

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tax increases require a heavy lift to pass

It's hard work to convince people to raise their taxes anywhere, and especially here in Eastern Oregon. Blue Mountain Community College learned that recently. So too did the city of Pendleton and the Hermiston School District.

If you don't go all out with a campaign of dedicated volunteers, if you don't button up every question hurled at you from cynics, and if you can't convince a majority of voters the money you are asking from them is the bare minimum needed, you are in trouble.

So the move to establish the 4-H, Extension and Agricultural Research Service Districts in Umatilla and Morrow counties was always up against it in one respect.

On the other hand, we know how well respected and important the region's farming community is — and very few families have not sent a child through 4-H at one time or another and seen the benefit thereof. The organization has a baked-in sense of appreciation, and a reputation of an organization that has always done good work and benefited our area.

But the tea leaves tell us that this measure is in trouble. And we think we've targeted a few reasons why:

1) The cost.

"It's too damn high!" — that's what that old dude with the sideburns would say. But more seriously, 33 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value is a big ask. It would raise about \$1.7 million in Umatilla County. The median home price in the county is roughly \$167,000,

so the average homeowner would pay about \$55 a year to support the district. For people on a tight budget, that's just another bill to pay.

But then you must consider compression, which means that some people — mostly in cities — wouldn't see their taxes rise as much or at all, but would see less funding go to other taxing districts. That's not good. And people outside districts in compression would likely pay more than \$55 to the district, due to the higher assessed values of larger plots of land.

Add in the fact that the rate is the second highest of any Extension service district in the state of Oregon, and you can see why opponents would pounce on the number. Although, of course, we're getting a lot more service here, too. Two major research centers create invaluable work for our industries, and bring immensely talented scientists to our rural communities.

2) A missed opportunity for clarity.

It is critical for Extension service district staff to say whether or not they will continue to ask for funding from local governments, should the measure pass. Currently, Umatilla County is sending \$397,000 for fiscal year 2018-2019, and Morrow County is chipping in \$167,000. It was our impression that, once the Extension service district starts collecting its tax, they will not as for, or receive, those dollars from county general funds. Which is the way it should be.

But staff were unable to say if that is in fact the case. And that seems critical



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Caleb Glenn, a 4-H member from Hermiston, washes the tail of his steer during the Umatilla County Fair last August in Hermiston.

to knowing the full tally of what this tax will cost us, and if it could possibly free up some general fund money for use elsewhere. Either way, they must be able to answer that question.

3) The threat of a reduced focus.

Dick Smiley, former director of the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center, argued in a much-discussed op-ed in this paper that with county commissioners controlling the purse strings — and with local taxpayers filling a larger percentage of the purse — that these internationally known and internationally focused research centers would have a reduced mission.

He argued that funding should continue to come from the legislature, seed royalties and grower funds. That's easy to say of course, but trying to consistently corral funds from the legislature is a job for Don Quixote. And that's why the local service does not have a consistent budget.

Perhaps he is on to something, however, if the research centers could be split out of this proposed district. It would be cheaper to fund the rest of it could be focused solely on 4-H and master gardeners and all those offerings that a majority of county residents enjoy and want to support.

We know agriculture makes this region run, and the work done at the research centers is invaluable. We want them to be well funded. We would rather they be funded by regionwide, nationwide and international dollars, so that its research remains locally based but internationally-focused, and attracting the best and brightest.

We're willing to chip in our fair share, but we're not sure most of Umatilla County is convinced to join us. If that's what the results say in May, there is still a way forward for local funding for a slimmed-down Extension ask. Let's take that road.

YOUR VIEWS

Editor's note: These letters have been heavily edited for space. Read them in their entirety at www.eastoregonian.com/eo/letters.

Buehler for GOP governor

I have been asked by a number of my Republican friends which candidate I am supporting for governor. They have asked, which candidate has the best chance for success in November? My answer is Knute Buehler.

I have worked with Knute for four years in the State Legislature, and I have found him to be a thoughtful, hardworking and smart legislator. His Roseburg rural roots, OSU education and successful orthopedic surgeon practice in Bend give him an understanding of what needs to be done for Oregon.

**Bill Hansell, state senator
Athena**

Re-elect Larry Givens

I had the pleasure of working with Commissioner Larry Givens after my retirement as assistant chief/fire marshal for the city of Pendleton, as the Umatilla County Emergency Manager for nearly five years.

Commissioner Givens was instrumental in realigning the office of county commissioners, a much-needed task, and the office is much more efficient than it has ever been. I truly believe Commissioner Givens has been one of the most influential, dedicated, responsible commissioners Umatilla County has had the pleasure of having in office.

**Jack Remillard
Pendleton**

Larry Givens has lived in Umatilla County all of his life, so he knows that this county's future depends on strong agriculture, economic development, good roads and public safety. He is a farmer himself, and a small business owner. He has also put enough miles on his car, traveling the length and breadth of the county, to know why we need good roads and highways. He has worked to strengthen the sheriff's office and the Umatilla County Jail, in order to ensure that it is staffed and running properly.

**Doug and Vera Worsech
Milton-Freewater**

Bottom line: Larry Givens is an experienced leader with a proven record of accomplishment. He has made our county better. No commissioner or commission

can please everyone all the time. There are few easy "common-sense" solutions. So many things are out of the control of any commissioner, such as limited funding or the effect of state regulations. Despite these obstacles, Larry's hard work and experience has resulted in county budgets that have made our tax dollars go further. In addition, he has helped create a situation where all voices can be heard.

**Ray Williams
Milton-Freewater**

Re-elect George Murdock

I would like to add my endorsement to the re-election of George Murdock. George has always been willing to listen and try to help small communities like Echo. He is also a great supporter of 4-H youth.

He truly cares about Umatilla County and making and keeping it a great place to live and work. He also has the background as a businessman and school administrator/educator to achieve goals.

**Diane Berry
Echo**

Collins for judge

I have worked with Rob Collins for seven years in his capacity as Indians Director for the Pendleton Round-Up. I also know him to be a friend to the local tribes and someone who is known to be thoughtful and fair in his dealings with other people. I believe he will be an excellent Circuit Court judge; he is impartial and will administer justice without bias or prejudice.

**Chief Gary Burke
Pilot Rock**

I am a longtime friend of Rob Collins and have always known him to be an honest, fair, caring, thoughtful person. I cannot think of a better person to maintain the high quality and integrity of the bench in our judicial district.

**Tim Mabry
Hermiston**

I have known Rob Collins as a fellow classmate, a member of the orchestra, a friend and confidante as well as a lawyer. In each of these roles Rob was extremely committed, approachable and fair-minded.

I believe his campaign slogan truly paints an accurate picture of my friend: experienced, just, knowledgeable and balanced.

**John Bartron
Pendleton**

As an attorney, Rob Collins has extensive experience in all facets of the law, with a repu-

tation for striving to find the fairest solutions for all sides. We are very fortunate to have such a qualified and outstanding candidate for this position. Please join me in voting for Rob on May 15.

**Joyce Hoffman
Pendleton**

We are fortunate to have two very good candidates running for judge. Both are smart, capable, hard-working attorneys; both are respected in the legal community; and either one will serve well. I'm voting for Rob Collins.

Rob has a deep and wide practice background needed to serve as judge, from criminal to estates, from family law to businesses, and from personal injury to real property. I have worked with him on a variety of cases, and he makes it look so easy, which I suppose comes from decades in general practice. Judges need proficiency in many areas of law due to the variety of cases that come before them.

Rob cares a lot about other people. Rob's first goal in a case is always the resolution of the issue in a way that improves the lives of those involved. Within the rule of law, judges must always remember that their decisions affect people, and I think Rob will always do this.

**Will Perkinson
Pendleton**

As many have already spoken about his altruistic nature and caring for his community, I will not further that except to say: you can count on Rob Collins.

**Louise M. Thompson
Pendleton**

Shakeups in city, county?

Are recent decisions by the office of the county commissioners the impetus for new challengers at the polls? Law enforcement at both city and county levels within Umatilla County are frustrated by the lack of facilities at County Corrections to deal with individuals experiencing mental health issues. The county sheriff's office has been seeking additional funding for additional facilities to deal with this issue.

Is there change in the wind at city hall as well? After the last election, an agenda was set based on a consensus of the people. Basically, it was simple — fix our infrastructure and public buildings as the first priority — yet time after time, funding has been provided for special projects that nothing to do with city operations while public property sits vacant, unused, deteriorating, off the tax rolls, and most

recently just given away.

**Rick Rohde
Pendleton**

Vote Ogden for BOLI

Ballots for voters are in the mail to an Oregon electorate that is divided, partisan and political weary. For the last few election cycles there has been no break from politics for people to just live their lives.

Into this septic environment a true leader has stepped forward, running for the nonpartisan position of Bureau of Labor & Industries commissioner.

Lou Ogden wants to take politics out of BOLI, to lead this department to a place where business can flourish and skilled job opportunities abound. He will begin to work to provide high school graduates an opportunity for technical training; resulting in a win-win for Oregon, high skilled, higher paying jobs to an economy that is in desperate of skilled workers.

**Annette Lathrop
Joseph**

Vote for Tim White

Tim White is the Democrats' best chance to unseat nine-term incumbent Congressman Greg Walden in the 2nd District. Democrats continue to serve up candidates who do not appeal to the constituents in the district and who then get slaughtered in the general election. The last 20 years of Republican electoral landslides in this district are proof that this strategy is a loser.

**Rich Tuttle
Medford**

Vote out Democrats

Oregon has suffered for years under Democratic leadership, and the voices outside of the I-5 corridor have been all but silenced. The oppressive blue thumb has dictated disastrous policy for far too long, and it's time we made a stand.

Not everyone in Portland supports these failed policies, and these "leaders" do not support my view or yours. The far left progressives are destroying this country. They fail to acknowledge the very importance of our Constitution and choose to impose their will on our daily lives.

We can change this. We can make a difference. I want to make that change, but I cannot do it alone. Together, we need to vote. We need to let the "leaders" in Salem and the far left progressives in Portland know that we will not follow their failed policies.

Scott Templar, Beaverton

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