, say, Elizabeth Warren cannot. That's why you want good guys on the other side of the partisan divide, no matter how irrelevant they currently appear to be. When Trumpism fails, as it inevitably will, who will be the Republican Adenauer?

I write this as a parallel contest is taking shape within the Democratic Party, most visibly in the rift between traditional liberals and the social-justice warriors of what used to be the far left. Dianne Feinstein's failure this week to claim her party's nomination for the Senate seat she's held since 1992 is another depressing indication that the rift is widening.

One side believes in the power of reason, the possibility of persuasion, and the values of the Enlightenment. It champions social solidarity for the sake of empowering the individual, rather than creating a society of conformists. It doesn't see compromise as a dirty word. Its belief in the benefits of civility and diversity does not override its commitment to free speech and independent thought.

As for the other side, it thinks it knows what's True. It considers compromise knavish. It views debate — beyond its own tightly set parameters — as either pointless or dangerous. And while it sees itself as the antithesis of Trumpism, it is, in its raging intolerance and smug self-satisfaction, Trumpism's mirror image.

My advice to traditional liberals is not to repeat the establishment Republican mistake of not taking the threat of populist illiberalism seriously, and of not fighting it fiercely. The fabric of an open society is more frayed than most people realize, and it is coming unraveled from more than one end. What happened to the Republican Party in 2016 could happen to the Democrats in 2020.

The good news, as Charen courageously reminded us, is that these fights should never be abandoned even when they seem lost, and that sometimes the fights most worth having are those with our own side. William F. Buckley and Daniel Patrick Moynihan would have told you the same thing.

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

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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. 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.