

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

Kick in the pants to all voters with ballots on their kitchen counters, bedside tables and junk drawers, in order to nudge them closer to the polls. As of Thursday, Oregon’s returns for the May 15 election have not been something to get excited about.

Unofficial numbers from the Oregon Secretary of State’s election division showed that just 14.6 percent of registered voters in the state have returned a ballot.

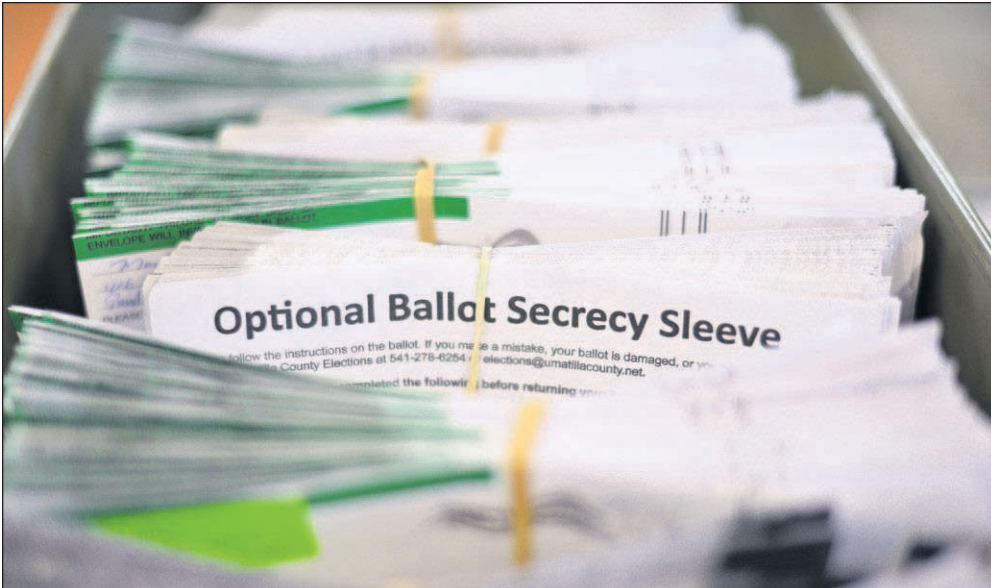
And while you can look at that from the bright side — states without vote-by-mail provisions are at 0 percent until election day proper — we think Oregon should be doing better.

And especially here in Umatilla and Morrow counties. Both are above the state average right now — Morrow is at 19.1 percent and Umatilla at 16.5 percent. Rural counties, in general, often return their ballots at a faster clip early, and urban residents pass them when they drop

them off in bigger numbers the few days before the election. This close to election day, voters in our area should forgo the mail route and drop their ballot off at their local city hall. Drop boxes located at many of those building are open 24/7 — check first to be sure.

We hope everyone who sees these low turnout numbers recognizes that this makes their own vote even more powerful. We hope everyone recognizes their power and returns a ballot.

Tip of the hat to a new plan that will allow for a summer farmers market in Hermiston. Local business owner Mitch Myers had partnered with the city to build an event space that could host the market this year, as well as a parking lot and restrooms that would be open for public use. But after disagreements with the city over construction, he said that space will not be available for the market in 2018.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

As of Wednesday morning only 14 percent of Umatilla County registered voters had cast their mail-in ballots.

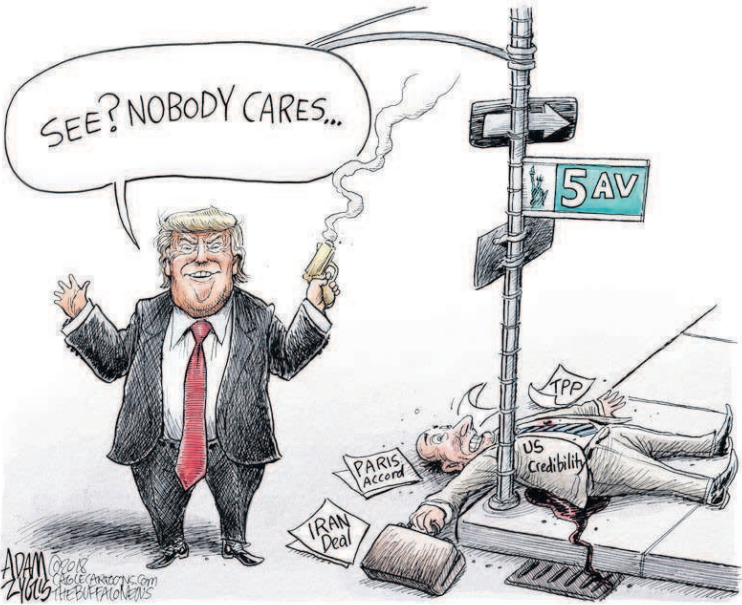
Myers claimed the city was asking him to go above and beyond because of a personal dispute, and he made his complaint known in his trademark bombastic manner. It all comes across as pretty foolish — something that could be solved with a conversation. And we know both sides are partly responsible whenever an agreement goes south.

Still, it’s important that a town like Hermiston — with a farming heart and

an agricultural bounty that any other city in Oregon would be jealous of — has a secure, reliable place for local farmers to sell their local wares.

The pavilion was a great idea that has yet to come to fruition. So for now, the festival street downtown is a great Plan B.

We hope both vendors and shoppers support the market, and show that it is something that deserves a permanent, reliable home.



YOUR VIEWS

Military training showcases Pendleton airport

Twice in late March, the night skies over Pendleton were crowded with Army rangers, paratroopers, planes and helicopters. In asking around for information, it turned out that the night exercises did not involve unmanned drones that are being tested at the Pendleton airport. The late-night commotion resulted from a requirement that the Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment conduct a night exercise once a year somewhere in the country. A press information person working with the Army in Georgia filled me in on details. The last time the Pendleton airport was chosen for the exercise was in 2012 when the 2nd Ranger Battalion was involved. When I served a two-year stint in the Army in the 1960s, I felt the ranger designation was conferred on just the best trained and most resourceful soldiers. (That was not me.) Ranger training at that time was an ordeal that required candidates to live off the land and display skill, endurance and resourcefulness day and night for 26 weeks. To me, rangers stood out for their self-confidence and low key, command presence.

Many rangers go through paratrooper training and become airborne rangers. About 700 airborne rangers were in Pendleton for the late March exercise. Strong winds interfered with the training, but the Army units coped. They moved training exercises from one day to another and changed some airborne drops into landings on runways. Pendleton’s airport has shown to be a major asset more and more.

Mike Forrester
Pendleton

Grading Pendleton’s city hall

Are you tired yet of driving past the dilapidated Edwards Apartments year after year? Going to the recycle center and seeing garbage strewn about? Residential

housing that the city cleans up, but continues to look like a garbage dump, wrecking yard, or RV park? Mistaking the front entrance of city hall for an ashtray? A car sitting on jack stands in your neighbor’s driveway? Here’s a tip on that last one: If it’s wrecked or otherwise inoperable, suggest to the owner that he makes sure that it’s moved off the city right-of-way, parked it in the yard, and then build a tent to hide it. That’s now OK with city hall. It’s not considered a code violation.

Evidently, with the push to promote tourism, city officials are going for the campground look. For anyone interested, those city officials on the neighborhood improvement committee, responsible for elimination of urban blight, are John Turner, Rob Corbett and Dale Primmer. It wouldn’t hurt to let them know what you expect from them in the future.

After reading the *East Oregonian* article on the city’s five-prong approach for economic development touted by city hall, I had to chuckle. In a recent conversation with an anonymous source within the city, I got the distinct impression that support for the city’s approach was half-hearted at best despite news to the contrary. When funding gets tight and businesses realize that their license fees are all going to support only those downtown as the city has proposed, I see this fragmented approach splitting rather than unifying the business community. Hermiston’s consolidated proactive approach to economic development has been very successful — spending less, getting more.

After pushing for the N.W. Seventh Street giveaway and agreeing to fund the Downtown Business Association in perpetuity, the mayor, in his monthly newsletter, is now warning of a budget shortfall when PERS payments balloon. As in the past, watch for cuts in the street maintenance program and a push for new higher taxes of some sort.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Trump vandalizes Iran deal

President Donald Trump’s attempt to blow up the Iranian nuclear deal isn’t foreign policy. It’s vandalism.

Trump is abandoning the Iran deal, with nothing to replace it, even though his own secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff say that Iran appears to be in compliance; even though his own secretary of defense says that staying in the deal is in America’s interest; even though our allies are pleading to stick with it. The reason for Trump’s decision seems obvious: The deal was President Barack Obama’s.

This petty retreat from diplomacy is the most significant national security move Trump has made. It means that Trump is isolating the United States, not Iran, and it increases the risk of military conflict down the road. If there’s anything we should have learned, it’s to avoid unnecessary wars in the Middle East — but Trump may be laying the groundwork for yet another.

“Many regard the invasion of Iraq as the worst foreign policy move in the history of the American republic,” James Dobbins, a much respected retired diplomat, tweeted after Trump’s speech. “Now we have a competitor.”

The Iranian deal may not permanently solve the problem of Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons, but it delays any crisis for nearly 15 years or more. Trump doesn’t want to risk a possible crisis then, so he chooses to have one now — just for the satisfaction of kicking sand at Obama.

A crisis won’t necessarily result right away. It could be months before sanctions would actually kick in, and in any case Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said this week that the nuclear deal could remain in place even if the Americans pull out.

Rather, Iran may try for moderation to peel European allies away from the United States — and Trump is playing into this Iranian strategy. Some will regard the actions of Trump and of Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and see Khamenei as more of a statesman.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seems to be itching for a joint American-Israeli strike on Iran. Netanyahu may see political advantages to a triumphant airstrike, and I fear Trump might as well. Trump may have absorbed the unfortunate lesson from his military strikes on Syria that when he fires missiles, he is hailed as presidential.

I’m told that the United States years ago secretly built a replica of the Iranian complex at Fordo, which is deep underground to protect it from bombings, and practiced striking it with new munitions to see whether it could be destroyed. Based on those tests, the United States could indeed destroy Fordo — and that will give hawks in the Trump administration, like John Bolton, more



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

confidence as they advocate military options down the road.

Bolton is smart and knowledgeable, but his hawkish approach also has a track record. Let’s see how it did in three cases:

First, Bolton agitated for the Iraq War and still considers the invasion to have been a wise decision. The war, remember, killed 4,500 Americans, about half a million Iraqis, and cost the United States some \$3 trillion — or \$24,000 per American household.

Second, Bolton in 2002 helped kill the Agreed Framework that had kept North Korea from building a single nuclear warhead during the Clinton years. North Korea was secretly evading the framework, so tough negotiation was required — but instead Bolton helped blow up the deal, and since then North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests and developed intercontinental missiles that can reach the United States.

Third, Bolton in 2003-2004 helped end a European initiative to reach a deal with Iran on nuclear issues at that time, when the program was in much earlier stages.

In each of these cases, Bolton and the hawks were right that diplomacy was a flawed tool and might not have achieved our objectives: In international relations, there are more problems than solutions. What is clear is that the hawkish non-diplomatic paths failed catastrophically.

A basic problem with military options is that, as Prussian strategist Helmuth Von Moltke observed, no military plan survives first contact with the enemy. After a strike, Iran might try to blow up Saudi oil installations; or block oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz; or it could use its proxies to stir up a war with Israel.

I’ve reported in Iran (and been detained there by secret police and accused of spying), and I know full well that the regime is untrustworthy. That’s precisely the reason for the nuclear deal and the rigorous inspections that come with it. For now, the inspectors agree that Iran is in compliance — while the United States arguably violated it by failing to approve licenses for commerce with Iran, and by subverting normal trade relations.

So why destroy a deal that is working? Jake Sullivan, a former senior State Department official involved in the outreach to Iran, noted that there’s little chance of Trump actually negotiating a new deal, and added: “So what’s the point of this other than ‘Iranians are bad people and we’re going to hurt them.’ What’s the strategy other than a temper tantrum?”

And that’s why I see Trump’s move as less about foreign policy than about vandalism.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill.

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