

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Public safety deserves thanks for job well done

The residents of Pendleton were able to see first-hand on Sunday just how important it is to invest in public safety.

The Pendleton Fire Department responded quickly and, along with firefighting crews from across the local area, battled a fire that gutted the We Sell Stuff thrift store at 342 S.W. First St. While officials are still investigating the blaze, the owner of the store, Greg Dixon, said he believed the fire erupted because of an electrical short.

Thankfully no one was seriously injured in the fire. But Dixon's business is destroyed, and, let's face it, the fire could have been far worse if not for the fast response of local first responders.

Not long ago the city invested in a new fire station that was built on Court Avenue. Fire crews are operating out of the new fire station and an open house for the new facility is slated for Thursday. Any time a city or a county invests in public safety it is expensive. Fighting fires or fighting crime in the community is costly and no one likes



Firefighters spray water into the We Sell Stuff building on Southwest First Street in downtown Pendleton on Sunday.

to pay more taxes.

But there is no more important public investment than in public safety. Expensive though they may be, police and fire services are — or should be

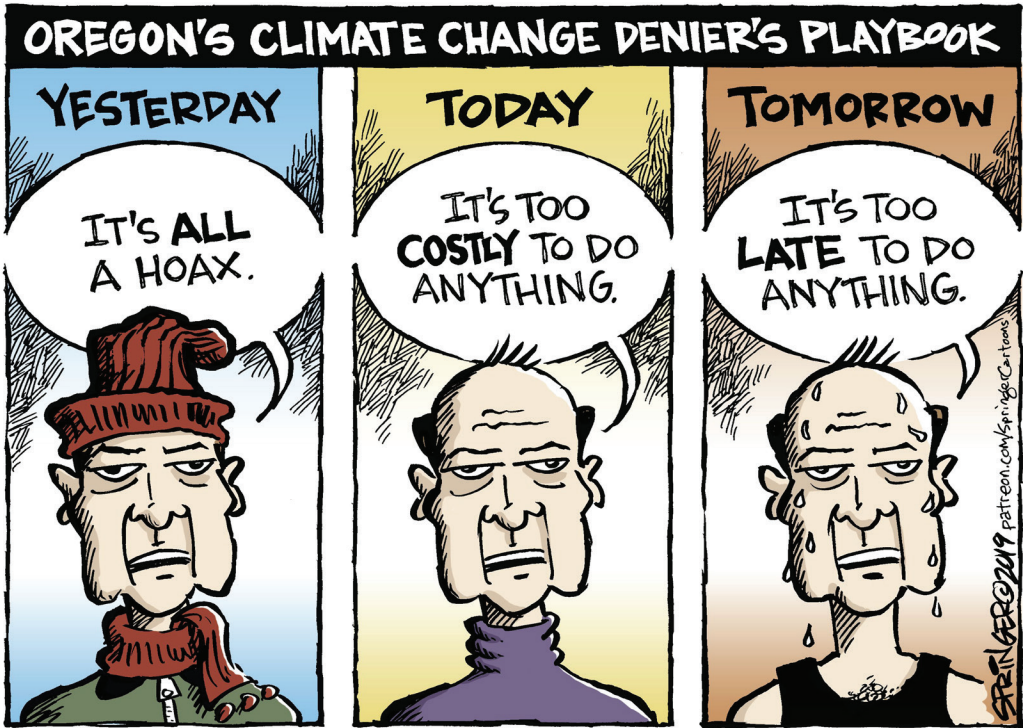
— at the top of any city or county's priority list.

The fire Sunday at We Sell Stuff was unfortunate. It will impact not only the business owner but those cus-

tomers who frequented the store and other nearby businesses. Without the professional and quick reaction by the area fire departments, the fire could have gotten out of control and damaged other nearby buildings.

We all tend to take emergency services agencies for granted. We don't think about the fire department until a fire breaks out. We don't ponder police services much, until we've been robbed or suffered an accident. When tragic events happen, though, there are no more important people than the firefighter who arrives or the police officer who responds to an incident. Then their work, their expertise is the most viable element in our lives.

All of us can argue about the necessity of specific taxes. Let's face it, often it seems like all the government agencies in the state and at the federal level seem to be reaching for our wallets. Yet when it comes to supporting public safety, it is easy to pay. Without these brave and competent men and women, our community would be a far less safer place than it is now.



YOUR VIEWS

School bond will be funded by city growth

Hermiston is an amazing place to live, and it's obvious the secret is out.

We live at the crossroads of the Pacific Northwest, a short drive to the Blue Mountains or Columbia River, with land perfect for growing crops of all kinds, and there are friendly faces everywhere you turn. Businesses continue to open here, bringing family wage jobs and growing the workforce.

We value this growth and owe it to ourselves to be prepared for the families that come with it. The Hermiston School District plays a big role in making the community an attractive place to live, and has created a bond package that

matches the pace of growth we're experiencing.

It's fitting that the bond will be funded in large part by local growth in the coming years. The expanding tax base will help pay off the debt over the life of the bond.

New schools will also increase the home values in nearby neighborhoods and spur further development. A strong school district leads to a more attractive city.

We've got a good thing going in Hermiston, and through the support of our community the school district will continue to be a gem that makes this a prime place to raise a family.

Join me in voting yes for Hermiston Schools this November.

David Drotzmann
Hermiston Mayor

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OTHER VIEWS

Facing crisis, we need real unity

Earlier this year, I spent a few days, all too short, with my mother. At the time, I didn't know she was dying, or at least I didn't want to acknowledge it. She was frail, yes, but she was also tough. She'd pull through.

I ignored the signs that now seem obvious. How she shivered uncontrollably even after we turned up the heat. How she refused meals. How she got incredibly short of breath just getting out of bed. It's hard to watch the demise of a loved one, and so I denied it.

During my lifetime, there have been ample signs that the earth can't withstand forever the pressures of the industrial age. America's national bird, the bald eagle, nearly went extinct. Lake Erie — or more precisely, the river that flowed into it — caught fire. Smog shortened life spans. Acid rain corroded buildings.

None of these problems fixed themselves. Our elected officials devised regulations, and we had to adjust. No more spraying DDT on pesky insects, no more flammable sewage, new emissions controls on cars and smokestacks. But everyone benefited from the results — clean air, clean water, safe soils, and rivers that don't burn.

During these same decades, our environment was also straining under a climate crisis caused primarily by too much carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, much of it generated by us humans. Starting decades ago, scientists warned of the consequences. Acidifying waters would hurt fishermen. Ecological disruptions would kill the trees on which loggers depend. Droughts would threaten farmers and ranchers. Rising oceans would flood coastal communities.

But unlike burning rivers and smog-ridden air, the climate crisis was hard to see, the problem complex and hard to grasp. After many orchestrated and heavily financed attempts at denial, we now understand the urgency. We know the sorts of actions, personal and legislative, that would help. Still, it's easier to tell ourselves it's someone else's problem — people in China or India or anywhere but here — when in actuality, the US has for decades led the world in cumulative carbon dioxide emissions. It's easier to tell ourselves that nothing we do in our own nation or state or community or home will make a difference.

Here in Oregon, certain politicians and wealthy business owners are making climate change into a wedge issue. They're spending big bucks — \$120,000 and counting — into trying to divide us

in a campaign they've ironically tagged as "unity." In this well-financed them-vs-us effort, they're spinning lies about proposed legislation. They're pretending that everything that could be done to address the climate emergency is already being done. They're pointing fingers and trying to make it seem as if no one cares about hard-working Oregonians except timber and trucking companies.

As a woman who owns my own business, I value every penny I earn. I don't want the cost of anything to go up — not the cost of shipping or paper or gas. Anyone who knows me would laugh at the idea that I live high on the hog.

But facts are facts. We can't afford to do nothing. Oceans are warming, sea levels rising. Drought is forcing people from their home countries, causing a refugee crisis. Crop pests are thriving. Bark beetles are devastating millions of acres of forest. Corals, shellfish, and phytoplankton, the essential base of our ocean's food chain, are increasingly at risk.

Warming temperatures threaten our food supplies, driving up costs.

As elected officials in our communities, our state, and our nation listen to stakeholders and propose solutions, we can be assured there will be no perfect answers. With some will come sacrifice. Ideally, the burden would fall mostly on those who've made their fortunes at the expense of our planet, the same big businesses and wealthy CEOs who happily invest hundreds of thousands of dollars to divide us when we most need real unity.

I value hard work and responsibility. I value family and freedom and my rural community. I value nature. For myself and my children and my grandchildren, I refuse to stand by and do nothing while we humans cause irreversible damage to the planet.

We're not helpless. Nor are we on our own. We have each other. But we must reject the attempts of big moneyed interests divide us.

When we lose a loved one, as I lost my mother this year, we're reminded of how brief a time we have on this earth. Our legacy is in how we take care of those we love and in the changes we're willing to make to preserve the values we share. We are living through a defining moment. It's time to put aside ginned-up differences and work toward meaningful solutions.

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DEB VANASSE
COMMENT

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