

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Walden leaves a lasting legacy

In today's pop culture dominated climate, politicians rarely receive much thanks, but the work of U.S. Rep. Greg Walden stands out as a classic example of what an elected leader should do once he or she reaches Congress.

Walden, as many already know, will close the door on a long career in January 2021. His successor, Ontario attorney Cliff Bentz, will step into Walden's position with big shoes to fill.

Walden did not always get it right, but his best efforts far overshadowed any miscues. While in office, Walden was a champion of property rights, water rights, farmers and ranches and those who serve our nation.

His long political record — which began as a state lawmaker — paid off often in Congress, which means those he served in the sprawling 2nd Congressional District reaped the benefits.

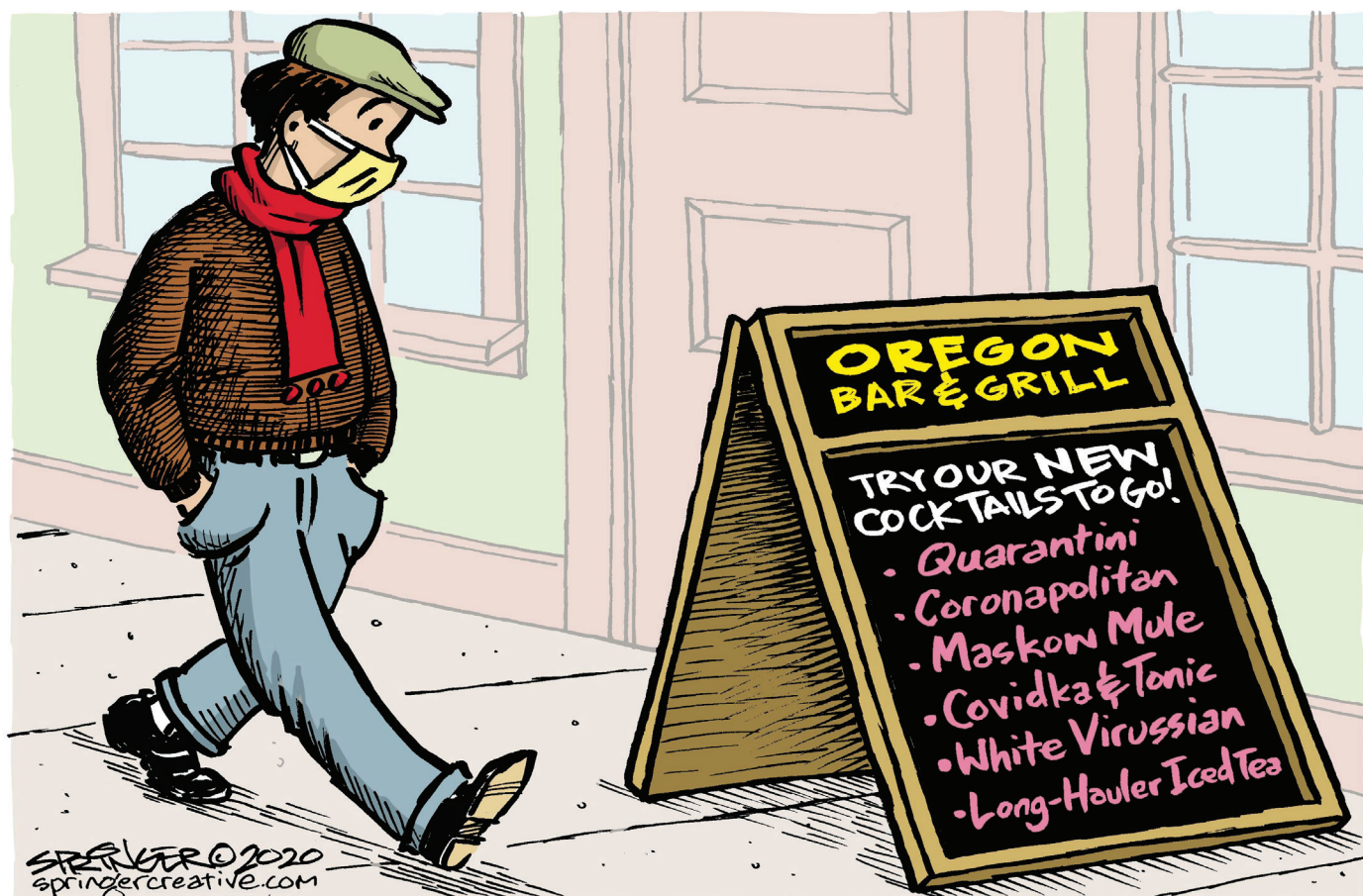
Occasionally — or frequently, depending from the individual perspective — our federal politicians fail and forget they represent the people. They ignore the will of those who elected them. By and large, that was never a trap that Walden fell into.

Walden made it a priority to visit his district as much as possible. He held town hall meetings in out-of-the-way places across rural Eastern Oregon, but, maybe most importantly, he listened. That may not seem like a great attribute, but it is. Walden listened to the voters. He paid attention. He delved deep into local problems and sought answers. That type of commitment from a politician is refreshing, and Walden did it year after year.

Oregon is going to miss Walden on several levels, especially regarding his seniority and the know-how he collected over years as a congressman. When Walden departs, he will take with him all the key relationships he had with other lawmakers that helps get things done. The various coalitions he made with other politicians that are often critical for a bill to pass will also be gone. That won't help Oregon in the short term.

However, Bentz, while not a Walden protégé, is very much like the Hood River politician in his outlook and his concern for rural values. On water issues especially, Bentz is well versed. That will pay off for Oregon down the road.

Meanwhile, the state will watch one of its longest serving federal lawmakers exit the stage. He can depart with the knowledge that, for the most part, he consistently served the voters of his district and made sure their priorities were his priorities.



2020 leaves us bloodied but unbowed



ANDREW CUTLER
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It's been a tough year. From my standpoint as the publisher/editor of the *East Oregonian* I can't think of any other time in my career where the challenges seemed so great and the future so stark as it was in the spring when COVID-19 was escalating.

Matters grew worse as the year wore on and as COVID-19 cases climbed locally.

Yet, through it all, I was able to see many different things that enhanced my already strong faith in our local communities and in our newspaper.

Crisis often brings out the very worst or best in people, and from my experience I saw far more outstanding actions and words from people than the reverse.

Our newspaper staff performed during extremely trying circumstances. We were helped in that endeavor by our readers and others who, instead of falling into a river of fear, decided to be proactive and to work the problems one by one as they came up.

A few examples that come to mind include the 2nd Congressional District candidate forum in May hosted by EO Media Group and streamed online by La Grande-based Eastern Oregon Live TV. That partnership brought the candidates together virtually so Eastern Oregon voters could get a sense of where candidates were at on important issues,

something that can often be challenging — even during the best of times.

Another example is the August partnership between the *East Oregonian*, *Hermiston Herald* and Umatilla County commissioners to distribute 25,000 masks throughout the county during the height of the outbreak. Joining forces with the county to provide masks and much-needed information shows the important role this newspaper plays.

The local newspaper is a key institution in any community. I have always felt that a community is what helps make a newspaper good in the first place. Our subscribers and advertisers are paramount to our success.

That is why I want to thank our advertisers, our subscribers and all the staff at the *East Oregonian*. Our readers deserve praise for remaining loyal and giving us the benefit of the doubt when the darkest days of the pandemic descended upon us. Our subscribers are the lifeblood of our organization, for without them, there would be no paper.

I take our obligation to the reader very seriously. I spend large chunks of time every day wondering about the reader, pondering a news coverage task by putting myself in the place of the reader and asking, "What would I want to know?"

We are grateful for our advertisers, because in a year unlike any other in our lifetimes, it would have been easy for advertisers to save every penny. Instead, when it was more important than ever for them to get their message out, they trusted the *East Oregonian* to deliver that message, and for that I am thankful.

Our staff here at the *East Oregonian* also deserves to be lauded. From our advertising representatives to our reporters and editors, each person contributed to our success this year despite monumental challenges.

Some may not believe that. Some may think, "What I do isn't that big a deal for the newspaper," but they would be wrong. Every employee makes a difference every day here at the *East Oregonian*, whether they realize it or not. Without their dedication we would not be the great organization we are today.

The proof is in the pudding, as they say. While there were many challenges in 2020 — for all of us — one thing the *East Oregonian* continued to do without fail was ensure that critical information went out to subscribers and nonsubscribers alike in print and online at eastoregonian.com. And for that, the *East Oregonian*, once again, was named the No. 1 paper in its circulation class in the ONPA General Excellence category. That's something everyone here at the *East Oregonian* and the community should take pride in.

We — the *East Oregonian*, residents and our readers — have been bloodied but we are unbowed. That's because of the unique kind of Eastern Oregon grit that is hard to define but crucial during tough times.

So, as the new year looms just a few days away, I want to thank everyone for allowing us to fill our vital role in Eastern Oregon and continue our mission to keep the public informed.

Andrew Cutler is the publisher/editor of the *East Oregonian*.

YOUR VIEWS

Trump's unconscionable use of federal death penalty

The Trump administration's ineptitude in dealing with the COVID-19 virus has led to the avoidable deaths of over 300,000 U.S. citizens, soon to surpass 400,000.

As if that's not enough deaths, the Trump administration in the last half of 2020 has begun executing federal prisoners on death row, thereby ending a 17-year moratorium on executions.

I don't think I'm being cynical in pointing out that the executions are taking place right after the Republican Party's renomination of President Trump last July as the party's candidate for president. How better to show you're tough on crime than by killing prisoners on death row in the federal prison system?

The other day I read the Death Penalty Information Center's just-issued "The Death Penalty in 2020: Year End Report." The report covers thoroughly death penalty statistics in all 50 states, plus military and federal system.

One federal system statistic in the report, besides ending of the 17-year moratorium on executions, is the following: "The 10 people executed under the federal death penalty in the second half of 2020 exceeded the number executed by all of the states combined, the

first time in the history of the United States in which the federal government carried out more civilian executions than did the states."

The report describes specific executions, often accompanied by photos of the prisoners executed: "The rash of executions was also aberrant in its selections of prisoners to be put to death. The condemned included the first Native American ever executed by the federal government for a murder of a member of his own tribe on tribal lands; the first federal executions of teenaged offenders in 68 years; the first federal execution in 57 years for a crime committed in a state that had abolished the death penalty; the scheduled executions of two prisoners who medical evidence indicated had intellectual disability; the scheduled executions of two prisoners with serious mental illness, including one who may have been mentally incompetent at the time of his execution; the scheduled executions of two prisoners who did not kill anyone and three who were less culpable than co-defendants who received lesser sentences; the first lame-duck execution in more than a century; and executions carried out against the wishes of victims' family members, trial or appellate prosecutors in the cases, and at least one of the judges who presided at trial."

Gary Dielman
Baker City

Levy's support of disenfranchising millions of voters is appalling

I am appalled to see that our representative-elect, Bobby Levy, signed on to the Texas attorney general's failed effort to disenfranchise millions of voters in four states. More specifically, the Texas AG attempted to stop the Electoral College from counting the votes of the four swing states that just happened to support Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

And what was the big problem that Texas sought to address? These four states, as well as many others, had expanded the ability for their citizens to vote by mail. Never mind that no state has the ability to dictate to another state how to conduct their elections. Levy must surely realize there is nothing wrong with voting by mail. Oregon has proven many times over two decades that voting by mail is a secure and economical way to conduct elections, and Levy herself has just been elected by this very system.

I'm sure Levy is sincere in her support of election integrity, but watching a debunked propaganda video is no way to develop an informed opinion about anything. I hope for all of our sakes that Levy can make better decisions in the future.

Jon White
La Grande

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

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