

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

## OUR VIEW

# Stanfield decision to invest in education a good one

Stanfield voters made the right choice this week when they approved an \$18 million bond.

The bond — and a \$4 million matching grant from the state — will help fuel a series of projects, including a new wing at the middle school and replacing modular units used now for students.

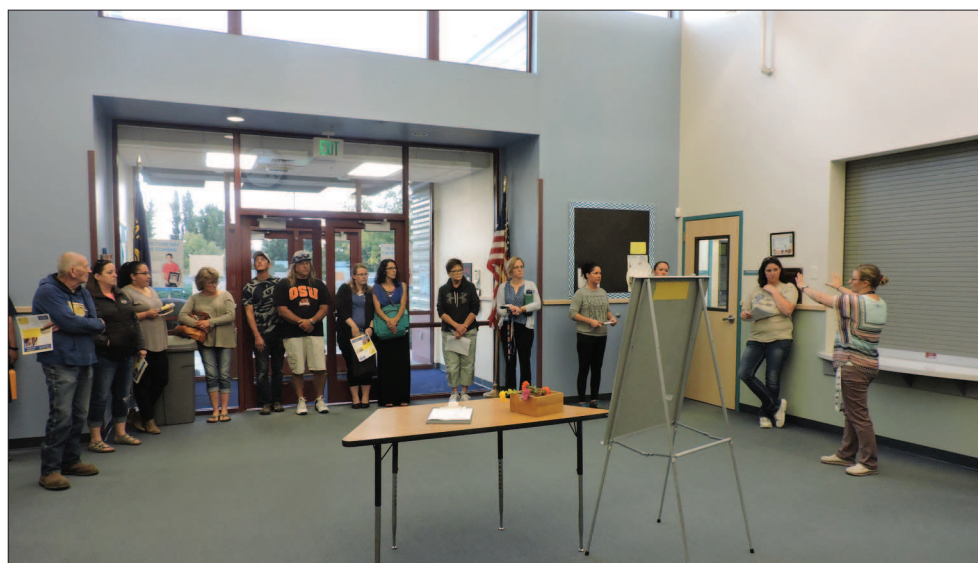
Voters will get a good deal for their \$18 million.

School district officials say the new bond will help boost safety at the middle school while also providing funds for new windows at the secondary school. A new parking lot at the elementary school, along with renovations and improvements to career and technical education areas and asbestos removal, will be completed with the funds.

Paying taxes — for streets, city and county services and other amenities — are a fact of life but nowhere are tax dollars better spent than in education.

No one likes to pay more taxes. But when voters do decide they will ante up more money they need to be assured those funds are going to be well spent.

There is already too much finan-



EO file photo

Stanfield Elementary School principal Lacey Sharp, right, talks with citizens last year about changes that would be made to the school's entryway if a bond is passed. Earlier this week, Stanfield voters approved an \$18 million bond. The bond — and a \$4 million matching grant from the state — will help fuel a series of projects, including a new wing at the middle school and replacing modular units used now for students.

cial waste in government. Examples of waste with taxpayer money are legion and, all too often, easy to find.

What makes the decision by Stanfield School District patrons so significant is the money will go to needed improvements. The district clearly targeted what

taxpayer funds will be used for. They explained and justified the need and voters accepted those answers in good faith.

All of that is a good example of public servants doing their due diligence when it comes to communicating with

voters. That is never an easy task. We are all different, all face different monetary challenges and we all look at the world from our own unique perspective.

Which means when public officials ask for money out of our wallets they have a duty to ensure that the justifications for more taxes are clear.

Stanfield school district officials made a good case for more money. Instead of simply going through the motions and standing before taxpayers with their hand out, they instead articulated the need.

Investments in education pay off in the future. That is a fact. Whenever we can promote and finance improvements to school districts the community, as a whole, prospers. The long-term impacts of a good education — in Stanfield or Pendleton or Eugene — help the state and the nation. It is always hard to justify more taxes. But in this case the Stanfield School District did what all districts should do when they ask for more funds: They were upfront and justified the need.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Voters should get a say on death penalty

Corvallis Gazette-Times

A bill before the state Legislature that would dramatically curtail the cases in which the death penalty could be applied passed the state Senate on Tuesday and now heads for the House.

But in the House, the bill might well run into a major roadblock: Speaker of the House Tina Kotek has said in the past she believes such a major revision in Oregon capital punishment laws should go before the state's voters. She said this week that she would need to read the latest version of the measure, Senate Bill 1013, before making a final decision — but it certainly is true that the speaker has the power to stop a bill from advancing in the Legislature.

Here's a case where Kotek is right: This is something that the state's citizens deserve a chance to consider.

To be fair, Senate Bill 1013 is a well-crafted and clever bit of legislation. The

bill redefines the crime of aggravated murder (the only crime in Oregon statutes that can be punished by death), so that it includes acts of terror that kill two or more people. The bill has been revised so that it includes two other instances in which a defendant could be sentenced to death: cases in which the victim was under the age of 14 or in which a defendant killed another inmate while serving time for a murder conviction.

Other offenses that currently qualify as aggravated murder under state law, such as killing someone during the course of a rape or robbery, would be reclassified as another type of murder, and the maximum punishment for those would be life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The proposed legislation also would change one of the four questions juries must decide when considering whether to impose a death sentence. Oregon jurors now must determine whether a person guilty of aggravated murder is at risk of being a danger in the future. The bill would remove that question, which is fine:

It's an unfair and unscientific duty to ask jurors to tackle.

The bill passed the Senate on Tuesday on a largely party-line 18-9 vote. Among mid-valley legislators, Sen. Sara Gelsler, a Democrat, voted in favor of the measure; Sen. Fred Girod, a Republican, voted against it.

For a bill that has drawn a measure of attention this session, the floor debate in the Senate on Tuesday was remarkably restrained: Only Sen. Floyd Prozanski, the influential Eugene Democrat who's led the charge on the bill, spoke.

The main argument opponents have raised against the bill — and the very point that Kotek is pondering — is that such a major change to state law on capital punishment should be referred to voters.

And that's what the Legislature should do.

The verdict of Oregon voters over the last century on capital punishment has been mixed: Capital punishment was outlawed by voters in 1914 and then reenacted in 1978. Three years later, the state

Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was unconstitutional, paving the way for a 1984 initiative in which voters reaffirmed capital punishment.

Since then, though, the topic has been rarely revisited in Oregon. After then-Gov. John Kitzhaber imposed a moratorium on capital punishment in 2011, he made a halfhearted effort to goad the Legislature into action, but the proposal didn't gain any traction. Gov. Kate Brown has said that she plans to continue the moratorium, but hasn't taken much of an active role on the issue.

Oregon hasn't executed a prisoner since May 1997; the state has 32 men and one woman on death row.

It's very possible that the opinions of Oregonians have changed since that 1984 initiative, as the national debate over the death penalty has taken intriguing twists and turns in the 35 years since then. But there's only one way to find out for sure. The Legislature should let voters decide.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Hinkle provided a great living for families

My mother and father, Leo and Helen Koffler, moved to Umatilla County in 1951. My dad, after starting his railroad career in the Dakotas, moved here for a good job with stability. He worked at the Hinkle Rail Yard for more than 30 years, retiring with a good pension.

The UPRR at Hinkle allowed my parents to raise five children. We settled in Echo with all of us graduating from high school there. The salary and benefits were reasonable. The work was honest. My dad was a telegrapher before the time of computers. He typed up train orders and handled other office duties. He typed using only his two index fingers and he was the fastest typist I have ever seen. He worked with many other folks, Deke Stensrud, Bert Rozema and Nelson Pate to name a few, who provided for families, filled the schools with kids and added to the economy of the area.

Now I read that the bosses in Omaha are gutting the workforce at Hinkle, probably tied to some corporate stock to make additional profits and boost price by economizing, centralizing and laying people off. I understand it. It's an all too common game plan. I don't have to like it.

The problem is I still have friends that

work at Hinkle. They are five, 10 or 20 years into a career and busy raising their own family. They will find other work. There are lots of jobs around the area. Will they have the right training? Maybe not. Will the pay and benefits be as good? Probably not.

Let's hope many of the jobs being created in the area feature longevity, stability and a future. I think that is a tall order.

George Koffler  
Hermiston

### U.S. leaders, economists acknowledge climate change reality

Letter-writer Stuart Dick dismisses the threat posed by human-caused global warming.

However, it's important to note that 58 former U.S. national security leaders, including 35 admirals and generals, sent a letter on climate change to President Donald Trump. This extraordinary letter states: "Climate change is real, it is happening now, it is driven by humans, and it is accelerating." These senior military and national security leaders also assert that "climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States," and that addressing it should be seen "as a threat



reduction issue, not a political one."

Over 3,500 economists, including 27 Nobel Prize-winners and top economic advisers to presidents of both parties, have endorsed a plan to fight climate change. Their "Economists' Statement on Carbon Dividends" advocates putting a steadily rising price on carbon dioxide emissions and returning the money to the American people.

This statement concludes that the price signal will encourage technological innovation and steer our economy toward a low-carbon future. Returning the revenue to households will shield consumers from rising energy

prices, and "the majority of families, including the most vulnerable, will benefit financially." A border carbon adjustment would protect U.S. competitiveness and encourage other nations to adopt their own carbon pricing systems.

A bipartisan bill embracing these principles has been introduced in the House of Representatives — the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. Let's reach across divides and provide U.S. leadership in the fight to slow climate change.

Terry Hansen  
Hales Corners, Wisconsin

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