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EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

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OUR VIEW

Let voters decide on death penalty

Like Kate Brown, who replaced him as Oregon governor, John Kitzhaber wanted to do away with the death penalty in the state.

But at least Kitzhaber respected his constituents enough to recognize that this matter ought to be left to voters rather than the legislative or executive branches.

When Kitzhaber declared a moratorium on executions in Oregon in 2011, he supported the idea of putting the issue on the ballot. This was eminently reasonable — the last time voters decided on the death penalty, in 1984, 55% who cast a ballot supported execution as a possible punishment.

Moreover, that vote amended the Oregon Constitution, which means the voters, having decided capital punishment should be an option, also reserved for themselves the option of changing their mind.



Oregon Gov. Kate Brown speaks to reporters in February in front of pictures of previous state governors in Salem.

Not that the sanctity of the Constitution has proved much of a deterrent for Brown and the Democrats who control the Legislature. They not only haven't shown much interest in consulting voters about the death

penalty, but this year they passed a law that severely narrows the definition of aggravated murder — the only crime punishable by execution in Oregon.

And although their intent was that the new law would apply only to future cases, the Oregon Justice Department concluded the law could potentially also affect defendants who have already been convicted.

The bottom line here is that Brown and her backers in the Capitol, being legally precluded from reversing voters' 1984 decision, have been striving to thwart the electorate's will anyway.

Oregon has changed quite a lot in the past 35 years, with the electorate trending toward the left side of the political spectrum. It may well be that a majority would choose to remove capital punishment from the Constitution. Brown and the Democrats should advocate for giving voters that chance.

OTHER VIEWS

No escape from trade wars' effects

The trade wars are hitting me where it hurts.

One of my few respites from these rough-and-tumble times is to sit by an autumn bonfire with good friends, a Leaf and Bean cigar and some fine Scotch whisky.

But, reports Forbes, the U.S. government announced last week a "25% tariff on all single malt Scotch whisky imports, as part of a wider set of tariffs aiming to punish the European Union."

As of Oct. 18, Scotch whisky — and Parmesan cheese from Italy and olives from France and Spain, tasty goods I also enjoy — will be more expensive.

Regrettably, that means I have to pay attention to government trade actions — which is about as fun as spending hours watching spirits be distilled.

Forbes says the origin of my costly hooch woes dates back to 2004, when the U.S. got steamed that the E.U. was subsidizing Airbus' development of its A380 and A350 planes, which made competing harder for America's Boeing.

To retaliate, the U.S. raised tariffs on the E.U., which caused the E.U. to raise tariffs on, among other things, American bourbon, which led the U.S. to raise its tariff on Scotch whisky.

I'm certainly no expert on tariff diplomacy — I found trying to grasp Economics 101 at Penn State unpleasant — but it seems much like a playground fight among children:

"You're a meanie!"

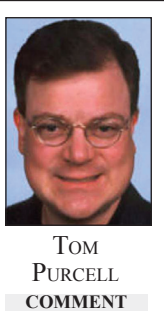
"You're a dodo head!"

"Nuh-huh!"

"Yuh-huh!"

*Investor's Business Daily* (IBD) explains that tariffs used to be how America paid its bills — until 1913, with the introduction of the income tax (and later, payroll taxes).

The average U.S. tariff then fell until 1930, when — early in the Great Depression — the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act hiked the average U.S. tariff by about 50%.



TOM PURCELL COMMENT

This protectionist action spurred retaliation. IBD says "economists generally argue that Smoot-Hawley helped dry up global trade and exacerbated the Great Depression."

Since then, tariffs had steadily trended lower — until recently.

"Before Trump took office, half of U.S. industrial imports entered the country duty-free, with no tariff imposed," IBD says. "In 2016, the average U.S. tariff rate was 1.6% across all products, according to the World Bank. ... After Trump's escalation of tariffs in May 2019, the average U.S. trade-weighted tariff rate stood at about 7.5%, according to a Deutsche Bank calculation."

China, no stranger to unfair trade tactics, is a primary target.

"In 2018, Trump became the first president to systematically threaten and impose tariffs to try and reshape the flow of trade," IBD says.

"Trump's stated purpose for new and higher tariffs? Shrink the 2017 U.S. trade deficit of \$566 billion, boost U.S. production and increase manufacturing jobs."

Now we're in a bona fide trade war — which isn't going well. The trade deficit is getting worse, not better. Americans are paying more for low-cost imported goods they depend on. And American farmers, who depend on exports to pay their bills, are getting hurt as China retaliates.

It's a game of "chicken" that's imposing uncertainty and pain on global markets, including ours.

I don't know how it's going to turn out. But I do know these stresses and strains get more troubling by the day.

They're so troubling that I can't even escape them by sitting by an autumn bonfire with good friends, a Leaf and Bean cigar and some fine, though ever-more-costly, Scotch whisky.

Tom Purcell is a nationally syndicated columnist.

YOUR VIEWS

Yes vote is investment in Hermiston students

Hermiston has the opportunity in November to yet again invest in its young people and its future.

The Hermiston School District is asking voters to approve a bond that will fund adequate classroom space for its students. It's a package that takes into consideration the growing student enrollment and the priorities of residents polled in the past year.

Support for a school bond such as this is truly an investment, and we see the returns every day. Graduates of the Hermiston school system are a huge part of our community. We're lucky to live in a place that adds jobs and housing at a pace that enables alumni to return and give back to the community they grew up in.

It's incredible to look around at the number of businesses started or managed by Hermiston graduates. Alumni are stepping up into service clubs, nonprofit boards and volunteer positions. At Hermiston High School, more than a quarter of the teachers were once Bulldogs themselves.

I have always been appreciative of the education all my kids received from the Hermiston School District. My son teaches at Armand Larvie Middle School, while my daughter is a member of the Rotarians.

My kids and so many others were students who came up through a district supported by the community. They attended first-rate schools with outstanding teachers and staff.

Residents made this possible by supporting school bonds.

Please join me in voting Yes for Hermiston Schools.

Phil Hamm  
Hermiston

Agape House leader announces new journey

To the community:

For the past 17 years, it has been my honor and privilege to lead Eastern Oregon Mission and its two out-reaches, Agape House and Martha's House. It is now time for me to turn over the reins and begin a new adventure.

As I reflect on the past years, I cannot help but see God's hand in all that has been accomplished. These accomplishments are not mine but His, and would not have happened if you, our supporters, had not provided prayers, vision, and funding.

I want to give a brief recap of the major highlights of what God and this community have accomplished during my tenure here. At my first board meeting, I was presented with a challenge: Bring to reality the vision of the board for a new facility. After three years of planning and fundraising, Agape House moved into its current home at 500 Harper Road. With the new building, Agape House was able to expand services to those in need in our community. Also during this time, Agape House partnered with Blue Mountain Community College to open and operate a thrift store.

We expanded our Harper Road location with the purchase of two additional acres to provide space for current and future programs. Seven years ago, with the encouragement of the late mayor Bob Severson, our board developed Martha's House, a homeless family transitional program.

These are your accomplishments. I was only the catalyst. A very special thank you here goes to my wife, Jodene, who is a prayer warrior, confidante and encourager.

So what is your role in the future of Eastern Oregon Mission? First and foremost, your prayers are needed to ensure the organization continues to look to God for direction. Pray specifically that God provides a new executive director. Second, your financial support is needed to allow Eastern Oregon Mission to continue to provide services to our community.

So what is up for Dave and Jodene? I had a plan to enjoy retirement here in the Hermiston area, but God had a different plan. The one major lesson I learned during my time here is to follow God's leading. We will be moving to Arizona and beginning a new journey.

In closing, I would like to personally thank each and everyone who has supported Eastern Oregon Mission during my time here. So please join me on Oct. 12 from 2 to 5 p.m. at First Christian Church's fellowship hall and allow me to thank you in person. Cake and punch will be provided.

Dave Hughes  
Hermiston