

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

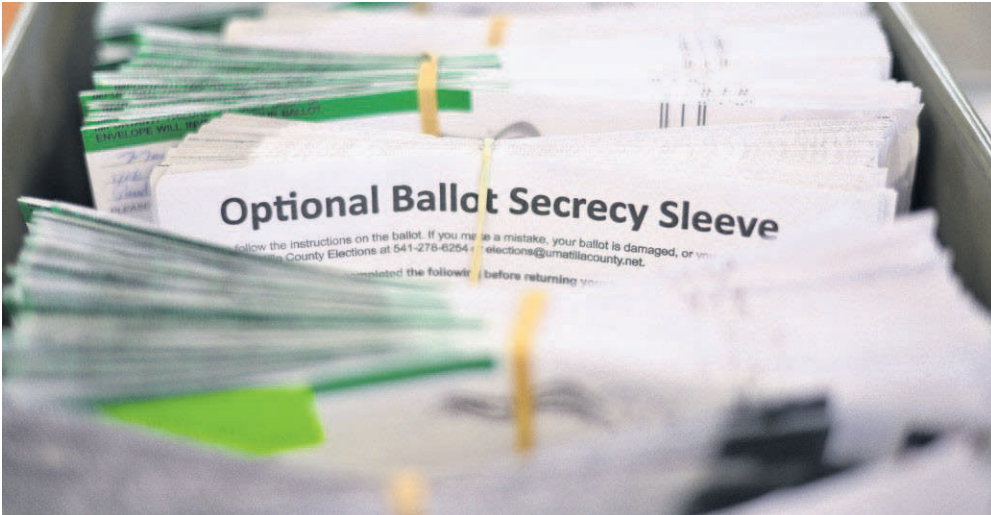
Half-measures and full consequences

The initiative process is the citizenry’s tool to directly enact change in state government. It can be used to answer questions the Legislature is unwilling to tackle (as in Measure 91 in 2014, which legalized recreational marijuana), direct state funding (Measure 98, 2016, which required additional dollars to fund student dropout prevention) or change an existing law (Measure 105, 2018, which would end Oregon’s sanctuary status). Sometimes the issues are small and obscure, other times wide-spread and conspicuous. Like all tools, measures can be helpful in fixing problems in the state. But in the wrong hands, they can create bigger ones. In each of the five statewide measures on the November ballot, we hope voters take a good look at the problems they claim to solve, the means by which they intend to solve them and potential consequences. We believe it is up to the backers of each measure to make their case and answer any and all concerns before earning a vote. In our evaluation, we have not found a compelling reason to vote yes on any of the five. Here’s a brief explanation of each, and our concerns:

- Measure 102 would end the constitutional requirement that housing projects funded by municipal grants

be owned by the government. It’s a well-intentioned measure that fails to adequately protect taxpayers’ investment. While it may help jump start affordable housing development, it is also ripe for misuse by the private sector and would grease sweetheart deals between public officials and developers. We’d rather see the Legislature tackle the problem with a bill that protects the rest of us.

- Measure 103 amends the state constitution to ban local and state taxes on groceries. It must be noted that no one is attempting to pass such a tax, and this unnecessary measure is solely a defensive move by the grocery lobby against any future tax. Also of note is that the full ramifications aren’t spelled out in the measure, and it’s concerning that auxiliary industries may claim protection under its umbrella. Everything from restaurants to transportation could find itself shielded from taxes. Special interests shouldn’t be allowed to rewrite our constitution to their benefit, and voters should have the ability to decide whether to increase taxes on a case-by-case basis.
- Measure 104 amends the constitution to apply the supermajority vote requirement to legislation that increases revenue through changes in tax exemptions, credits, and deductions. Limiting legislators’ ability to adjust tax exemptions and credits doesn’t solve an



EO file photo
Ballots are counted before the May primary election in the Umatilla County Courthouse.

actual problem, but a perceived one. In this case it gives oversized power to a minority of the Legislature, and, much like Measure 103, is an effort by special interests to wrest control from the will of the people.

- Measure 105 repeals the sanctuary state law, passed in 1987, which forbids state agencies from using resources to detect or apprehend people whose only violation is breaking federal immigration law. In an effort to build support for this measure, half of Oregon’s sheriffs signed a petition arguing for its necessity. That letter contends that the measure is not about racial profiling (the reason the law was first passed) but about better communication among law enforcement. To prove their point, they cited the murder of a young woman in Iowa who was allegedly killed by a man in the country illegally. It’s classic fear-mongering, pointing to a far-off ill and claiming it could be at your doorstep unless you take action. Set aside the fact that immigrants commit crimes at a lower rate than

citizens, and that there’s nothing currently prohibiting communication between agencies, and you’re still left with the big question of why this bipartisan law should go away. Police are stretched thin enough without spending their time and resources enforcing federal law. It’s a measure that would fix nothing while sowing distrust toward law enforcement.

- Measure 106 would prohibit public funds from being spent on abortions, except when medically necessary or required by federal law. Opinions on abortion are tied to deeply held beliefs about human life, and those opposed to the procedure are understandably opposed to seeing any sliver of their tax dollars supporting it. But this measure fails to take into consideration all the possible side effects of such a ban, including its unequal impact on women living in poverty and public employees, who both rely on public health plans. Without a stronger case on any of these measures, we recommend voters reject them all.

OTHER VIEWS

Journalism under attack when it’s needed most

When has the work of journalists been more important? Was it 50 years ago, when America’s inner cities were burning and the Pentagon was hiding the scope and nature of the war in Vietnam? Or 100 years ago, when the administration of President Woodrow Wilson was muzzling newspapers and churning out propaganda in support of the nation’s involvement in what would become known as World War I? Or now, when falsehoods metastasize through social media, foreign governments attempt to subvert our elections, citizens insulate themselves from opposing viewpoints and the president derides as “fake news” the information he doesn’t like and calls news media the “enemy of the people?” It’s not difficult to make the case that it’s more important now than ever that journalists offer unvarnished facts about important issues after asking hard questions. But now, the time when journalism is needed most, is when journalism is under duress like never before. The number of people in newspaper newsrooms has dropped by nearly half since 2006, according to journalism.org.



The president has launched a frontal assault on journalism, and his words have had an impact on his followers. A recent poll indicates 43 percent of Republicans believe President Donald Trump should “have the authority to close news outlets engaged in bad behavior.”

Meanwhile, long-developing problems presented by social media continue to fester. Facebook and Twitter muddy the information waters. They appeal to people who want to read, hear and see only information with which they agree.

YOUR VIEWS

Walden’s policies threaten health care coverage

Greg Walden’s policies threaten health care coverage for the members of our community who need it most. Walden said he’d uphold protections for people with pre-existing health conditions, but he went to Washington, D.C., and wrote a bill that would have dismantled coverage for pre-existing health conditions. Was he listening to us or his big corporate donors? Here in Umatilla County, the effect of this bill would have caused 10,000 area residents to lose their health care. The Mirasol Family Health Center in Hermiston would have had its funding cut. Medicaid expansion is a necessity for the patient base at Good Shepherd Medical Center. Walden’s ACA repeal plan would have significantly disrupted

health care services, which is one of the top three sources of employment in Umatilla County. Will you join us in making sure the voices of rural Oregonians are heard by voting for Jamie McLeod-Skinner?

**Bob and Sue Keys
Hermiston**

Murdock gives taxpayers their money’s worth

George Murdock is the right person at the right time to continue the progress Umatilla County has made with its finances and the reorganization of county departments. Retired Sheriff John Trumbo, in a recent letter to the editor of this newspaper, was right on target when he pointed out that George Murdock makes tough

decisions and accomplishes his work. It is extremely important he remain as our county commissioner. On the personal side, George Murdock is a compassionate and kind person. He is not angry nor grinding an ax. He cares about the future of this county. He goes to work at 7:30 a.m. and does his job. Taxpayers are getting their money’s worth with Commissioner George Murdock. Further, he is able to keep a keen sense of humor about the complexity of managing the day-to-day operations of one of the largest geographical counties in Oregon. George is a true steward of our county. He listens to all points of view from diverse interest groups. He is deliberate and decisive when he makes his decisions. He takes his responsibility to manage this county seriously. George Murdock is the right person

And social media are vulnerable to manipulation. President Trump turns to Twitter to deliver what often is misinformation to millions of followers, bypassing the filter of journalists asking, “Is this true?” Foreign governments have attempted to influence our elections by spreading lies through social media, a scheme that doesn’t work through traditional media staffed by skeptical, fact-checking journalists. The fourth estate has been a check on the power of government since the Bill of Rights was penned. Thomas Jefferson famously wrote that if it were left to him to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, “I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.” Now, when facts are increasingly perceived as optional and bad information clogs the internet, we need journalists asking questions, cutting through propaganda and offering fair and balanced reports. Our republic depends on it. ■

October 7-13 is National Newspaper Week. Sid Schwartz is editor of The Gazette in Janesville, Wis.

at the right time to represent us as one of Umatilla County’s commissioners. He has earned our vote and yours.

**Alice and David Nelson
Pendleton**

Gomolski qualified for council spot

We are endorsing Mark Gomolski for a Hermiston City Council position. With his extensive experience working in our community he will be a thoughtful, approachable and committed councilman. More than anything, he wants to represent the people of this town whom he has come to know so well. Please join us in voting for this very qualified man.

**Gary and Sharon Hoeft
Hermiston**

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