

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Clear need for new ambulance district

No one likes to pay more taxes. Let's face it, for most of us, the prospect of another government entity reaching into our wallets or purses for more cash is an unpleasant prospect.

Yet when it comes to providing cash for emergency services — such as firemen, police officers and ambulance services — the reality is voters often face little choice.

Voters in the Milton-Freewater area may be required to tackle another difficult funding challenge this fall if local officials can craft a ballot measure in time to provide more funding for the city's emergency medical services.

Late last month board members of the Milton-Freewater Ambulance Service Area Health District met with county commissioners to chat about the formation of a new ambulance district because of a lack of funds.

The new district would cover the city and boost the permanent tax rate from 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A pair of the district's ambulances sits outside the Milton-Freewater Rural Fire District fire station on Tuesday afternoon.

value to a yet undetermined new rate.

Before anything happens, though, the ambulance board must secure the OK from the city council for the idea.

The ambulance board's treasurer, George White, said recently in an article in this newspaper that ambulance service can't survive without more funds.

The issue revolving around the city's medical services is not an unfamiliar one for small cities scattered across Eastern Oregon. In a real way those who provide such services and those who pay — taxpayers — face a Faustian bargain in such matters. On one hand, citizens in the small towns across the region often already

feel as if they are paying too much in taxes. On the other side of the coin is the very real need for emergency services. Obviously, it would be nice if we never had to worry about police, fire or ambulance services but the reality is we have to have all three. People get sick or are injured. Fires erupt and criminals exist.

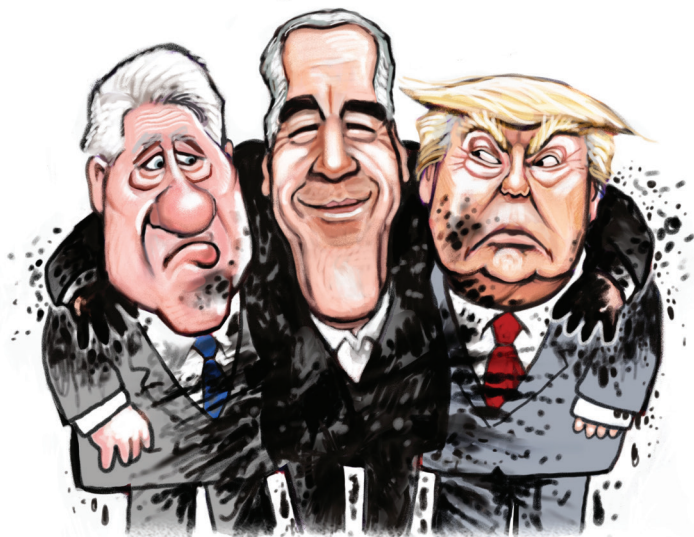
Rarely would we advocate more taxes. However, emergency services are critical to the health of any community. The truth is we have to have police, firefighters and trained medical personnel to serve our great community and we have to pay for them.

Area officials need to quickly develop a plan about how to pay for the new ambulance service district in Milton-Freewater and then quickly — but efficiently — explain why it is necessary for taxpayers. That doesn't mean hosting a single public meeting. It means sponsoring several public meetings to explain the need.

Taxpayers will pay for added services — but only if the need is clear. On this issue, we believe the need is not only clear but crucial.

STAR TRIBUNE
S&K

EPSTAINED



YOUR VIEWS

Walden should get more credit for his work

"Walden town hall turns testy" is what I found when I was looking to see how Congressman Walden's town hall on June 30 went. As someone who's known Greg Walden for a number of years and is a business owner in Hermiston, I know how much Greg cares for his district and how much support he has in the area.

I was disappointed to read that the only piece that was remotely fair to who Greg Walden is was one small section at the end. The news article briefly touched the important work that I know Congressman Walden is doing to help alleviate the burden of robocalls on our society, which deserves much more than just a line — especially when he is leading the charge. Greg is someone I know who tries to reach across the aisle whenever possible, and it is a shame that this wasn't reflected.

Eva J. Swain
Hermiston

Unpatriotic Americans shouldn't be lauded

If printed, this letter will be after the 4th of July. This is our most patriotic celebration where we express our appreciation and gratitude for those who fought and died to create this wonderful country.

Homegrown Nike almost got it right. They produced a new sneaker featuring the Betsy Ross American flag on the heel. This flag had 13 six-pointed stars in a circle and was the very first American flag. This might have been a good way for Nike to apologize for supporting failed quarterback Colin Kaepernick in their recent "Just Do It" campaign. As the first to take a knee during the National

Anthem, this unpatriotic has-been has somehow become a big hero to a segment of our society. He must have tremendous clout, as he told Phil Knight (Oregon's richest person) to stop production of this shoe because it "carried offensive slavery connotations." What a ridiculous accusation, but sure enough, Phil buckled to this pressure and stopped production even though some of these sneakers had already been delivered to retail outlets. Now that is real power.

How ironic this unpatriotic failure as a pro quarterback has been made rich and famous posing as this poor mistreated guy who has sacrificed so much to further his phony cause. I expect him to be chosen as a vice presidential running mate for at least one of the democratic contenders (since Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is too young).

Another sad situation involves soccer star Megan Rapinoe. She is proudly and defiantly gay and has happily announced she would never visit the White House if the team won. Her exact words were pretty profane, so I can't repeat them here. She offers no apologies and freely admits her hatred for our president. I see she has gladly accepted an invitation from AOC, however. Maybe they will discuss the Gangreen New Deal?

Being gay is her personal choice, but she is not playing for herself — she is playing for the country and the Americans who support this team. She should show some respect for the National Anthem, the country and for the office of president. It should be an honor to visit the White House, no matter who is in office. I would rather lose without her than be so ashamed and embarrassed winning with her. The sad truth is if you are a sports superstar in the USA, you get a pass for bad behavior.

David Burns
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Oregon politics needs a reset after high-drama session

The Oregonian

The final weeks of the 2019 legislative session made for some ugly politics. In between Senate Republicans' walkout and Democrats' hobbling of Oregonians' ballot-initiative power, partisan conflict metastasized — both in and out of Salem. Sine die, it seemed, marked the opportunity for legislators and Oregonians as a whole to break from the drama and hit the reset button.

That reset, however, has yet to occur. Frustrated by the death of a carbon cap-and-trade bill, Gov. Kate Brown announced last week that she may resort to executive orders to carry out some of the ideas and policies included in House Bill 2020. While Brown is right to continue pressing for carbon-pricing legislation, she should abandon any efforts to implement such controversial policies by fiat. What Oregon needs most is thoughtful leadership that rallies people behind a common goal, not flexing of political muscle.

There's already been far too much of that. Senate Republicans, mired in minority status, staged a walkout twice this session, fleeing the Capitol in order to deny the Senate a quorum. The first time, they disappeared to delay a vote on a new business tax for education, returning only after securing promises to kill two unrelated bills. The second time, they stayed out even longer, holding legislative operations hostage to block passage of HB 2020, which, they argued, would hit rural communities and their industries especially hard.

Their message, however, was soon drowned out after Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, warned that any Oregon State Police troopers sent to bring him back to Salem better be bachelors and "come heavily armed." But such muscle flexing ultimately won't help Republicans, despite the bill's demise. Boquist now faces a formal complaint in the Senate, as he should — there's simply no conceivable defense for making such threats. And Republicans have handed Democrats a potent weapon in future elections. Why should voters choose Republicans when they admit — twice in one session — that their only tool to effect change is a constitutional gimmick? While legislators must stand up for the interests of their constituencies, they also must let voters be the ones to hold lawmakers and their work accountable.

It should be noted that HB 2020 was not doomed by the Republicans' no-show, but by three Democratic senators who

ultimately decided that the legislation posed more pain than promise for their constituents.

That should resonate with Brown because Oregonians' support or opposition doesn't depend so much on whether they believe climate change is real. Rather, it's how they weigh the difficult set of facts underlying any action to price carbon in Oregon.

Climate change is already having devastating effects on lives and livelihoods around the world, from intensifying wildfires to deadly heat waves and starving wildlife populations. Scientists have sounded the alarm that we are running out of time to stem the worst effects of climate change.

But Brown and leaders still need to acknowledge the tensions that make acting on that moral obligation harder to do.

Carbon pricing legislation is necessarily about inflicting economic pain on those engaging in acts of pollution in order to change behavior, whether it's people driving gasoline-powered cars or farmers raising methane-belching cows. That uncomfortable reality becomes even trickier if options for changing behavior don't exist or are exorbitantly expensive.

At the same time, Oregonians' share of emissions is so tiny that even drastic reductions in Oregon would have nearly zero impact on national emissions, much less global. How should policymakers weigh the obligation to act for the common good versus the hit of a gas price increase of up to 72 cents a gallon in year one? And while cap-and-trade legislation could fund breakthrough research that yields global benefits far beyond any reduction in Oregon emissions — perhaps the single best argument for enacting cap and trade — what's the right level of investment versus devoting dollars to mitigate the harm felt by individuals?

As obvious a problem as climate change is, convincing people what to do, how much to do or even whether Oregon should do anything at all is far more complex. To Brown's credit, she said she will first push for a legislative solution before resorting to executive action. She is also directing her carbon policy office to work with rural manufacturers and transportation entities to figure out how they can meet emissions goals.

But this past session showed that even with a supermajority of Democrats, carbon pricing isn't a slam dunk. Brown should not treat it as if it should be.