

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Tip of the Hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Pendleton's Rhythmic Mode dance team on its ninth state championship.

This year's performance again combined athletic prowess, technical mastery, creative choreography and dramatic flair. And stils.

To top it all off, there was no safety net. The team, which performed at the end of the night on Friday, got one shot at its routine. It was nearly flawless, and a short time later it was named the champion.

Pendleton is highly supportive of its dance team, and each year the dance team does the city proud. Here's to another streak of success for the program.

A kick in the pants to the U.S. Forest Service for its failure to complete a Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision, or apparently even come close.

The plan is already a full generation behind schedule — the last one was

completed in 1990 and is supposed to be updated every 10-15 years.

A draft of the plan was released in 2014 to noteworthy scrutiny, but a half decade of work, meetings, objections and revisions wasn't enough time to find an acceptable compromise.

We won't speak for the plan itself — it's a nuanced and complicated document that covers the gamut of issues from grazing to logging to roads to recreation. There's no wonder it would draw criticism from everyone with a vested interest in our forests — and that's everyone.

But Glenn Casamassa, the new northwest regional forester who took the job in August 2018, should have been able to inherit a plan ready for implementation. Instead, it's back to the drawing board.

It's going to take a whole lot of work to rebuild trust with the people who have spent the last 15 years of their lives working on this plan, and we hope to see better leadership the



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Pendleton High School dance team dancers and coaches pose with their trophy Friday evening after winning the state 5A OSAA title for the second year in a row and nine times overall.

next time around.

While we're on the topic of the forests, **a kick in the pants to Oregon House Bill 2656**, which could lock up more than 1 million acres of Oregon forestland by banning timber harvests, road-building and the use of pesticides and fertilizers in any forest watersheds that provide drinking water to cities and towns.

State and federal timber regulations already protect water quality, yet this bill could virtually shut the industry down in some areas of the state.

Under the bill, any activities would have to be approved by the state Board of Forestry. Because the plans would be made public ahead of time, one might also assume that environmen-

tal groups would insert themselves into the issue the same way they have in other timber management issues. In other words, the lawsuits would start flying.

It should be noted that municipal utilities are required to constantly monitor their water quality. If there was a problem, it would be found immediately.

Well-managed forests have long been a large part of Oregon's history — and its future, if the legislature and environmentalists don't shut it down. The timber industry is in every sense the epitome of a renewable resource. Even those who don't like logging probably live in houses built using lumber from Oregon's forests.

OTHER VIEWS

Emergency funding of border wall hurts military projects

San Diego Union-Tribune

President Donald Trump's plan to divert \$6.6 billion from the Pentagon and the Treasury Department to help pay for the construction of a border wall is a frontal assault on the constitutional provision that gives Congress the authority to appropriate public funds. It is shocking that 41 Republican senators accepted this extralegal seizure of power.

But as illustrated by the Pentagon's newly released list of military construction projects that might have to be canceled, Trump's plan isn't just objectionable because of his constitutional overreach. It will also harm national security by forcing cancellation of projects that are necessary for the safety of members of the armed forces and for military preparedness. In the San Diego region, nearly \$170 million that was meant to be spent on construction of a new Navy SEAL complex in Coronado is in jeopardy. At Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, \$175 million in projects may be canceled, including a fire emergency response station needed to address the huge threat of intensifying wildfires. New landing pads for F-35B combat aircraft at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and long-planned infrastructure projects at Naval Air Station North Island and Naval Base San Diego could also be scrapped.

Besides his signature concern about unauthorized immigration, Trump says a border wall is urgently needed to stop narcotics trafficking. But this is undercut by the fact that in recent years, the Drug Enforcement Administration has repeatedly reported the vast majority of illegal drugs entering the U.S. from Mexico came through ports of entry.

The president has pledged to rebuild the military after it was allegedly "totally depleted" because of budget rules approved by Congress in 2011. There is a gap between his words and his actions.

New Zealand's dealing with its gun problem. When will we?

When a terrorist massacred 50 people at two New Zealand mosques last week, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern immediately grasped the nettle. "I can tell you one thing right now," she told a news conference. "Our gun laws will change."

That's what effective leadership looks like. New Zealand's Cabinet has now agreed in principle to overhaul those

laws, experts are reviewing ways to make the country safer from firearms and, Ardern promised, "within 10 days of this horrific

act of terrorism, we will have announced reforms."

Contrast that with the United States, where just since 1970, more Americans have died from guns (1.45 million, including murders, suicides and accidents) than died in all the wars in U.S. history (1.4 million). More Americans die from guns every 10 weeks than died in the entire Afghanistan and Iraq wars combined, yet we still don't have gun safety rules as rigorous as New Zealand's even before the mosques were attacked.

The National Rifle Association (not to be confused with the vast majority of gun owners) will turn to its old smoke-and-mirrors standby, arguing that the killer's hate, not his guns and bullets, were the real problem.

But while it's true that white supremacy is deadly and needs to be confronted — something our vote-obsessed president blindly ignores — without the weapons of mass murder, 50 New Zealand worshippers would still be alive; 17 Parkland, Florida, schoolchildren and staff members would still



be alive; nine Charleston, South Carolina, churchgoers would still be alive; 11 Pittsburgh congregants would still be alive; 58 Las Vegas concertgoers would still be alive; 26 Newtown, Connecticut, first-graders and adults would. ...

Why can't leaders in America learn from experience, the way leaders in other countries do? After a massacre in Australia in 1996, the government there took far-reaching action to tighten gun policy. In contrast, every day in America, another hundred people die from gun violence and 300 more are injured — and our president and Congress do nothing.

In fairness, liberals have often been unhelpful, broad-casting their own ignorance about the firearms they propose to regulate, or speaking blithely of banning guns or of "gun control" in ways that drive

responsible gun owners into the arms of the NRA. I suggest dropping references to "gun control" and instead speaking of "gun safety."

It's also true that there are no simple solutions. The U.S. now has more guns than people, so criminals have a steady supply — and so do ordinary Americans at a time when suicides are at a 30-year high.

But gun laws do make a difference. When Connecticut tightened licensing laws in 1995, firearm homicide rates dropped by 40 percent. And when Missouri eased gun laws in 2007, gun homicide rates surged by 25 percent.

Polls show some measures have broad backing. For starters, more than 90 percent even of gun owners support universal background checks to ensure that people are legally allowed to own a gun before they buy one.

Astonishingly, about 22 percent of guns in the U.S. are still acquired without a background check. In parts of the U.S., you need a more thorough background check to adopt a dog than to acquire a semi-automatic AR-15 weapon.

The House passed a bill last month to require universal background checks, but it has little chance in the Senate this year.

Another basic step: Keep guns out of the hands of people shown to present a danger to themselves or others, such as when they are suicidal or threatening a domestic partner. Fourteen states have such "red flag" laws, and similar legislation is before Congress to achieve something similar at a national level.

We should likewise invest more in "smart guns" that can be fired only by an authorized person; it's outrageous that my phone requires a pin or fingerprint but that an AR-15 doesn't. That would help with the estimated 200,000 guns stolen each year.

The regulatory model to follow is automobiles. We haven't outlawed cars, but we have required safety modifications (seat belts, air bags) and limited access to them (licenses, bans after drunken driving) in ways that have sharply reduced the fatality rate per miles driven.

If we took this approach to guns, many Americans would still die. But experts have suggested to me that we could plausibly reduce gun deaths by about one-third, saving 13,000 lives a year.

Slowly, the tide of public opinion is shifting. The NRA's extremism is turning some people off, and it seems on the defensive, so eventually we may follow New Zealand. But how many more people will die before the president and Congress act?

Nicholas Kristof is a columnist for the New York Times.

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