

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Don't forget to shop local

With the official start of the holiday shopping season upon us, we would like to urge residents to shop local, and here's why.

When you spend money at a local store in, say, downtown Pendleton, Milton-Freewater or Hermiston, you are doing more than simply purchasing a gift. When you shop at a locally owned small business, those dollars stay in the community. That's because local merchants often purchase items from other locally owned stores. Spending money at a small business in our downtowns helps the overall business health of the community.

Another element that makes shopping local appealing is that small businesses offer unique gifts. But more than that, small business is a distinctive piece of our small-town character. Small businesses across Umatilla and Morrow counties exude a sense of place, of the communities they set up shop in, and of Eastern Oregon. Another key to the benefits of shopping locally is that small businesses generally are the biggest



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Cars pass under the holiday lights on Main Street in Pendleton on Wednesday evening in this long exposure image.

employers at home.

Small merchants also typically invest in the community. That means your dollars don't fly out of town and end up at a corporate office far away. No, your dollars recirculate in the community and are reinvested in many ways. Think about businesses who donate so the local soccer team can buy new jerseys or the dance team can travel to competition. That

reinvestment is often unnoticed, but it is important for a host of reasons, not the least of which is it helps the community in the long run.

And shopping at a locally owned business can be an intimate, positive experience. A patron often participates in a one-on-one interaction with the person who owns the business. The customer service is specialized and specific, and that counts for

something in our fast-paced world.

We are not immune to nor dismissive of the attractions of big-box stores, such as Walmart or Home Depot. The Walmarts of the world provide a large array of choices. The convenience of one-stop shopping offered by big-box stores has its benefits, and most of us this year will journey through the doors of Walmart or travel down the interstates to larger metro centers like Portland or the Tri-Cities to do some Christmas shopping.

We're not advocating abandoning shopping at a big-box store, but only suggesting that when you are out looking for those gifts, don't forget about the unique offerings of your local merchants.

The business strength of a small town isn't exclusive to just one type of merchant. We need Walmart and we need small businesses. For those businesses to survive — and if they prosper, we all prosper — they need patrons.

Saturday is "Small Business Saturday" across the country. We encourage you to shop local this year. You won't regret it.



YOUR VIEWS

'Silent majority' skewing road repair survey results

The public, the gasoline dealers, the hotels, the restaurants, and the large event organizers all oppose increased fees or additional taxes to raise revenue for a city street repair program that's promised to be completed in 10 years, and city officials don't understand why. With very little business experience, they really can't comprehend how thin retail profit margins really are all, too eager to raise fees and taxes as the sole solution to increase revenue.

Rather than make any significant budget cuts, they continue to increase budgets by planting more trees and managing a bicycle trail program, while adding additional dog and nature parks rather than addressing the city's real problem, crumbling infrastructure. They assume residents would rather drive on pothole-riddled streets than cut any "quality of life" programs. As with all past city sponsored surveys, their conclusions are based on a very small sample of the city's population.

Yet, they claim overwhelming community support for more gas taxes and an event fee. They'll be basing their decisions on just over 400 returns, while the silent majority remains just that, silent. The fact

that so few surveys were completed should be a signal the public has very little support for any of the city council's proposals. Convinced, and rightly so, the council is going to unilaterally raise existing fees and institute more should any tax ballot measure fail.

The city council takes great pains to profess their openness and transparency with periodic reminders that meetings are open to the public. However, with the public barred from any discussion on topics included in the agenda, it's really a waste of time to attend city council meetings, workshops, or those of the Pendleton Development Commission. There's a reason those public town hall meetings were so poorly attended, and I doubt it's because residents are bubbling over with joy at the city's plans for raising more revenue.

Not long ago in a discussion concerning the effects of a proposed gas tax on overall prices in the local area, a councilor professed this: The price of gas to me is inconsequential, when I need it, I get it. Unfortunately, low and fixed income residents don't have that luxury, must shop around, and in many cases, buy out of town where prices are often cheaper.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Trump continues to manufacture lies

You could be forgiven for missing it in the build-up to Thanksgiving and the blizzard of impeachment news, but America's fact-challenged chief executive was up to some old tricks this week.

At a rally in Florida, Trump continued to peddle a false narrative that he opened an Apple plant in Texas. As the Associated Press and other outlets have reported, Trump actually visited a factory in Austin on Nov. 20 that's been making the Mac Pro for Apple since 2013.

Nonetheless, Trump has continued to perpetuate the story, tweeting on the day of his visit that "Today, I opened a major Apple Manufacturing plant in Texas that will bring high-paying jobs back to America."

Trump's tall tale masks something — and you'll pardon the pun — rotten at the core about his ongoing claims that he's rejuvenated American manufacturing. And no amount of shine he tries to put on the Apple can change that.

"Last year was the best year for American Manufacturing job growth since 1997, or 21 years," Trump tweeted back in January. "The previous administration said manufacturing will not come back to the U.S. 'You would need a magic wand.' I guess I found the magic wand — and it is only getting better!"

Yes, it's true that manufacturing did enjoy a growth spurt during the opening months of Trump's presidency. But, as CNBC reports, thanks to the administration's ongoing trade war, that advantage has pretty much evaporated.

And states, such as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan, which were key to Trump's 2016 victory, have borne the brunt of it.

Manufacturing jobs in Pennsylvania have shrunk steadily, according to NPR affiliate WITF-FM. In January, a total of 569,800 people worked in manufacturing jobs in Pennsylvania. That tally shrunk by 8,400 jobs by July, and continued to decrease into September, the data showed, to about 561,700 jobs.

The picture is much the same in Ohio and Michigan, two Obama states that flipped to Trump in 2016. The Rust Belt States are now more than "six months into a steady manufacturing job decline. Indiana also has fewer factory jobs than it did in the same period of 2018," Newsweek

reported.

In addition to the job losses in Pennsylvania, Ohio has lost 2,400 factory jobs, while employers in West Virginia cut 400 mining jobs — despite Trump's claims that he's saved the shrinking industry.

"I don't think that Ohio is just a lock in the Republican's column, nor do I think that blue-collar voters are settled on who they're likely to select," Robert Alexander, a political scientist at Ohio Northern University, told the AP in October. "There is a lot of economic angst still in the state."

An October poll by Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa., uncovered

a similar sentiment. While voters felt optimistic about their personal finances, only one in three respondents said the country was headed in the right direction. And only a third of respondents said Trump was doing a "good" or "excellent" job as president.

An earlier Franklin & Marshall poll found that same number (36%) said Trump deserved re-election, compared to 61% who believed it was time to

change horse.

Nonetheless, Trump's loyalists have parroted the White House's line.

"Our economy is in far better shape than it was four years ago," Pennsylvania Republican Party Chairman Lawrence Tabas said during a recent lunchtime appearance before a mixed crowd of policymakers and business leaders. "6.5 million jobs have been created under President Trump, 500,000 in the manufacturing industry, which was an industry that most people thought was done and dead in this country and never to be revived."

Trump repeated the same claim about manufacturing during a speech to the Economic Club of New York, this time inflating the number of new manufacturing jobs to 600,000 positions — which is 25% more than the actual figure, according to a *New York Times* fact-check.

Given the White House's current troubles, it's no wonder that Trump's followers are trying to put the best face they can on the manufacturing picture.

And in the key states where workers have felt the pinch the most, you might not blame voters for once again changing their minds.

John L. Micek is a syndicated columnist.



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COMMENT