

O EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the Hat,
kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the volunteers who jumped into action over the past week in Pendleton to protect against the rising waters.

There’s not a lot you can do once flooding begins, and Umatilla County wasn’t alone in dealing with severe weather in the past week. Hail, high water and tornados ripped across the southern U.S., with more violent weather in the forecast. We’re fortunate that flooding isn’t a seasonal occurrence here in Eastern Oregon.

But the terribly perfect combination of snowmelt and rain did take its toll, and citizens from Ukiah to Umatilla joined the effort to attempt to keep the worst of the damage at bay.

In Pendleton, a volunteer force filled and placed some 60,000 sandbags. Neighbors helped move equipment and evacuate buildings, trying to divert water where possible.

It’s never a surprise to see the outpouring of support when there’s a need, but it’s always encouraging. Whether it’s fundraising, giving time or putting in hard physical labor, the people of Eastern Oregon are willing and able.

Now the water is receding and the damage is being assessed. It’s going to be an expensive cleanup, and one the state should help cover.

We’re also interested to know how much of the damage could have been avoided. Many in the crowd at Wednesday night’s public meeting, many of whom were out helping on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and into this week, were critical of the Bureau of Reclamation’s role in the flooding and response. The office is in charge of McKay Reservoir, which was filled to the max and dumping water as the river flooded below.

It’s too early to point fingers, but the disaster is a good time to take stock of



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Volunteers fill sandbags Saturday in Pendleton.

the protocols and systems in place and figure out if they need to be revised.

In the meantime, we’re thankful that no one was seriously hurt, and that we can count on our neighbors when nature strikes.

A tip of the hat to Al Plute, a private developer who has taken it upon himself to bring second-story housing to downtown Pendleton.

It’s not simply out of the goodness of his heart — he’s a savvy businessman with an eye on the bottom line.

But he’s also fulfilling the goal of the Pendleton Downtown Commission of adding dozens of new units in place of unused spaces downtown.

Housing development in Pendleton requires a multi-faceted approach, with a combination of new and refurbished homes, apartments, duplexes and single apartments.

That’s because Pendleton needs to attract a wide range of people — from large families to single adults, filling blue collar and white collar jobs.

Plute’s latest target is the Odd Fellows Temple on Dorion, which hasn’t been occupied in a generation. It looks about like the St. George and Brown Building did a decade ago, before Plute turned them into desirable housing.

Like others, Plute has shown vision and proved that there’s a market for the kinds of housing he’s offering, and we’re glad he’s taking the lead.

OTHER VIEWS

Measure 11 adjustments are necessary

Medford Mail Tribune

Oregon’s initiative process allows the people to enact laws directly when the Legislature cannot or will not do so. On Tuesday, the Senate voted to change Ballot Measure 11 to be more lenient toward juvenile offenders 25 years after voters passed it. It was the right thing to do.

Senate Bill 1008 — actually a combination of five bills — squeaked through with the required two-thirds majority (more on that later). Three Republicans, including Sen. Dennis Linthicum of Klamath Falls, joined 17 Democrats in voting yes.

Measure 11 was a get-tough-on-crime initiative passed in 1994 that set mandatory minimum sentences for crimes including murder, rape, kidnapping and arson and required juveniles 15 and older accused of those crimes to be tried as adults. SB 1008 removes that requirement and leaves the decision in the hands of a judge.

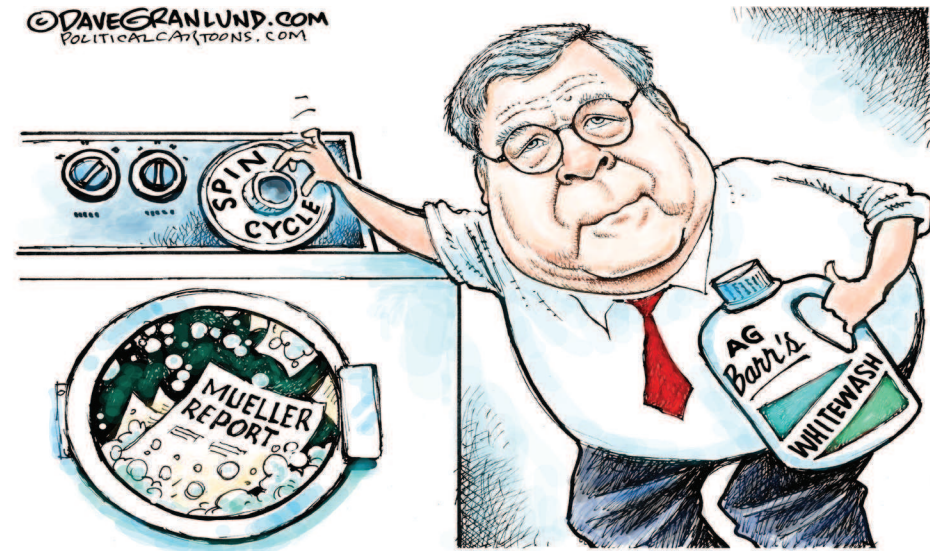
The measure also allows juvenile offenders scheduled to be released from custody before their 27th birthday to be released at 25 rather than being transferred to the adult Department of Corrections. It creates new provisions for early release of serious juvenile offenders and makes sure offenders who commit crimes before they turn 18 but are not sentenced until age 19 won’t be sent to adult prison.

The bill faces considerable opposition, but much has happened since 1994, including a drop in crime rates. Criminal justice experts say Measure 11 is not the reason. A study released last year by the Oregon Council on Civil Rights concluded that Measure 11 “has had no clear benefit to public safety as measured by deterrence or recidivism. In fact, most research suggests that interactions with the adult criminal justice system at such a young age increase recidivism and reduce public safety.”

Scientific research shows juveniles’ brains aren’t fully developed until they are in their 20s, and they have “a unique capacity for change and growth,” in the words of the study. Polls also indicate that changes in juvenile sentencing laws enjoy broad support among Oregonians.

Oregon’s district attorneys and others opposed SB 1008, arguing that the voters should decide. But in the same election that produced Measure 11, Ballot Measure 10 said lawmakers could reduce voter-approved sentences with a two-thirds vote.

That’s what the Senate did Tuesday. The House should follow suit.



YOUR VIEWS

John Murray will continue the port’s vision

The Port of Morrow is the county’s greatest business asset, generating over \$3 billion in business every year, making the Port the second largest in Oregon. Larry Lindsay, whom many credit as the visionary father of the Port and the commissioner that brought Gary Neal, who Lindsay called “the greatest Port manager in America,” has retired after 54 years of Port leadership.

Lindsay and Neal’s stewardship of the Port with the diligent assistance of fellow Port Commissioners and Port administrators has fostered the employment of over 8,000, directly or indirectly, affording Morrow County one of the highest average household incomes in the state.

With both Lindsay and Neal now retired it is imperative to select the right person to continue their vision for the Port of Morrow. Fortunately, Larry Lindsay’s son by marriage, John Murray, has made a commitment to take his place on the commissioners board of directors. The Lindsay and Murray families have exercised leadership, vision, integrity, and stewardship in Eastern Oregon and Morrow County for half a century.

The Port of Morrow is a business and John Mur-

ray is a business owner that knows how to balance a budget, create and expand his business, and gain the confidence of the public by his astute management of the pharmacological regulatory process.

The Murray family has been a great blessing to Morrow County since they arrived in Heppner in 1959. It was John’s mother Meg Murray that authored the restoration of the old dilapidated Heppner Hotel into the successful Heppner Senior Center. Expect the same vision, leadership and integrity from John Murray and vote for him to succeed and continue the work of his father-in-law Larry Lindsay.

Stuart Dick Irrigon

OTHER VIEWS

Every presidential candidate should release tax returns

The Washington Post

One by one, Democratic presidential hopefuls are releasing their tax returns. Years of them. Longtime holdout Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) revealed 10 years of returns at the tail end of Tax Day, which arrived on Monday this year. Later that evening, former Texas representative Beto O’Rourke unveiled a decade of his personal tax information. Both followed Sen. Kamala D. Harris (D-Calif.), who released 15 years of tax returns on Sunday, enabling her campaign to boast that Ms. Harris is “the most transparent candidate in the field when it comes to information about her personal finances.”

It is nice to see a race to the top, rather than the bottom, for a change. This is the kind of political one-upmanship Americans should welcome.

Clearly, part of the point is to draw a contrast with President Trump, who routinely promised during the 2016 presidential race to offer his tax information for public scrutiny. He has instead revealed nothing. His excuse is that his returns are under audit, but that would not prevent him from releasing tax documents he signed and swore to be true — and certainly does not explain why he refuses to reveal returns from years ago, as his challengers have done.

The president’s staff has offered nothing more persuasive. Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said earlier this month the public would “never” see the president’s tax returns, arguing that the 2016 election had settled the question over whether Americans cared. In fact,

Mr. Trump’s persistent promises to disclose more personal financial data remain unfulfilled campaign pledges. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said Sunday that Democrats were not smart enough to understand Mr. Trump’s tax returns, a new defense of Mr. Trump’s indefensible refusal to come clean that hardly rises above the level of a schoolyard insult.

Ever since President Richard M. Nixon set the example, presidents and major candidates have revealed their tax return information to offer voters a view of how these national leaders conduct their private affairs. The returns sometimes expose nothing surprising. Sometimes they result in a headline or two, as when the socialist Mr. Sanders was revealed to be a millionaire. *The Post’s* James Hohmann pointed out Tuesday that the most interesting nugget from the Democrats’ recent tax revelations is that many of the candidates have not given much to charity.

Each of these women and men has years, if not decades, of public service that voters can judge. Mr. Trump entered office with a privately held business of unknown value and a Twitter feed. It was all the more important for voters to see how reality matched up to his claims of private business success.

Tax returns should have been only the baseline for transparency; a thorough accounting of his business arrangements and possible conflicts of interest was also needed. It is needed still. Americans remain in the dark about Mr. Trump’s potential conflicts. As Democratic candidates do the right thing, Mr. Trump continues to insult the voters who entrusted him to lead the nation.