

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the minor mistakes coming out of the state elections department that are chipping away at the integrity of the process.

In Umatilla County, there were about 150 voters guides delivered to households that were missing information about local races or measures.

In Wallowa County, dozens of voters are reporting they received the wrong ballots that don't include local races.

Both county election departments are pointing to the private vendors that handle printing and mailing as the problem. That comes with the territory when farming out work to third parties.

Oregon's electoral process has a lot going for it. Vote by mail removes access problems other states face, and the paper ballot ensures accountability in a way voting machines don't. The Motor Voter rule puts a ballot in nearly every eligible hand, and the impetus on every voter to do their job.

But even so, there are problems that must be worked out. Mistakes — even small ones — leave voters feeling the system is broken. We hope the state takes these issues seriously.

A tip of the hat to the West County Trails Project, which received a \$150,000 bump from the National Park Service to connect 25 miles of trails in the greater Hermiston area.

It's a beautiful area, and the Umatilla and Columbia river views are woefully underutilized. New trails creating a connected system for walking, running, biking and horseback riding will help make the most of that bounty.

The money will help plan the routes and estimate the full cost, and community meetings will be planned to help inform the process.

A project of this scope takes money, time and careful planning, and we're glad to see a little of the former



EO Media Group photo

Ballots are counted by volunteers during an Oregon special election.

coming this way.

A kick in the pants to the fact we won't get to see a Pendleton/Hermiston football game this season.

We know, we know, there's no one to blame but the changing times. Hermiston was right to join up with Washington schools, and we're glad they're saving money and time on travel.

But with Pendleton playing its best football in at least a decade

and flirting with a No. 1 ranking in Oregon, and Hermiston eying a title in the competitive Mid-Columbia Conference, this would be the perfect year to see a head-to-head matchup, even in a nonleague setting.

Who knows, it may have even packed the expansive Round-Up Stadium.

At least this new set-up gives us a chance to full-heartedly root for both teams the rest of the way. Go Bucks and go Bulldogs.

OTHER VIEWS

I'm an American nationalist

Here's a question: To which layer of society do you feel most attached: your neighborhood, town, county, state, nation or humanity as a whole?

I've put that question to a lot of people. About 5 percent say they feel most connected to humanity as a whole. A vast majority of the rest say their strongest attachment is to the local — their neighborhood or town.

I get that. Though we've moved around a lot, my family has a clear home base. If you start at East 15th Street in lower Manhattan and walk 2 miles south, you will have walked by where my great-grandfather had his butcher shop, where my maternal grandfather practiced law, where my father lived during high school, where I went to elementary school and where my youngest son now attends college.

That's five generations within 2 miles. I feel a magical attachment to that neighborhood. The blocks and street names enchant in my mind.

And yet I have to say my strongest attachment is to the nation, to the United States. You could take New York out of my identity and I'd be sort of the same. If you took America out of my identity I'd be unrecognizable to myself.

What does this national attachment feel like? It feels a bit like any other kind of love — a romantic love, or a love between friends. It is not one thing that you love but the confluence of a hundred things. Yes, it is the beauty of the Rockies, but it is not just the land. It is the Declaration of Independence, but not just the creed. It's winning World War II and Silicon Valley, but it is not just the accomplishments. It is the craziness, the diversity, our particular brand of madness.

The 19th-century French philosopher Ernest Renan argued that "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle": "These are the essential conditions of being a people: having common glories in the past and a will to continue them in the present; having made great things together and wishing to make them again. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices that one has committed and the troubles that one has suffered."

When I think of the great American nationalists, I think of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, A. Philip Randolph and Walt Whitman, of course, but also the wild mixed-up urge that seizes millions to sacrifice, in sometimes opposite ways, for the common good: Gloria Steinem as much as Phyllis Schlafly, those who stand for the anthem and those who kneel.

Love for nation is an expanding love because it is love for the whole people. It's an ennobling love because it comes with



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

the urge to hospitality — to share what you love and to want to make more love by extending it to others.

In the soul of a nationalist, Yoram Hazony writes in his book "The Virtue of Nationalism," there is a gratifying tension between a person's intense loyalty to her inherited traditions and an awareness that there are many other traditions, similarly beautiful, but that don't happen to be her own.

In a family you can feel when love is stretched and broken. And you can feel the same thing in the nation. Today, when bombs are sent and vitriol follows, our common American nationalism, our mutual loyalty, is under strain.

It's threatened by extreme individualism — people who put the needs of the individual above the needs of the community. It's threatened by globalists — people whose hearts have been bleached of the particular love of place. The greatest threats come from those who claim to be nationalists but who are the opposite.

Donald Trump says he is a nationalist, but you can't be a nationalist if you despise half the nation — any more than you can be a good father if you despise half your children. You can't be a nationalist if you think that groups in the nation are in a zero-sum conflict with one another — class against class, race against race, tribe against tribe.

You can't be a nationalist if you despise diversity. America is diversity; if you don't love diversity, you are not an American nationalist.

"We have chased metaphysical and theological abstractions from politics. What now remains?" Renan asked. People remain. People with their same old need for belonging. People with their same old need to dedicate their lives to something, but with the great unifying object of love — the nation — taken away.

If you stop the love songs to America, take the celebration of America out of public life, you leave people spiritually bereft, robbed of a great devotion. The results are what you see — loss of connection, a tendency to catastrophize, feelings of anger, isolation and powerlessness. People begin to feel that the injustices in American society are the whole and there is no hope of redemption. They get the urge to burn everything down.

American nationalism has been one of the great joys, comforts and motivators of my life. I don't know how anybody can live without it.

David Brooks has been a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, a contributing editor at Newsweek and the Atlantic Monthly, and he is currently a commentator on "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer."



YOUR VIEWS

Murdock involved, suited for the job

I support George Murdock for re-election to the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners. He is an honest, hard-working individual that truly is dedicated to our county.

At work, he developed a new annual budget process with the creation of a balanced budget plan. He recognizes we want to maintain a stable level of programs and services using the resources we have. In his responsibility for the county budget, he has demonstrated to me that he has worked closely with the county department heads to make certain each is a good steward of the funds received.

George Murdock's personal dedication to community service in the county is unmatched. He currently serves as president of the Pendleton Rotary Club. He is chair of the Wildhorse Foundation, chair of the Pendleton Enhancement Project, and secretary-treasurer of the CAPECO Board of Directors. I have firsthand knowledge of his devotion to community causes also by now serving with him on a special legislative committee that acts as a liaison for the community with our state and federal elected officials.

George Murdock has earned our support for another four-year term.

Steve Corey
Pendleton

Why not just go ahead and endorse McLeod-Skinner?

I'm pretty sure the East Oregonian editorial board just endorsed Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Congress, though you wouldn't know it from their headline.

Earlier this week, they seemed genuinely impressed by Jamie's energized, constituent-focused campaign. They give her credit for being a moderate candidate that "makes sense in rural Oregon" and for

putting "issues over identity" during her campaign's "18 months of research and outreach." Also of note: they believe Jamie has "rightfully pointed out that economic recovery has come slowly in rural Oregon" and join her in questioning Walden's handling of the ACA repeal.

She sounds like a strong representative who is tuned in to our region, right? So what's the problem? Apparently, the editorial board questions Jamie's knowledge of the district. However, in the next breath, they applaud Walden for his growing influence in Washington, D.C., even if it has meant that he has "cut down on his time in front of the constituency at large." Then they name-drop some D.C. bigwigs that Walden has paraded through in closed-door meetings, as a sort of sign that he's kind of a big deal we should be proud of here in the backwaters.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner has generational ties to this district and has proven that she is willing and able to make an impact in rural Oregon. She is no fresh-faced newcomer; we're talking about an accomplished middle-aged woman with an impressive and inspirational resume that includes experience with water rights, engineering, law, NGO management in war zones, elected office, and much more.

There are a truckload of reasons why I appreciate rural Oregon, but one of the biggest is the opportunity it afforded me and my husband to jump right in when we moved here to take on big roles and responsibilities in our respective careers. We were judged by our strengths and credentials and our willingness to proactively contribute these to the things that matter in our community.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner is an excellent candidate and she should be judged by the same standards. If you read between the lines, I think you'll see that the EO editorial board believes this as well.

Christina van der Kamp
Pendleton

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