

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Driverless cars are closer than they appear

The average Oregonian might not realize it, but Pendleton is on the forefront of autonomous technology.

The UAS Range at the airport is flight-testing some of the early concept aerial vehicles that could very well fill our skies in a generation. Or sooner. One company — Airbus subsidiary A³ — is even testing a self-flying air taxi under the project name Vahana.

Getting certified to do such work took the coordination of the FAA, city of Pendleton and University of Alaska-Fairbanks. It's closely monitored to make sure the new air traffic and the old don't mix in catastrophic ways.

There's no such oversight for driverless automobiles in Oregon, or rules on the books for what happens when these vehicles are tested and ready for the road.

It may not seem like the most pressing problem for the state. We're

smack in the middle of a PERS crisis that's only going to get worse, health care in rural Oregon is getting harder to afford — or even find — and our summers are filled with wildfires and drought. Driverless cars are a thing of the future.

But regulations often chase technological advances, which can create a dangerous or unfair gap. It's valuable to look ahead at what's around the bend, even if a crash isn't imminent.

At least two companies — Daimler and Intel — have reported plans to the Oregon Department of Transportation to test autonomous vehicles, according to a story from our Capital Bureau. An Oregon task force has recommended creating rules to test such vehicles on state roads.

Regulations will revolve around not only safety, but who's responsible when something goes wrong. It's hard to imagine the roads becoming any



AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File

In this Dec. 13, 2016 file photo, an Uber driverless car waits in traffic during a test drive in San Francisco.

more dangerous, but when self-driven vehicles collide with others, liability will come into play. Is a vehicle's manufacturer held to the same standard as a drunk driver if a control glitch or system failure causes a crash? Or is it up to an operating company to validate the safety of its vehicles? What role does an occupant or owner play?

The task force will look at these questions, as well as potential regulations, and may have preliminary rules in place by 2021, according to Rep. Susan McLain, who chairs the House Committee on Transportation Policy.

Technology is a moving target, but the state needs to stay focused on it.

OTHER VIEWS

Dems move Kavanaugh goalposts far, far away

Ask any casual observer what the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court confirmation fight is about, and the answer will be the allegation that at a high school party 36 years ago, when Kavanaugh was 17, he drunkenly forced then-15-year-old Christine Ford onto a bed, tried to undress her and, when she tried to scream, covered her mouth with his hand.



BYRON YORK
Comment

That is now old news. In recent days, immediately after Senate Republicans and President Trump agreed to Democratic demands that the FBI investigate the 1982 incident, the Kavanaugh goal posts have moved dramatically. Now, a key issue is Kavanaugh's teenage drinking, and whether he lied to the Senate Judiciary Committee when he was asked about his drinking practices both in high school and at Yale University.

"Lying to Congress is a federal crime," Sen. Bernie Sanders noted in a letter to Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles Grassley. "Kavanaugh's truthfulness with the Senate goes to the very heart of whether he should be confirmed to the court."

The new developments raised two questions. One, did Kavanaugh actually lie to the Senate about his drinking? And two, why are Democrats, now that they have finally won the FBI investigation they wanted into the sexual misconduct allegations against Kavanaugh, suddenly making a bigger deal of his drinking?

On the first, Kavanaugh clearly told the Senate he drank in high school and college. He told the Senate he sometimes drank to excess. But he said he did not black out, nor did he drink so much that he could not remember events that took place while he was drinking.

"I drank beer with my friends," Kavanaugh testified. "Almost everyone did. Sometimes I had too many beers. Sometimes others did. I liked beer. I still like beer. But I did not drink beer to the

point of blacking out, and I never sexually assaulted anyone."

That was pretty clear. Kavanaugh repeated it when the Republican-appointed prosecutor, Rachel Mitchell, pressed him on whether he sometimes drank so much that he forgot what he did when he was drinking.

"Have you ever passed out from drinking?"

"I — passed out would be — no, but I've gone to sleep, but — but I've never blacked out," Kavanaugh said. "That's the — that's the — the allegation, and that — that — that's wrong."

Some Democrats and their allies in the press suggested Kavanaugh lied in his exchanges with Mitchell and the Democratic senators. But how? Kavanaugh was quite open about the fact that he drank in high school and in college, and also about the fact that he sometimes drank

too much. He denied having alcohol-related blackouts, but said he had "gone to sleep" after drinking. On another occasion, responding to Sen. Amy Klobuchar, he said "I don't know" when asked if he had ever drunk so much that he didn't remember what happened the night before. It's hard to see where the "federal crime," as Sen. Sanders put it, is in that testimony.

But *The Washington Post* reported that "many Democrats have called for the FBI to take a broader look at whether Kavanaugh may have misled senators by minimizing his carousing behavior in high school and college." In particular, Democrats want to press the question of whether Kavanaugh ever blacked out from having too much to drink.

Why? The answer is the theory behind the Democratic attacks on Kavanaugh. The most serious allegation against Kavanaugh is, of course, Christine Ford's. Kavanaugh has strongly and unequivocally

denied it. The problem for Democrats is that there is no contemporaneous evidence to support Ford's claim. By her own account, Ford told no one of what happened at the time. She told no one in the next few years. No one in the next few decades. No one for 30 years, until, in 2012, when Ford says she told her therapist what had happened to her long ago.

The people Ford claims were at the home where she says Kavanaugh attacked her, including one close friend of Ford's, have said they have no memories that support her account.

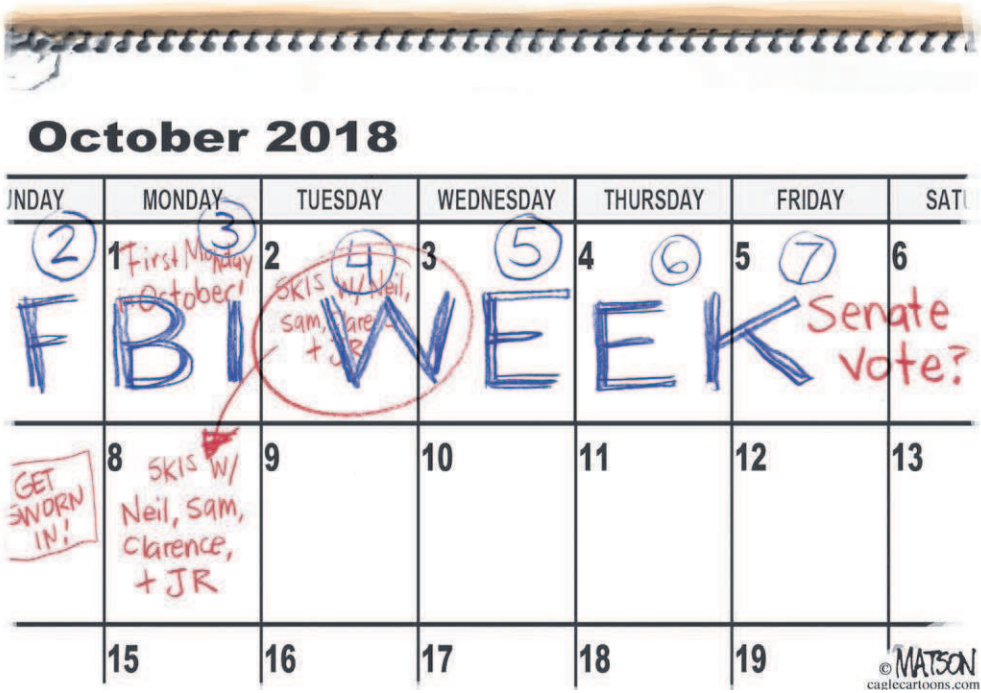
So the Ford case is quite hard to make. And that is where, for Democrats, Kavanaugh's supposed blackouts come in. With no contemporaneous evidence that the Ford attack happened, Democrats are trying to make the case that it could have happened. What if Kavanaugh got drunk, attacked Ford and later didn't remember that he did it?

That is the theory behind some Democratic senators' questioning of Kavanaugh last week. The idea was to get Kavanaugh to admit alcohol-induced memory loss and thus undermine his firm contention that he did not do what Ford alleged. How could he really know? He himself admitted that he sometimes drank so much he couldn't remember what happened the night before. He could have attacked Christine Ford in an alcoholic blackout and never remember that he did it.

The problem, of course, is that is all anti-Kavanaugh theorizing. There's no evidence to support it, just as there is no evidence beyond Christine Ford's word to support the original attack allegation. But it's what Democrats have to work with right now, and it's why they are trying to change the subject from sexual misconduct to Kavanaugh's teenage drinking.

■

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



YOUR VIEWS

In defense of Hermiston's non-student days

Recently a letter about the school calendar was published. I have a different viewpoint. There is a reason for every item on this calendar. The year begins with in-service week. Teachers walk into blank rooms with the furniture in a pile. It takes time to prepare so students come into an inviting place ready for them — more time than allotted. I live near Rocky Heights and teachers were there, unpaid, two weeks earlier. Also that week teachers work together to make schedules, set up groups, and learn to use new technology and curriculum. And don't forget the annual safety class. Teachers master how to handle any emergency — injury, illness, seizure, fire, earthquake, or God forbid a shooter. I, for

one, don't want them to skip that training.

That first letter does not like "transition days." These come at the end of terms. Teachers prepare grades and report cards. Secondary teachers often have 150 or more students and don't just write down A,B,C. Most classes have culminating activities such as final exams, essays, lab reports or term papers. Do you know how long it takes to grade 150 term papers? Elementary teachers grade six to eight different subjects and also meet in groups to discuss reading growth of every student using evidence-based assessments of accuracy, fluency and comprehension. They determine if instruction is producing desired growth or what changes should be made. This is done for math as well. This is vital to the education of our children and should continue, even if it takes

some time.

I find it shocking that anyone would object to parent-teacher conferences. I see great value in meeting one-on-one with teachers to discuss progress and better enable parents to support their child. The day after these conferences there is no school because the teachers have worked until 8 p.m. part of that week, and are exhausted. Teachers need rest occasionally — they are not getting it on the weekends. Last week there were teachers at Rocky working both Saturday and Sunday.

There is also no school the day before Thanksgiving. Statistically, that day was poorly attended and students missed vital instruction. Many families travel that day. It benefits everyone to have class another day instead.

I think the calendar does a reasonable job

of meeting the needs of Hermiston families and school staff. For those who still don't like it, I will expect to see them at school board meetings. They take input on the calendar every year.

Shelley Wilson
Hermiston

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