

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OTHER VIEWS

## Dangers lurk for kids on gaming apps

Eugene Register-Guard

As if parents don't have enough challenges today limiting children's screen time, now comes warnings that even some of the most "kid-friendly" apps might collect and share personal data on young users. It's more than just creepy that online ad platforms might track kids' exact locations; it's possibly dangerous and likely illegal.

As a recent story by the *Register-Guard* reported, the mother of a 5-year-old playing a cartoon racecar game with animal drivers was stunned to learn that the app was spying on her child. It shared users' data, sometimes including the precise location of devices, with more than a half-dozen advertising and online tracking companies.

New Mexico's attorney general recently filed a lawsuit against the developer who made the game, Tiny Labs. The suit alleges that the company violated a federal children's privacy law with dozens of Android apps that shared children's data and subjected them to unwanted, targeted advertising. Those apps appeared in supposedly kid-friendly sections of online app stores and have millions of downloads.

Collecting and storing data about kids also creates broader risks. If the data ever

leaks in a hacking incident or through mismanagement, it could wind up in much more dangerous hands.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation isn't mincing words. It urges parents, especially of tweens and teens, to follow their kids' app use closely, to download the same apps and to monitor conversations kids have online. FBI agents recently arrested 24 men accused of luring children on popular online apps for sex. The report says the men started conversations with the minors through apps like Kik, Tumblr and Wishbone.

Apps aren't the only problem, either. The screens themselves can become a time sink and distraction from physical activity and group play. Yet even 2-year-olds will throw tantrums at darkened screens, and they are adept at getting those screens to light up. Who can blame them? The cuteness factor is built into games to appeal to kids.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act is supposed to protect children younger than 13 from being improperly tracked, including for advertising purposes. Without verifiable permission from parents, children's sites and apps are prohibited from collecting personal details if they're used for targeted ads.



AP Photo/Martha Irvine

**Rich Wistocki, a retired cybercrime detective who now consults with and trains educators, parents, kids and law enforcement on digital safety, demonstrates a parental monitoring app at his webcasting studio in Lockport, Illinois on June 5.**

Yet academic researchers at universities and reporters at *The New York Times* have found violations in many popular children's apps. Enforcement clearly could be better.

The dangers of lost privacy and worse lurk around many corners online, and most kids are ill-equipped to avoid trouble. Making sure children remain safe requires parental vigilance and a social mandate on developers and regulators. The best minds in government, universities and

major online players — Google, Twitter, Facebook, etc. — owe as much to families.

Already, some of the recent publicity prompted Google to push Tiny Labs out of its app store. That's only a start, though. Rather than reacting to bad actors, technology and laws must improve to empower parents and prevent developers from putting children at risk.

## OTHER VIEWS

## The case for Puerto Rico, D.C.

The biggest racial preferences in this country have nothing to do with college admissions or job offers. They have to do with political power. And they benefit white Americans, at the expense of black, Asian and Hispanic Americans.

These racial preferences are the ones that dictate the makeup of the U.S. Senate. Thanks to a combination of historical accident and racism, the Senate gives considerably more representation to white citizens than to dark-skinned ones. It allows a minority of Americans — white Americans — to wield the power of a majority.

The anti-democratic tendencies of the Senate are well known: Each citizen of a small state is considered more important than each citizen of a large state. It's a deliberate feature of the Constitution, created to persuade smaller states to join the union. Over time, though, the racial edge to the Senate's structure has become much sharper — for two big reasons.

First, the states whose populations have grown the most over time, like California, Texas, Florida and New York, are racially diverse. By contrast, the smallest states, like Wyoming, Vermont, the Dakotas and Maine, tend to be overwhelmingly white. The Senate, as a result, gives far more special treatment to whites than it once did.

The second reason is even more frustrating, but it would also be easier to fix. Right now, about 4 million U.S. citizens have almost no congressional voting power, not even the diluted power of Californians or Texans. Of these 4 million people — these citizens denied representative democracy — more than 90 percent are black or Hispanic.

They are, of course, the residents of Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Almost half of Washington's residents are black, and nearly all of Puerto Rico's are Hispanic.

It's time to fix this inequity and to make Washington and Puerto Rico the 51st and 52nd states, with full representation in the Senate and the House. A few years ago, this idea would have seemed radical (or at least it would have outside of Washington and Puerto Rico, where it's long been popular.) But it is now starting to get more attention, and it deserves to. Those 4 million American citizens deserve to be treated as American citizens.

I know that some Republicans will claim that adding two states is just a ploy to help the Democratic Party. But if the people of Washington and Puerto Rico want to be represented by Democrats, they should have that right. Plus, they might sometimes choose Republicans, as the conservative pollster Patrick Ruffini has suggested. Puerto Rico's current (nonvoting) member of the House of Representatives is a Republican, Jennifer

González-Colón.

Adding two new states is a far more achievable idea than many of the other democratic reforms being bandied about these days, like Supreme Court term limits. Granting statehood has been a regular part of this country's history. It happened in every decade from the Constitution's ratification in the 1780s through the 1910s, when Arizona and New

Mexico joined. Then it happened again in 1959, with Alaska and Hawaii. That most recent expansion was now 59 years ago, which means the country has never gone so long without adding a new state.

To do so, Congress would need to pass a bill, and the president would need to sign it. Clearly, the current Congress and president won't do so, but they won't be around forever. They may not be around by January 2021.

If you think about the four youngest states — Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska and Hawaii — you may notice a pattern. Like Puerto Rico and Washington, they are home to a lot of nonwhite people, which is not a coincidence. This country has historically been slow to grant full

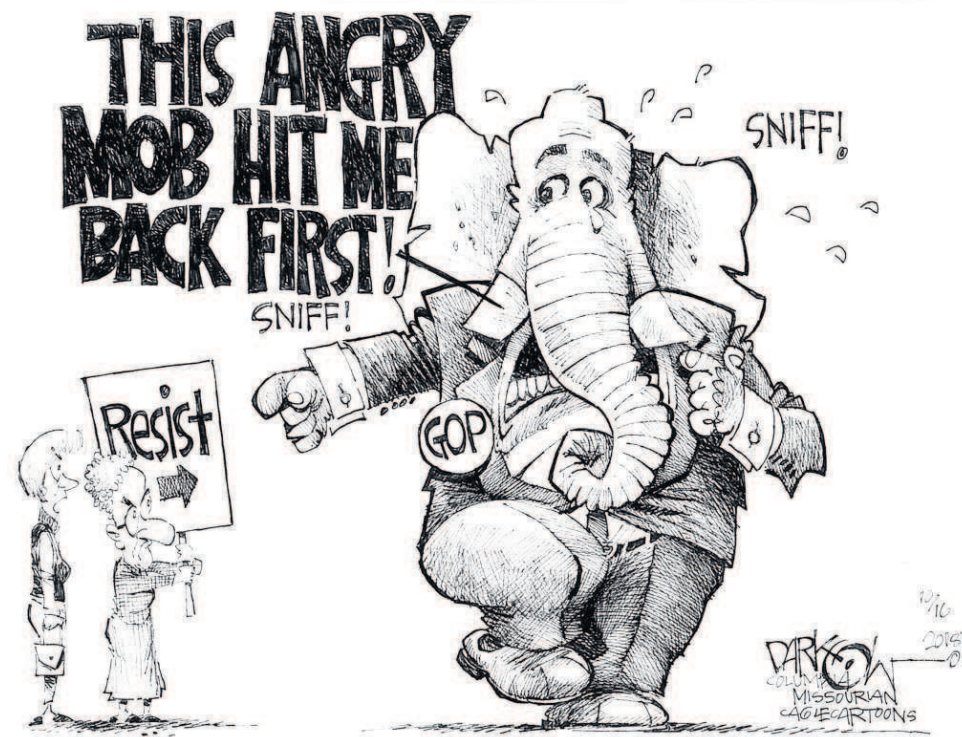
enfranchisement to people with darker skin. Try to imagine if the 4 million people who lacked Senate representation today were upper-middle-class white suburbanites. Or imagine the Fox News outrage if they were white evangelicals. They'd have a legitimate grievance, too.

To measure the gap between the political power that the Senate currently bestows on white and nonwhite citizens, I did a little math. I started by calculating the number of senators per million people for each state and territory. I then looked at the ethnic breakdown of each state and territory to create a nationwide senators-per-million-people average for each major ethnic group. The average for black Americans, for example, takes into account how many live in California, Texas, Wyoming, Washington, D.C., and so on.

The results are pretty outrageous. The Senate gives the average black American only 75 percent as much representation as the average white American. The average Asian-American has 72 percent as much representation as a white person. And the average Hispanic American? Only 55 percent as much. That's right — the structure of the U.S. Senate treats a Hispanic citizen as only about half as important as a white citizen.

Granting statehood to Washington and Puerto Rico would not erase these racial gaps, not even close. The small states that control the Senate would still be overwhelmingly white.

David Leonhardt is a columnist for the *New York Times*.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Murdock supports everything Umatilla County

George Murdock is probably one of the most valuable people in local government as a Umatilla County commissioner. For one thing, he's a workaholic.

Mr. Murdock is a leader in supporting education, the Pendleton Arts Center, Eastern Oregon Symphony, Blue Mountain Community College, economic development, county and mental health, transportation, county road development, and other projects. His support of agriculture for farmers, ranchers, Future Farmers and 4-H programs has been exceptional.

Mr. Murdock even helped me when I was writing my book, "Oregon Pioneer Cattle Barons," although he doesn't know it, as I used some of the ideas from his articles titled "On the Dry Side" when he was writing for the *East Oregonian*.

Please join our many friends in voting to re-elect George Murdock as one of our Umatilla County commissioners.

Dr. Dorys C. Grover  
Pendleton

### Round-Up continues to diversify, give back

A recent letter rightfully pointed to the need for more diverse leadership in various community organizations including the Pendleton Round-Up Board. I would quickly point out that with the election of the late Heather Corey, the transition is taking place.

The writer referred to the city giving the Round-Up a handout, to which I'm not certain what was intended; however, I would point out that years

ago the Round-Up developed and gave to the city Roy Raley Park along with the rodeo complex. For the 2010 centennial the city gave the rodeo grounds back to the Round-Up to finance and build the new stadium, since the city was unable to fund the project. This year the Round-Up purchased the Albertson's property, removed the building and now is providing, without charge, a new parking area, which has been used extensively for many community activities at the Round-Up facilities.

Furthermore, when the city owned the rodeo complex no property taxes were paid to the county; however since the ownership has reverted to the Round-Up it pays a handsome property tax to the benefit of the community, while to the west of us the new Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center (EOTEC) pays no property taxes. If there is a handout it may be to the communities in our county and not the Round-Up.

Mike Thorne  
Pendleton

### Keeping Walden has advantages

There are advantages to keep Greg Walden in office. Republicans are anxious to keep majorities in Congress. Republicans have reduced taxes. Republicans now have the lowest unemployment in years and the economy is strong. Representative Greg Walden, because of his length in office, is chairman of an important committee.

Because of these things, it is important to keep him in office, more so now than ever before.

Don Peterson  
Pendleton

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