

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A kick in the pants to efforts that seem to come up each legislative session to reduce access to public records.

This year, one of those bills would specifically exempt unmanned aerial systems test ranges, such as the one in Pendleton, from disclosing records that “would cause a competitive disadvantage to the test range or its users.”

We understand that dealing with private companies sensitive about their proprietary information can be complicated for public bodies, and there are some records it does make sense to protect, such as intellectual property regarding the design of unmanned aerial vehicles tested.

But we believe the language in this particular bill is overly broad, which in public records law is a recipe for abuse. The phrase “including but not limited to” throws open the door too widely when one could argue that any information that negatively reflects on the test range could put it at a “competitive disadvantage.”

The city has correctly argued that given the \$20 million the public has invested in the Pendleton test range and the economic activity it has generated, it is in everyone’s interest that the facility succeed. However, part of the recipe for success is oversight and accountability to the taxpayers who put up the funds.

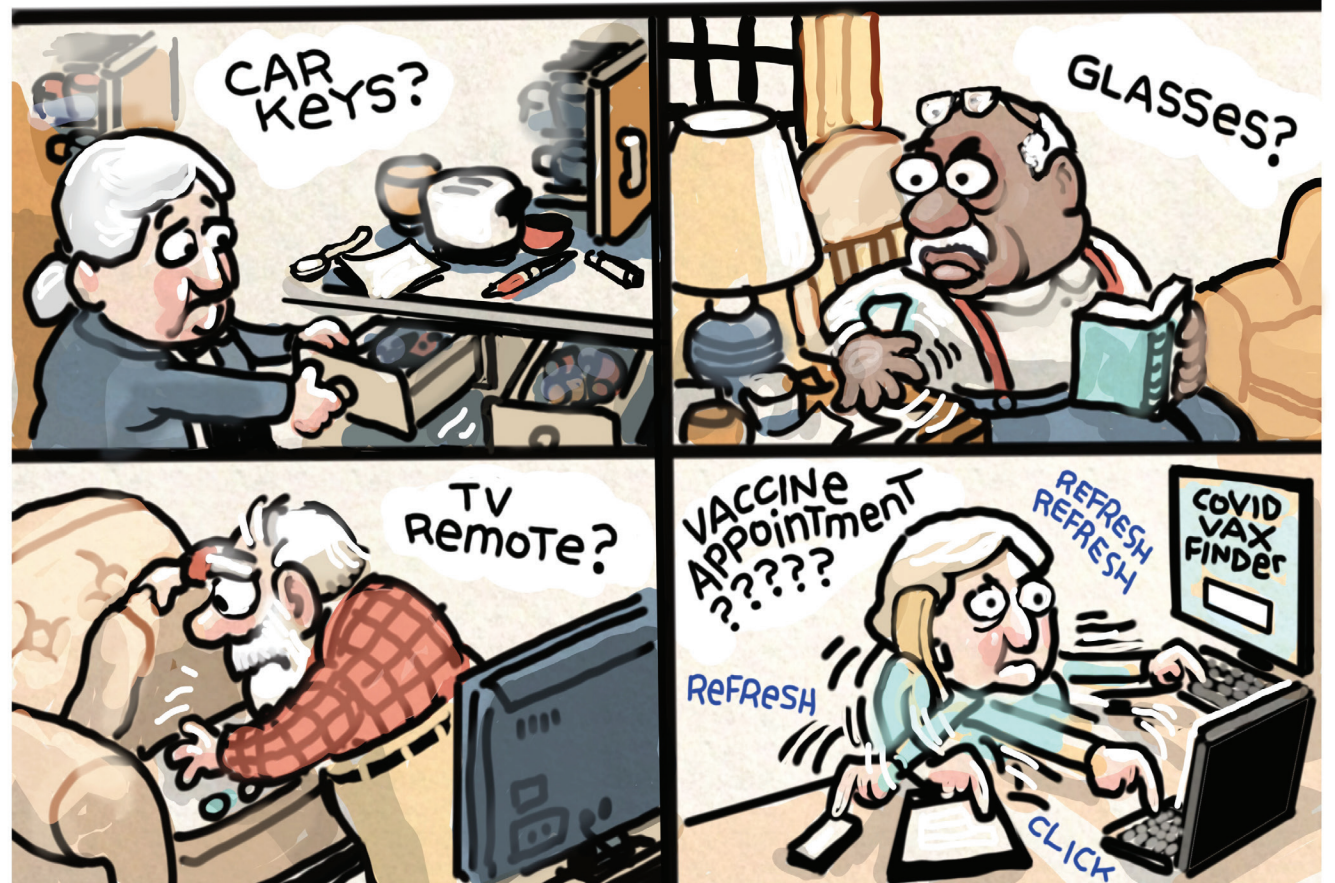
A tip of the hat to Morrow County and Tillamook County Creamery Association for providing another round of grants for small local businesses affected by the pandemic. As exciting as it is to see COVID-19 cases trending down and vaccination rates trending up, a lot of businesses are not out of the woods yet. It would be a shame for a business to make it this far only to not survive the final stretch, so we appreciate efforts to help sustain them.

A tip of the hat to high school sports teams returning to the competitive field for the first time since the pandemic began. We admire the students who have persevered through a difficult school year full of unknowns and constantly changing information. We also tip our hats to teachers, coaches and administrators who have worked hard to create what opportunities they can for students instead of throwing up their hands and saying, “We’ll just wait until next year.”

We wish everyone a safe and healthy season, however short and unusual it may be.

STAR TRIBUNE
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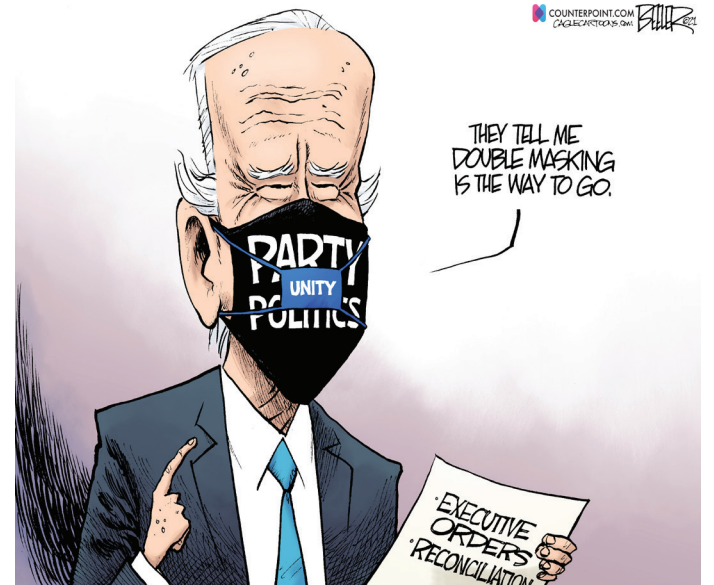
SENIOR MOMENTS 'I-CAN'T-FIND' EDITION



Bill Day



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YOUR VIEWS

HB 2379 is key to restoring some of your tax dollars

For decades, corporate timber companies benefited from tax cuts that cut local county budgets across the state. Residents also suffered when they were forced to make up for the losses to maintain schools and other county programs as a result of those corporate tax cuts.

Taxpayers have increasingly been asked to make up the difference and for some counties and residents in the state that meant higher property taxes, fees or cuts to existing programs and services.

What we do know is that Oregon timber companies previously paid a severance tax on the value of the trees they logged. And these timber barons have not paid their fair share because lawmakers passed a series of lopsided tax cuts that resulted in lowering the funding provided to schools and local governments.

What can and should be done? House Bill 2379 before the Oregon Legislature is key to restoring some of your tax dollars. The bill imposes a severance tax on owners of timber at time of harvest at 5% of value of the timber and directs revenue from the severance tax into the Emergency Wildfire Fund. Let’s face it, if you think about the

demographics in counties — they’ve been hit hard by logging, the people are relatively strapped, and so when the local option comes up for large timber companies and says, “We’re going to increase your property taxes, we’re going to pass this measure, do you voluntarily support it?” They say “no.”

Just look at a fire services proposal to merge the city of Union’s fire department and the Union Rural Fire Department, and you kind of get a picture for how tax forgiveness works.

Randy Knop
Union

River Democracy Act benefits ranchers too

I ranch near Union and irrigate from Grande Ronde tributaries — Catherine and Little creeks. I was not caught off guard by the introduction of the River Democracy Act because I, like all Oregonians, received an unprecedented invitation from Sen. Ron Wyden to highlight streams worthy of protection.

Some might think that Wyden’s ask was only for recreationists. However, for my ranching business, the watershed’s ecological health is essential. Moreover, my hometown’s water quality, infrastructure, and economy depend

on what happens upstream, whether the waterway is on private or federal lands.

If we continue neglecting our floodplains’ health, fires and flooding will further erode infrastructure and threaten our safety. Windblown trees and ice jams are already threatening Union due to channelization. Imagine what would happen if fire took over our forest lands with little vegetation to slow snowpack melting. With the fire management tools offered in the Act, we are less likely to see huge amounts of sediment choking creeks, flooding out private properties, and silting in irrigation systems.

While some seem concerned that this legislation will negatively impact private property and water rights, this is an opportunity to build resilience downstream by restoring the waterways upstream — enhancing the value of private property and water rights.

Sen. Wyden invites us now to modify the River Democracy Act. Whether using livestock, forestry practices, or enhancing recreation opportunities, the River Democracy Act gives us a voice and opportunities for regenerative management.

Cattlemen, don’t be caught off guard. Be part of the solution.

Andrea Malmberg
Union

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