

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Lack of guestworker bill leaves farmers hanging

Caught up in the swirl of confusion surrounding the immigration issue on Capitol Hill is a guestworker visa program that serves as a lifeline for many U.S. farmers.

Called the H-2A visa, it allows farmers to bring in guestworkers from outside the U.S. To qualify to bring H-2A workers to their farm to harvest fruits or vegetables, prune trees or do other work, farmers first have to advertise the jobs to Americans. Once they can't get enough domestic workers, they can apply for foreign workers, but they have to pay to get the paperwork through the federal government. They then must pay to get the workers to the farm and back to their home country, and provide housing while they're here. They also must pay the H-2A workers a higher minimum wage — \$14.12 an hour in Oregon — established by the federal government. This is to prevent farmers from using "low-cost" H-2A workers to displace domestic workers.

No problem there, since finding

enough domestic workers is all but impossible as tree fruit and other plantings increase. The growing U.S. economy also attracts domestic workers to the construction industry and other jobs that offer year-round employment and fringe benefits. All of that forces farmers to look overseas for help through the H-2A visa. In Washington alone, the use of H-2A visas is up nearly 60 percent this year to 30,000 guestworkers.

The main reason H-2A is an issue is its high costs and the slow federal processing that farmers have encountered, especially during the Barack Obama administration.

But beyond that, H-2A workers are limited in the amount of time they can be in the U.S. That means they are unavailable for year-round jobs at dairies and other agricultural occupations that are not seasonal.

In the meantime, the agricultural foreign guestworker issue was split off from the immigration issue as the U.S. House tried to get its arms around the big



EO Media Group file photo

Growers have increasingly turned to foreign guestworkers in recent years because of labor shortages, but Congress has delayed action on improving or replacing H-2A visas with a better program.

picture. An alternative program, the H-2C program, would be cheaper and provide year-round guestworkers, but set a limit low enough to make farmers worry that they would come up short. After all, the whole point of a guestworker program is to make sure farmers have enough workers, not limit them. Even though the limit would increase over time, it was seen as a poison pill by some agricultural groups that depend heavily on handwork.

The result was the U.S. House fumbled another important issue, to the

detriment of U.S. farmers. Though some in the House continued to work to get an improved guestworker program passed, others appeared to be intent on holding off until after the November elections.

That's too bad. It's not like Congress has a sterling record for incumbents to run on. One would think that passing a bill to help U.S. farmers harvest the food they need to feed Americans would be a top priority among elected leaders.

Apparently, though, they can wait until after the election. But U.S. farmers can't.



YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton animal control and a sustainable budget

It looks like the proposal for a new tax by the Pioneer Humane Society, PAWS, is dead in the water. This tax was deemed necessary since many unfunded organizations like PAWS commonly over-rely on volunteers, donations, and have an insatiable appetite to expand services beyond what available resources permit. Evidently due to burnout, volunteers are just getting too hard to find. The group's proposal would have enabled them to hire more paid administrators to make up for those volunteers lost to burnout.

Suggestions by PAWS that the city do more ignore the facts that their facilities are provided free of charge by the city and include a monthly donation of \$1,300. The city's original agreement with PAWS included a provision to assume the city's animal impoundment function, a commitment they've not honored. They have instead elected to receive animals from outside the city, county, and state. Critics of the city reference the amount Hermiston, a larger city, provides for their program. They fail to mention that the Humane Society in Hermiston operates the impoundment and licensing programs for their city.

I suspect PAWS will be asking for additional funding at a future city council meeting, amid threats of shuttering the program entirely. With a new budget already in place, that means cuts to other programs if their request is approved. I hope I don't start hearing "it's only" or "I'm sure the city manager can find you something somewhere." The reluctance of the city manager and council to say "no" and just "kicking the can down the road" when it comes to making difficult decisions perpetuates their inability to adopt a sustainable budget. Personally I'd rather they worked on our streets than waste money on projects like moving the Eighth Street Bridge to Main Street or renovating the Rivoli.

So if you feel obligated to care for every unwanted pet in the city, county, and beyond, avoid cuts in other programs. Then open your hearts and wallets, and volunteer at PAWS. It certainly sounds like they need your help and donations. The city has been more than generous. By the way, I do have a living, breathing pet with four legs that does not live in a cage or disturb my neighbors, and she's spayed.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Sanctuary law affirms Oregon's values

Walk through any school and you'll see plenty of signage about safe and respectful behavior. We tell our kids to act kindly towards others, be respectful and stay safe. The same lessons are reinforced by families and friends at home and in the community. Whenever I look around at my adult peers and see what's happening in my community I wonder how we've gotten to where we are. What went wrong?

Business owners and politicians are linked to white supremacist groups. Latin American immigrants are verbally and physically assaulted while at work. Children are losing their parents to deportation.

Swastikas, hate speech and anti-immigrant messages appear in graffiti, propaganda and social media.

This fall, we will have a chance to affirm our values of kindness, public safety and respect for human life. Measure 105 will ask voters to decide whether the state should keep ORS 191A.820, commonly known as Oregon's sanctuary law. Voting no on Measure 105 will protect sanctuary for all, affirm our values and ensure that Oregon remains a safe, respectful place for all who call this great state home. Now is the time to get to work. Register to vote. Reach out to your friends and family. Vote no on 105.

Trevor Whitbread
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS

The outrage over Sarah Jeong

In March, a liberal furor erupted when *The Atlantic* magazine briefly hired Kevin Williamson, a conservative writer with *National Review*. Several years earlier, Williamson had written a short tweet in which he seemed to suggest that women who obtain abortions should be hanged. Though he insists this is far from his real view, his fate was sealed when it turned out he had said something similar in a podcast. He was fired almost immediately.

I defended Williamson at the time, but not on account of any potential misinterpretation of his abortion views. My main point was that we should be judged on the totality of our work, and that we are more than just a collage of quotes from our social-media history or some foolish utterances from the near or distant past.

"Your critics show bad faith when they treat an angry tweet or a flippant turn of phrase as proof of moral incorrigibility," I wrote. "Let he who is without a bad tweet, a crap sentence or even a deplorable opinion cast the first stone."

Not surprisingly, some on the left pilloried me for that argument. So allow me to apply precisely the same logic in defense of my soon-to-be colleague at *The New York Times*, Korean-American technology writer Sarah Jeong, who is joining the editorial board with her own extensive history of unfortunate tweets.

Among these: "White men are bull—"; "#CancelWhitePeople"; "oh man it's kind of sick how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men" and "f— white women lol." She has also bashed police, called for censoring a fellow journalist, and believed the 2014 University of Virginia rape hoax, in the course of which she lashed out at "white men" and "white college boys."

We should call many of these tweets for what they are: racist. I've seen some acrobatic efforts to explain why Jeong's tweets should be treated as "quasi-satirical," hyperbolic and a function of "social context." But the criteria for racism is either objective or it's meaningless: If liberals get to decide for themselves who is or isn't a racist according to their political lights, conservatives will be within their rights to ignore them.

Also worth noting is the leftist double standard when it comes to social-media transgressions. In February, my centrist colleague Bari Weiss celebrated U.S. figure skater Mirai Nagasu's historic triple

BRET STEPHENS
Comment

axel by tweeting a line from the musical "Hamilton": "Immigrants: They get the job done." Left-wing social media went berserk over this alleged "othering" of Nagasu, who was born in California to immigrant parents.

By contrast, the left has been nothing if not aggressive in its defense of Jeong. That's the right thing to do, but it's also rank hypocrisy coming from many of the same people who loudly demanded the ouster of Williamson, Weiss or, well, me. The tests for who gets to work at publications like *The Times* or *The Atlantic* ought to revolve around considerations of liveliness, integrity, maturity and talent. When ideology becomes the litmus test, we're on the road to Pravda.

My own misgivings about Jeong's tweets have less to do with their substance than with their snarky tone, occasional meanness and sheer number: 103,000 over some nine years, averaging about 31 tweets a day. (Donald Trump averages only 11.)

But that's the way we live now — unfiltered — and many of us, including me, have been late to appreciate Twitter's narcotic power to bring out the worst in ourselves. Undigested thoughts. Angry retorts. Jokes that don't land. Points made in haste. All the mental burps and inner screams that wisely used to be left unspoken — or, if spoken, little heard and seldom recorded.

I've spent the last few days reading some of Jeong's longer-form journalism. It's consistently smart and interesting and as distant from some of her more notorious social-media output as a brain is from a bottom. But you'll struggle to find her articles on an internet search, because her serious work is overwhelmed by the controversy her tweets have generated.

Is it ultimately her fault for writing those ugly tweets? Yes. Does it represent the core truth of who she is? I doubt it. Anyone who has been the victim of the social-media furies knows just how distorting and dishonest those furies can be. I'm routinely described on social media as an Arab-hating, climate-denying, pedophile apologist. It's enough for me that my family, friends and employer know I'm none of those things. God save us all when those pillars crumble in the face of our new culture of denunciation.

Bret Stephens is a columnist for the *New York Times*.