

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ANDREW CUTLER
Editor

WYATT HAUPT JR.
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Voters make decision to finance education

Hermiston School District patrons received a fair bit of good news Wednesday morning.

District patrons approved an \$82.7 million school bond by a narrow margin, and the significance of it is huge.

The 25-year bond will help finance a new elementary school and another new student facility. The money will also fund an annex to boost capacity at the high school.

Readers may remember the district attempted to float a \$104 million bond in 2017, a campaign that ultimately failed.

Voter feedback then was clear — it just wasn’t time for an investment.

Now, though, the same voter input shows the time is right. That’s good news for the district, for its patrons and for its students.

Investing in education should be a top community priority.

Just like financing police and fire services, education is a crucial element to the overall and future health



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Supporters of the Hermiston School District Bond react to learning of the passing of the bond during an election party at The Gathering Place in Hermiston on Tuesday night.

of any community.

Let’s face it, we’d all rather not pay more taxes. Most of us struggle daily to make ends meet financially. Yet, just like with police and fire services,

there always comes a time when an investment must be made and Hermiston School District voters showed that time was Tuesday.

Education spending is never a bad

idea. It is an investment in students, young people, which means it is financing future success. Sometimes such nebulous goals can be hard to quantify. How do you know, after all, if any funds spent on students will pay off in the future? The fact is, though, that financing education pays off in a variety of different ways. We want our young people to be properly prepared to go out into the world, and the only way to do that is to ensure they have the facilities and the tools to grasp life’s opportunities.

The patrons of the Hermiston School District that voted for the bond delivered a huge tip of the hat. They voted with their hearts and made a choice to help our students succeed in the future.

In the end, a financial outlay to help students build a stable and successful foundation is a noble undertaking. While we can’t predict if a student will ultimately succeed, we can furnish all the necessary items for each of them to triumph in life. Which is a pretty big deal.



OTHER VIEWS

Fire tweets spotlight feud between Trump, California

Corvallis Gazette-Times

There’s a kernel of truth in some of President Donald Trump’s recent tweets about this year’s California wildfires, but just a bit: Overall, the president’s tweets show the same general disregard for the facts that we’ve come to expect.

But it’s important to remember that the president’s tweets aren’t really about the wildfires: Instead, they’re intended as portrayals against a state that he wants to portray as an out-of-control socialist experiment of sorts. Trump has nothing to lose in these attacks — it’s not as if he’s going to carry California in the 2020 elections — and they might be useful in an attempt to keep his political base united.

And, to be fair, California Gov. Gavin Newsom can give as good as he gets, often firing back against Trump on Twitter. Again, Newsom has nothing to lose politically by taking on Trump, and at least part of his appeal to state voters is based on the idea of being a thorn in the president’s side. (The same is true, to some extent, of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown.)

With that said, many of Trump’s recent tweets about the wildfires display a gen-

eral unfamiliarity with the issues behind the blazes. That’s to be expected, in part because the president generally has never displayed much sustained interest in Western issues.

This tweet from the president was typical: “Every year, as the fire’s rage & California burns, it is the same thing — and then he (Newsom) comes to the Federal Government for \$\$\$ help. No more. Get your act together Governor. You don’t see close to the level of burn in other states.”

It is true that in 2018, California had more acres burn than in any other state. But so far this year, Alaska has seen 2.57

But the president ignores certain inconvenient truths about these most recent fires: For starters, they’re generally not burning in forests but rather in agricultural areas and grasslands. In addition, of the 33 million acres of forestland in California, 57% is owned by the federal government; just 3% is owned by the state. And California actually is increasing the money it’s spending on reducing fuels for fire — while federal officials scramble to find money to do that work.

The evidence suggests, however, that this latest tussle of tweets is mostly intended to let the two leaders posture to their bases: And so, the show goes on.

OTHER VIEWS

We must continue standing up for our nation’s veterans

The men and women who have selflessly served our great nation deserve the utmost support and respect. While every Veterans Day we pay special respect and honor to our nation’s finest by visiting gravesites, attending memorial services, and participating in parades, let us also remember that veterans deserve the best every day. That is why one of my top priorities in Congress is ensuring our veterans receive the service and support they earned every day.

This year, we have done a lot for our veterans. First, Congress passed the biggest budget in history for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), particularly when it comes to health care. That includes \$8.6 billion for mental health care services, \$400 million for opioid abuse prevention, \$206 million for suicide prevention outreach, and \$270 million specifically for rural veterans’ health initiatives. A strong VA budget is especially important with the launch of the VA MISSION Act.

The VA MISSION Act, which I cosponsored, was signed into law by President Trump last year. This past June, the community care program, an aspect of the law, launched. This gives veterans increased access to timely, quality care by allowing them to seek care in the community and by establishing a more permanent network of doctors to partner with VA and see veterans close to where they live. The community care program is essential for veterans living in rural areas, like much of our district, because the nearest VA may be hours away.

Another huge win our veterans received this year came when the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 was signed into law. This law ensures that Vietnam Navy veterans who served in the offshore waters of Vietnam receive the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange, a toxic chemical used during the Vietnam era. Many veterans exposed to the chemical found that it resulted in medical issues such

as colon cancer.

In addition to providing necessary compensation to our veterans, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act included a provision I coauthored that ensures veterans in rural Oregon no longer face needless delays when seeking to buy a home using the benefits they earned through their service. I have heard several horror stories from veterans about delays getting an appraisal for their VA-backed loan. Some waited up to nine weeks to even have an appraiser assigned to their case, making them far less competitive as prospective buyers in the housing market — one veteran even lost his prospective home when his interest rate lock expired as he waited for an appraisal. That’s unacceptable. Now, veterans living in rural America will get a fair chance to have their appraisals completed in a timely manner.

In June, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the GI Bill, which has allowed our nation’s veterans and their families to return home to pursue further education. I worked to help improve this benefit by supporting the passage of the Forever GI Bill, which made the benefits last a lifetime.

While we have already achieved a significant amount for our veterans this year, we still have much more ahead of us. I will continue to work to improve the benefits and services that veterans receive and help veterans in my district with any issues they may face with VA. If you are a veteran in the 2nd District of Oregon, and you’re having problems with VA, please give my office a call at 800-533-3303. My team and I are ready to assist you with problems you are having with VA. We will do everything in our power to get results for you.

God bless all our veterans and their families, and thank you for your service.

Greg Walden is the U.S. representative for Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District, which includes Umatilla and Morrow counties.



GREG WALDEN
COMMENT

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. PRESIDENT Donald Trump The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 Comments: 202-456-1111	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
--	---	---