

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

## Bring the debate to Eastern Oregon

It's almost too frightening to admit it, but we are once again entering campaign season.

Shudder.

You have probably already noticed commercials on your television have devolved into attack ads comparing Kate Brown or Knute Buehler to the devil incarnate. Get ready for your phone to ring off the hook with prerecorded messages about one candidate or issue, and then another call about the opponent just as you make it back to the dinner table. And your email inbox is probably never free of politicians asking for a donation — yet that daily spam will only increase as Election Day get closer.

There is no getting around it. An election season is on the way, and there is plenty at stake locally, statewide and nationally in 2018. Eastern Oregon has something to say on all three accounts.

Locally we still have a county commissioner runoff, as well as one for Hermiston city council. And there will also be some interesting questions on the ballot, including for an animal control service district and about gun rights. Add in the fact that we have a statewide governor's race and as Democrats and Republicans vie for control of the U.S. House, Eastern Oregon's district is up for grabs.

That means we will have plenty of decisions to make and constituents here should have the best information possible to make that decision. As



we editorialized last week, we think debates are a great way to do so.

Sure, we know there is plenty of politicking in the debate dance. Usually, the incumbent is favored and wants to keep them to a minimum, while the scrappy challenger wants any chance to be on the same stage as the current officeholder.

Knute Buehler, for instance, avoided all debates with fellow GOP candidates, and was called out for it by some in the party. Now, his campaign is calling out Brown for using the same strategy in the run-up to the general.

So will we see any here in Eastern Oregon? The verdict is still out.

Last weekend at Chief Joseph

Days, Jamie McLeod-Skinner approached Greg Walden's float and challenged him to "at least three debates within the district. She raised the idea of one each in Eastern Oregon, Central Oregon and Southern Oregon.

Walden seemed to answer to affirmatively: "I look forward to debating you," he said. "We'll figure out a schedule that works."

As for the governor's race, our chances for seeing the two candidates on the debate stage looks less likely.

Christian Gaston, Brown's campaign spokesman, wrote that the candidates will likely only appear at three debates — two in Portland and one in Medford.

"I think it's important to note that television debates are closed events

and are not open to the public, so the physical location doesn't matter as much as the statewide reach of the event online and on broadcast," he wrote.

Hoovey, we'd argue. The likelihood that many rural or Eastern Oregon issues will be raised or discussed in Portland is slim to none. Perhaps there would be better chance in Medford for discussion of rural policies, but the issues there are much different than we are dealing with here.

There is a real benefit to having candidates talk about rural issues in the place where it matters most.

Sure, there are no television stations east of Bend, but the days when TV is the only way to share live video are long over. This newspaper and its parent media organization would be happy to do what we can to host, moderate, and/or organize debates or discussions in any of the above races. We just need candidates who are willing to do it.

Local constituents can help make it a reality. They should ask — even demand — that their prospective representatives (and especially those who are current officeholders) show up out here and make their best argument about their policies, alongside an opponent who disagrees with them. It's the best chance for politicians to show how hard they are willing to work for our vote, and if their ideas truly are superior.

## OTHER VIEWS

## GOP fears rise for midterms

From time to time, I've been catching up with a Republican strategist who is trying to help the GOP keep control of the House in the midterm elections. It's been an up-and-down ride.

"I would put the odds of keeping the House at exactly 50-50," he told me in January.

"I get how bad things seemingly are," he said during a particularly tumultuous time in April. "But if the election were today, I'd bet my son's college tuition we'd keep the House." He was even more confident by June. "We keep the House," he told me. "I'd bet a lot of money on that."

And now: "The last 30 days have been really bad. I really wouldn't want to have the election today."

Looking back, each change in the strategist's mood has been the result of whatever President Trump was doing at that particular moment. His current anguish is the product of what he called "30 days of sh-t." By that, he meant the period of time beginning with Trump's decision to separate families crossing illegally into the United States and ending with his performance at the Helsinki summit.

Both hurt Republicans, the strategist said, but probably the Trump-Putin summit hurt more. When the president met with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, he said many Republican-targeted voters saw a method in the madness. It actually helped GOP candidates. But when Trump met Putin, those voters didn't see the method part.

If the past is any lesson, memories will fade. But the problem going forward is that Republicans will have less and less time to recover before Nov. 6.

"The next couple of weeks/months are critical in that we have had peaks and valleys before, but they always got fixed," he said. "The fear is that we're running out of time and maybe they won't get fixed."

Perhaps the biggest underlying question of the coming elections is the relationship between presidential job approval and the House GOP's re-election chances. It's often observed that Trump is keeping the favor of his base supporters. He is. But Republican strategists are watching his approval sink in some educated, affluent districts with independent voters the party needs. That undoubtedly hurts Republican

BYRON YORK  
Comment

candidates. "The Trump numbers, I don't know what to make of," said another GOP strategist. "It's not that his job approval ratings are good — they're not good — but we're not sure what role they play."

The second GOP strategist pointed to the economy, a subject of lots of good news. But he said "it's still income and wages."

"With over half the country living paycheck-to-paycheck, the question for them is, is there enough improvement occurring that they can see themselves beginning to break out of that paycheck-to-paycheck cycle? If the answer is yes, that's a positive environment for Republicans. If the answer is no, then they (voters) are going to be willing to rock the boat again. I don't believe they have reached a conclusion yet."

Right now, the RealClearPolitics average of polls has Democrats up about 7 percentage points in the so-called generic ballot question, which asks which party a voter plans to choose for his or her representative in Congress. Many Republican strategists would feel comfortable about keeping the House if the Democratic poll lead were kept to 4, or perhaps 5, points.

"Most of the data would lead a sober person to expect control of the House to be a 50-50 proposition, maybe a little worse for Republicans," said a third GOP strategist. "But most of the data at this time last election cycle led most of the pundits to celebrate President Hillary Clinton. I'm starting to think that this could be another instance where the group-think is wrong."

Maybe. But Republicans face a huge task. In a way, there has already been a wave in this election. It is the wave of 42 Republicans leaving the House. It's a record number, and there's no way to spin it as optimism for the future.

Still, all three are keeping hope alive. Even the first, rattled after those 30 bad days, sees the problems of the Democratic Party. Put that together with the members who have embraced the unpopular issue of abolishing ICE, and that's a party a lot of voters do not want to embrace.

GOP victory remains possible. What Republicans would like now is the absence of noise coming from the White House.

— Byron York, *Washington Examiner*



THE ART OF THE DUEL

## YOUR VIEWS

### Bike Week more than just one ugly incident

Your recent article regarding the "Pendleton man at center of attack during Bike Week concert" portrayed the event and the attendees as nothing but a bunch of motorcycle thugs looking for trouble. Nothing could be further from the truth, and if your reporter took the time to do a thorough report, he would have learned that this isolated incident is in no way reflective of all those that attend Pendleton Bike Week.

I have spent more than 30 years in law enforcement and ride with several motorcycle clubs, and I firmly believe that Pendleton Bike Week is one of the best run and managed motorcycle events in the Pacific Northwest. The Christian, law enforcement and veteran motorcycle clubs who all attend Bike Week should not be tarred and feathered by such a slanted and negative article.

Steve Gomez  
West Richland, Wash.

### Medicare for All should be first topic for debate

I read with interest the recent *East Oregonian* editorial recommending public debate among candidates running for office in 2018. I have a suggestion for a debate topic: Medicare for All — how could a candidate oppose or, more importantly, not openly advocate this?

Here's what I found with a simple

Google search: Medicare for All would provide effective health insurance to nearly all Americans for about 10 percent of what the current system costs, reduce the federal deficit and cost less for individuals and families. It could be voted in tomorrow — there are already-introduced House and Senate bills to implement the program. The existing health insurance industry could still participate on a reduced basis, providing supplemental programs just as they do for Medicare.

Some interesting side notes:

- Premiums would disappear, taxes would go up and the net effect is health costs would be greatly reduced for the average American.
  - No longer would insurance companies be allowed to kill our children and family members through denial of care or over-pricing.
  - Medical bankruptcies would nearly disappear — people's financial lives would no longer get destroyed by a single severe illness.
  - Medicare for All would actually reduce the federal deficit by lowering overall costs for medical care.
- The U.S. is the only developed country in the world not to successfully offer medical care for all citizens. Our current system results are worst among the top 11 industrialized countries. They can do it; why can't the USA do better?
- Why don't we have Medicare for All now?

Bill Young  
Pendleton