

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
PublisherKATHRYN B. BROWN
OwnerDANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing EditorTIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

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OUR VIEW

What did we learn from Tuesday's election?

Another election is in the books, and we may have learned a few things in the May primary.

▪ A shakeup on Umatilla County Board of Commissioners.

Perhaps the only upset on the card was challenger John Shafer defeating incumbent Larry Givens in a race for county commissioner.

The precinct results show an interesting political reality in Umatilla County. Givens won in the Hermiston area, but was soundly defeated closer to home around Milton-Freewater and Pendleton. Winning over his neighbors, but also convincing enough west county voters to make a change, was enough to put Shafer over the top.

The other commissioner race has yet to be decided. George Murdock received the most votes but did not reach the 50 percent plateau, which means that he will face off with runner-up Rick Pullen in September. So for one race, the campaign season comes to an end, but for the other it has yet to really begin.

▪ OSU Extension has to go back to the drawing board.

The idea of a two-county service district to support 4-H as well as international ag research hit the skids on Tuesday. The message and the

measure failed in both Morrow and Umatilla counties.

As we mentioned in the lead-up to the vote, passing a tax increase takes a lot of work. Each and every question has to be answered for voters to feel confident in heading down that route. And it is becoming more clear, as many taxing districts in the area hit compression, that new taxes are no longer just more money out of the taxpayer's pocket. Now it's about taking away money from other publicly funded projects — be it education or health care or public safety — which makes it an even more difficult sell.

▪ The Republicans will have some coming together to do in the governor's race.

Knute Buehler won handily, securing 46.5 percent of the vote when dispatching challengers Sam Carpenter and Greg Wooldridge. But the map shows a clear divide between Eastern Oregon and the rest of the state. Morrow, Grant and Malheur counties — and everything east of them — went for Carpenter. Every other county but Columbia and Coos went for Buehler.

There are two ways to look at that result. The first is that Buehler still has to win over the reddest areas of the state, where turning out voters



AP Photo/Don Ryan

A voter drops off her ballot on the day of Oregon's primary election at a drive-by drop-off station in Portland on Tuesday.

will be critical if he is able to upset Kate Brown. But other way to look at it is that a majority of Eastern Oregonians will surely vote for a Republican, and Buehler has made much stronger headway into the other side of the state than his opponents.

▪ Little effect seen from motor voter law.

We learned that people who haven't gone out of their way to register to vote are not willing to return ballots even when they are registered automatically.

Our statewide voter turnout percentage declined from recent primary elections in 2014 and 2010, most similar to this year's races. However, the actual number of voters

grew slightly. That means the same people who like to vote are returning their ballots, but those who were automatically registered haven't gotten engaged in the process yet. But perhaps the November general election will see a change.

Oregon's overall turnout was 33.6 percent — not great but still ahead of other states who have their primaries already: West Virginia saw 26 percent of registered voters return a ballot, Nebraska at 24.3 percent, Ohio at 20.9 percent and North Carolina at 14.3 percent.

Even if there are hiccups in the process, we seem to be doing something right in Oregon.

OTHER VIEWS

The McCain controversy

There have been some ugly comments recently about Sen. John McCain. With the senator at home in Arizona fighting brain cancer, a young White House aide reportedly told colleagues they need not worry about his objections to CIA nominee Gina Haspel because, "It doesn't matter, he's dying anyway."

At the same time, a retired three-star Air Force general suggested McCain cooperated with his North Vietnamese captors in his five-plus years in captivity, saying McCain's nickname was "songbird John" — a baseless charge that dates back to dirty tricks against McCain in the 2008 presidential campaign.

The slanders set off vicious battles on Twitter, with still more insults to McCain. In response, many of the senator's allies and supporters rushed to his defense.

McCain is having a moment, even as he deals with a terrible illness and is not expected to return to Washington. Next week, he will release what is being portrayed as a valedictory book, "The Restless Wave." He is also the subject of an upcoming HBO documentary. Given that, it is probably fair to say that arguments about McCain, both civil and not, will continue to the very end, and beyond.

Why? Because of the sheer complexity of John McCain. He has lived a big life with accomplishments few can match. But in the course of that life, he has also antagonized some who should be allies.

McCain's years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam will always define his biography. He showed courage and endurance under conditions most Americans cannot imagine. He is rightly celebrated for that.

But McCain's valor came in a war America did not win and which remains divisive to this day. More than a decade ago, the Vietnam fight was over John Kerry and swift boats.

In politics, McCain's political career has been marked by a sometimes-testy relationship with Republican Party doctrine and voters. In the 2000 GOP presidential primaries, his defeat of then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush in the New Hampshire primary led to a nasty showdown in South Carolina. Bush won, McCain lost, and some in the press came away with the impression that Bush had smeared McCain. On the other hand, some Republicans came away with the impression that McCain, who styled himself a "maverick," would go

BRIAN YORK
Comment

out of his way to irritate his party.

McCain would run a more conventional campaign in 2008, showing extraordinary drive and resilience. When his primary campaign went broke and nearly collapsed, McCain — 71 years old, wealthy and with a safe seat in the Senate — still trudged through the early voting states, addressing small crowds, struggling to stay in the game. He looked like a goner more

than once in the GOP primaries, yet still ended up winning the nomination.

But after the dismal failures of two Bush terms — a major war started by mistake and an economic meltdown at the end — in the general election, McCain found himself running in the face of perhaps the strongest political headwinds ever. Toss in a charismatic and history-making Democratic opponent, and there was no way McCain could win.

Still, McCain remained a factor in presidential politics. In 2015, when Donald Trump attacked McCain — "I like people who weren't captured" — it set off a firestorm. Trump, who avoided service in Vietnam, defamed a man with a hugely distinguished record. Still, Trump's words did not do terrible damage to his candidacy, in part because a significant number of Republican primary voters had mixed feelings about McCain.

McCain's final act of angering Republicans came in July 2017, when he cast the decisive vote to kill the GOP effort to repeal and replace Obamacare. Many Republicans felt it was a bad bill, and any lawmaker would have good reason to oppose it, yet some still saw McCain's vote as a way of getting back at Trump.

So McCain has a war record of pure heroism. He has a political record of real achievement, but also more than his share of the controversy that goes with politics.

So which to emphasize in what might be McCain's final days? Here's a thought: Why not dwell on the good, especially since it was so good? When someone dies, it really is fitting to look at the best that person did. And John McCain lived a great, patriotic life, doing more in service to the United States than his critics, or almost anyone else. When he dies, why not remember that?

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



YOUR VIEWS

University of Oregon students turning frustration into action

The Register-Guard

Kudos to some University of Oregon students who noticed that an organization classed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center is using a logo that is remarkably similar to the university's trademark trademarked "O" and who responded wisely.

The students, who are members of M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), crafted a letter to the UO's general counsel, explaining why they felt that Oregonians for Immigration Reform was violating a university trademark, why they were concerned, and what they hoped the UO would do.

The university is zealous when it comes to protecting its trademarks, which have not only significant financial value but also emotional, intellectual and philosophical value.

They represent the university to the world. UO attorney Kevin Hayes responded to the students by firing off a letter to OFIR, noting the SPLC's reference to it as hate group — a designation that OFIR disputes — and saying that, while OFIR is free to espouse

its opinions, "the University of Oregon neither supports your message, desires to be associated with your message, nor wishes to assist in your fundraising efforts." Hayes then threatened the group with legal action based on trademark infringement and dilution.

UO threatened the group with legal action.

OFIR, which describes its mission as "to stop illegal immigration as well as reduce legal immigration" has had some successes in Oregon. These include leading a successful

campaign to overturn the state's decision to give four-year driver's cards to people who can't prove they are in the United States legally. The group's leader, Cynthia Kendall, described illegal immigration from Mexico in an interview with *Willamette Week* as "an organized assault on our culture."

These messages hit close to home for the members of M.E.Ch.A., whose membership is open to all and whose mission includes increasing the number of Oregon Chicanos who attend and graduate from college. They chose to channel their hurt and frustration into a constructive response, which bodes well for their potential as future leaders in the community and in Oregon.

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