

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the proposed plan to place more stringent restraints on political campaign financing that was unveiled this week. The plan has merit but still needs more work and more input from voters.

The interim committee on campaign finance is busy creating a series of reforms to be pondered by the 2020 Legislature. Oregon is one of five states with no limits on campaign contributions. A committee hearing on the issue last week gathered input from lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle and from campaign finance reform advocates.

Not surprisingly, lawmakers expressed reservations about a plan to reform the state’s campaign finance blueprint. Under a new proposal, individuals would be limited to \$750 in donations to any legislative candidate and \$2,000 for those seeking a state office.

If there is one truism of democracy, it is that large sums of money tend to taint the political process. Lawmakers

shouldn’t be so quick to discard the idea of some kind of campaign finance reform.

A tip of the hat to the many service clubs and organizations across Eastern Oregon that hold annual holiday bazaars. These are wonderful community events that bring people together in the spirit of holiday gift-giving. Bazaars give local artists and craftspeople a place to sell their creations, so money spent at bazaars stays local — something we all feel good about in the era of Amazon. It’s no small task to organize a bazaar, and for that, we’re thankful to all involved.

A kick in the pants to the “porch pirates” determined to ruin the holidays for members of our community by swiping packages that aren’t theirs. Local law enforcement will be doing their best to catch these petty thieves, and we can all help by taking safety precautions. UPS, FedEx and the U.S. Postal Service all offer apps that give customers options, such as scheduling deliveries for a time some-



OPB Photo
Oregon is one of five states with no limits on campaign contributions, and a proposal announced earlier this week would establish regulations that have eluded reformers. During a committee hearing Tuesday, legislators from both major parties expressed reservations about the proposal while campaign finance reform advocates called on lawmakers to go further.

one will be home, changing the destination address or leaving instructions to place the package somewhere other than the front porch. Hopefully, this year everyone can also help their neighbors by keeping an eye out for thieves or offering to grab deliveries for a neighbor while they are on vacation. And, as always, buying from local retailers instead of online prevents the need to worry about package thieves in the first place.

A tip of the hat to Rep. Greg Walden, who announced recently

he will not seek re-election to represent Oregon’s 2nd Congressional District. We’ve already pointed out, on this page and in this space, many of Walden’s contributions, but his longtime performance as a federal legislator deserves more than a quick nod of acknowledgement. Walden put in a virtuoso performance as a legislator for the vast district and his presence in Congress is going to be missed. Whomever wins the May primary — the first step to filling Walden’s slot — will have very big shoes to fill.

OTHER VIEWS

Overlooked Dem debate was a moderated mess

The latest Democratic presidential debate was disappointing. Not because the participants weren’t articulate — in fact, many of their answers were excellent — but because the DNC and the networks can’t seem to figure out how to conduct a meaningful competition that will actually help voters determine how the candidates differ on key issues.

Wednesday night’s debate in Atlanta was scattered. At times it seemed as if questions for each candidate were being randomly picked from a hat rather than coordinated in a way that would give each competitor a chance to speak about the most controversial topics. Ten candidates might be too many to have a meaningful debate, but four moderators, freelancing with no apparent coordination, only made it worse.

Consider the issue of climate change, viewed by many as one of the most serious problems facing the planet. It only came up when Mayor Pete Buttigieg mentioned it in answer to a question about farming, opening the door to a brief series of climate-related questions. Even then, only half the candidates were allowed to speak on this vitally important issue. Not a word about climate was solicited from Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker, Amy Klobuchar and Kamala Harris, or businessman Andrew Yang.

The questioning was conducted by Rachel Maddow, Andrea Mitchell and Kristen Welker of NBC News, along with Ashley Parker of *The Washington Post*. Although they did an effective job of clock management and refereeing, they failed miserably in giving each candidate a chance to be heard. The issue of abortion and reproductive rights was debated by four senators — Warren, Booker, Klobuchar and Bernie Sanders — while the six other candidates were excluded. The topic of paid family leave was presented to only Klobuchar, Harris and Yang.

Real-time tweets from some viewers praised the four female moderators for bringing up, at long last, these two important matters. What a shame that the two questions were answered by so few participants.

Voting rights was discussed by five of the candidates. White nationalism was debated by only Yang and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard. An interesting question about whether more Ameri-

cans should participate in military service was asked, inexplicably, of only Sen. Warren — even though two recent veterans, Buttigieg and Gabbard, were standing, silently, nearby. Sen. Booker, for some reason, was the only candidate asked if he would tweet as much as Donald Trump.

“I’d like to go back to something I wasn’t included in,” said Booker after being ignored during a discussion about appealing to black voters. He quipped, “I’ve been one since I was 18.”

Clearly, with so many candidates it is difficult to give each equal opportunity. Warren, who got the most time, spoke twice as long as Yang, who received the least time. In fact, during the first half hour Warren was allowed to give five answers before Yang, Gabbard and businessman Tom Steyer had spoken a single word. But the greater failure was that some candidates were given obscure questions while being left out entirely on the major issues. Ashley Parker asked Yang if elected what would he say in a phone call to Vladimir Putin. What kind of question is that? To Yang’s credit his answer was far better than the question: “I’d say, ‘I’m sorry I beat your guy.’”

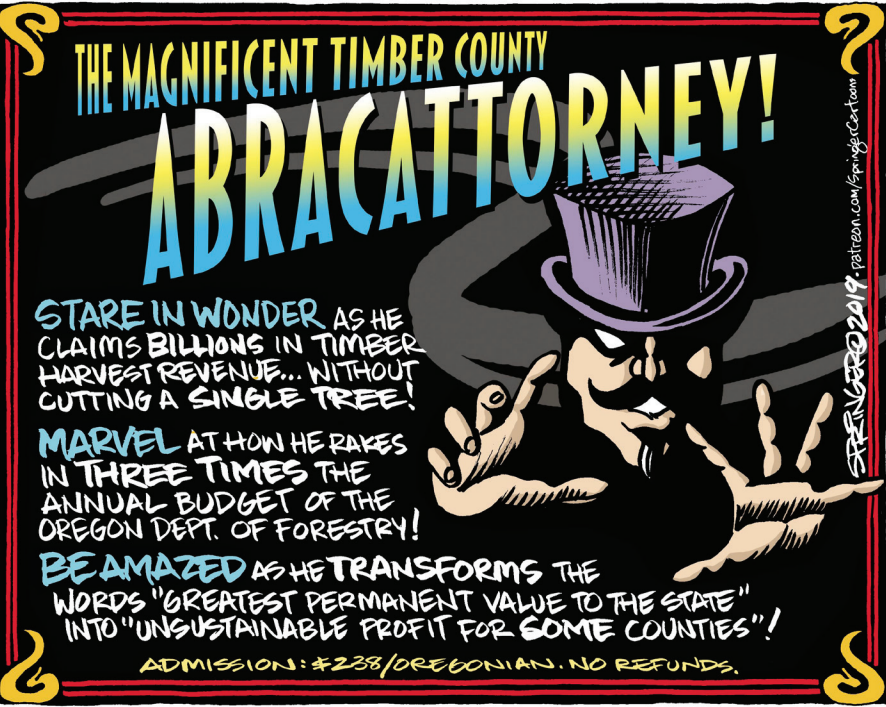
In her closing statement, Warren chided the moderators: “We should have talked about gun violence.” She was right. Despite recent shootings, and frequent criticism that the nation has a shamefully short memory about such horrors, the issue of guns was missing from the debate.

It’s unfortunate that the DNC rejected suggestions to devote one or more of the debates to a single topic, such as climate change. Such an approach would at least ensure that the participants and moderators would stay on point, while viewers could make meaningful distinctions about the candidates’ views.

When it was over, MSNBC anchor Brian Williams praised his colleagues as he gushed that the debate “was superbly moderated,” adding, “these four should be permanent moderators.”

That’s not how I saw it. Apparently it wasn’t even Rachel Maddow’s view. “I’m just glad we survived,” she said, before calling it a night.

Peter Funt is a nationally syndicated columnist.



YOUR VIEWS

Cap and trade needs more explanation for voters

I am grateful to the *East Oregonian* for the article on cap and trade House Bill 2020 (Tuesday, Nov. 19).

The article updated the status of the bill and the myriad of issues that make this bill extremely important to all residents of Oregon. What we need now is for our elected officials to exhibit a little leadership by informing their electorate, through town hall meetings, on the purpose, need and some options for this bill.

There is much confusion surrounding this bill, and this will allow for some clarification and feedback from a more informed electorate.

Charles LeBold
Union

Trump’s apologists have nowhere to turn

The impeachment hearings have revealed a gang of cowardly, craven apologists for Trump who no longer care about the U.S. Constitution, or the criminal conspiracy that is manifest in Trump’s behavior, his crime family,

and his syndicate of cultist followers. We know Trump solicited help from a foreign government to help his 2020 re-election; we know he attempted to bribe and extort Ukraine to investigate political opponents and promote cockamamie conspiracy hoaxes; we know he attempted to obstruct the congressional committee in the legitimate performance of its duties by blocking testimony from cronies. If Trump were innocent, he would be encouraging his followers to testify. Throughout the hearings, Trumpers moved the goal posts: First there was no quid pro quo; then it was a legitimate pursuit of corruption; then it was all hearsay and speculation. The Trump defense by his cult has collapsed like a house of cards as first one, then another witness shreds the arguments. Finally, the entire false narrative that Ukraine was involved in 2016 election misdeeds that serve only Russia has been debunked. The entire Republican Party should now don “Make Russia Great Again” hats. The once proud Republican Party is left cowering amid Trump’s tatters.

Trisha Vigil Medford