

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ANDREW CUTLER
Editor

WYATT HAAPT JR.
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

We must do all we can to safeguard democracy

If you live in the Lexington area and want to have a voice in local politics, now is your chance. The Lexington City Council is accepting letters of interest for the position of mayor and will probably select an individual to fill the slot Nov. 12.

Applicants must be a resident of Lexington for a least one year before they apply. If appointed, they will fill the seat left vacant by the resignation of Marcia Kemp until November 2020.

Lexington is a small town in a rural county, and, at first glance, the open position of mayor may not seem like that big a deal.

That assumption, though, would be wrong. That’s because every elected position in any county inside any state is crucial to the overall health of democracy.

We focus often on how important the health of democracy is. That’s because our nation is in a stage where the very fundamental pillars of democracy are often under attack from one political faction or another.



The town of Lexington sits nestled in the Willow Creek Valley surrounded by the rolling foothills of the Blue Mountains.

Each political party points the finger and accuses the other of undermining democracy, but make no mistake: there is plenty of blame to go around.

Quite often the sentiment is that democracy in a small town or rural county really isn’t that important.

There are few people in Lexington, fewer still in some of the other secluded parts of Eastern Oregon.

Yet, just because a town is small doesn’t mean the principals of democracy are any less important. We believe that democracy is even

more important in sparsely populated areas of the nation.

Democracy isn’t perfect and it wasn’t designed to be. Any endeavor that involves humans has a certain element of imperfection built into it.

But democracy as a form of government has several safeguards that allow the public, the average voter, to be able to participate.

Voters — taxpayers — should be involved in their local government. Sure, often the issues government tackles are mundane and time-consuming. But without citizen involvement democracy loses its edge and becomes something else. Taking time out to participate in local government isn’t easy either. It takes time and effort to do the job right, but we believe there are probably several people in Lexington who are willing to step up. We sure hope so. We hope so because to volunteer for an elected position in a small town is a noble decision.

Now, more than ever, we must do all we can to safeguard democracy.



YOUR VIEWS

Wyden a champion for Oregon’s wild rivers

As a fifth-generation Eastern Oregonian, I’m a strong supporter of Oregon’s clean, wild rivers. I was pleased to read on Oct. 3 that Sen. Ron Wyden is seeking nominations from the public for new Wild and Scenic Rivers to include in a statewide bill.

My great-great-grandparents came to the Burnt River Valley in 1863 and I grew up in the small town of Hereford, just south of Baker City. I spent the majority of my youth roaming the hills, fishing the streams and hunting throughout the region. I will be nominating the rivers that I enjoyed as a boy for Wild and Scenic protection in

hopes that future generations will have the same opportunity that I did to enjoy healthy, wild rivers.

The most important lesson I’ve learned as a part-time farmer is that I have to be a good steward of my land if it is to be productive into the future. In this same way, we must ensure that the rivers that provide clean water and critical habitat for fish and wildlife are protected and managed to keep these values intact for generations to come.

I applaud Wyden for his leadership on protecting Oregon’s wild rivers, and for giving all Oregonians the opportunity to be involved in keeping our state the special place that it is today.

**Mike Higgins
Halfway**

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. SENATORS
Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office: 541-962-7691

Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
Greg Walden
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

REPRESENTATIVES
Greg Barreto, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-38
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

SENATOR
Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-423
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

On Nov. 11, 1969, Operation Fulton Square in the Quang Tri Province was in full force with the assistance of the 1st Marine Division, 101st Airborne Division and the 5th Infantry Division. This was one of 20 operations active throughout Vietnam. There were over 500,000 United States military personnel assigned to the Vietnam War Zone.

Yes, Veterans Day 50 years ago was very different than this year. While today we have troops assigned to operations in the Middle East, we must realize that in 1969, the Vietnam War was raging. Identified as the second most deadly year of the Vietnam Era, 11,780 United States warriors were killed in action.

All totaled, over 58,000 of our troops died in Vietnam; 710 were from Oregon.

Those who survived the war and returned home were never welcomed or treated with respect or honor. Most of these dedicated soldiers never heard the words “thank you” or “welcome home.” As a result, when it came to Veterans Day in 1969 and subsequent years, most Vietnam veterans did not wish to participate. These warriors did their duty, served our country and were rebuked because of that unpopular war.

“We were not supported in the field, we were not supported by our government, we were not supported by the people and many of us were treated poorly when we came home,” said former Oregon legislator and Vietnam veteran Sal Esquivel.

When you look around our capital city of Salem, you can find memorials built to honor the veterans of every war and conflict with the exception of Operation Desert Storm and the Vietnam War. Once again, there is evidence of the poor treatment of our Vietnam veterans.

Oregon can do better. There are Oregonians who want everyone to remember our Vietnam veterans. A Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds to the south of the World War II Memorial is proposed. Over the past two years, dozens of volunteers have attended meetings and performed research. The end result of these efforts is a viable design for a Vietnam Memorial on the

capitol grounds.

The proposed Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds will remember the Oregonians who gave the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. It will honor the four Oregon families who lost two sons to that war. In addition to historic accounts of the Vietnam War, the design includes a memorial to the six Oregonians who died in Operation Desert Storm.

Just as Oregon saluted the Greatest Generation with a World War II memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds, it is time for Oregon to do the same for the Vietnam War veterans.

The Vietnam veterans are the sons and daughters of the Greatest Generation. The Vietnam veterans went to war to serve as their fathers and mothers did. It is fitting that our Oregon State Capitol grounds would honor these two generations. With the completion of the Vietnam War memorial, these two memorials will honor over 75% of Oregon’s war dead. But, memorials do not just honor those who died. Memorials honor all who served.

Veterans Day is designated to honor our military veterans who are still with us.

The average age of our Vietnam veterans is now over 70. We are slowly losing our Vietnam veterans. To show our Vietnam veterans the esteem they deserve, a goal has been established to honor our Vietnam veterans with a Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds by Veterans Day 2022.

Will you join this effort? Please send your contribution by check to: Vietnam War Memorial Fund, PO Box 1448, Boring, OR 97009. You can donate by credit card on the secure website at: www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org

On Veterans Day, we should thank all of our veterans for their service. Especially our Vietnam veterans.

Steve Bates has resided in Boring for 42 years and is a life member of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. He serves as chair of the Committee on Memorials & Remembrance and president of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund. He can be reached by email at vietnamwarmem@aol.com



STEVE
BATES
COMMENT