

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

WYATT HAUPT JR.
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

OUR VIEW

A tip of the hat, a kick in the pants



A kick in the pants to the closure of Aspen Springs Psychiatric Hospital in Hermiston.

According to Lifeways, the community mental health provider running Aspen Springs, the hospital was closed because Lifeways could not find enough qualified professionals, particularly psychiatrists, to staff the facility.

The nationwide psychiatrist shortage isn't Lifeways' fault, and it is an issue the mental health profession, universities and government leaders should be putting their heads together to address. However, the timeline here does bring up some questions about the level of due diligence that went into the decision to build the hospital.

Lifeways took four years to build the facility instead of the expected one year, which leadership at the time attributed to it being more difficult than expected to meet all of the state requirements for that level of secure facility. Now, after just under seven months, it is closing as a psychiatric hospital, with leadership citing more difficulties than expected recruiting staff.

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer is questioning why Lifeways abruptly closed the facility with five months still to go on a one-year waiver given by the state, giving the county less than a day's notice, rather than going public with the problem first and giving some time for government leaders and outside organizations to work on possible solutions. We have the same questions, and we hope that the sorely needed facility may once again welcome patients in the future.

A kick in the pants to people threatening Republican state legislators for showing up to work.

Sen. Bill Hansell was one of a handful of Republican legislators who declined to do another walkout, this time on a bill that would ban firearms in state buildings. Hansell opposed the bill, but ultimately decided that it was better to spend hours pointing out flaws in the bill and working to convince Democrats to amend it, rather than taking himself out of the conversation altogether.

In return, Hansell said, he has received emails threatening to shoot him.

That kind of behavior is unacceptable. Nobody who sends a sitting legislator death threats for showing up to work can call themselves a patriot, or a rational person. And on this particular bill, such a reaction makes the exact opposite point Hansell was trying to make on the Senate floor — that the public can be trusted to carry firearms responsibly.



YOUR VIEWS

Spencer's experience will benefit Pendleton schools

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter to announce my endorsement of Briana Spencer for the Pendleton School District Board Position 7 candidacy.

Ms. Spencer has served as a very reliable and dependable community organizer since my introduction to her work in July of 2020. We have accomplished much in a short period of time due to Briana's professional network and her dedication to racial equity.

Briana is an intelligent, hard-working team player. I know her to be an effective leader with a high level of computer skills and outstanding people skills.

As part of the Pendleton School Board, Briana Spencer would have extensive training and developed expertise to draw on. She is an accomplished public speaker and advocate for local policy change. She has developed, planned and delivered volunteer training. She has regularly been asked to facilitate social media engagement for various grass roots alliances, including Pendleton Community Action Coalition and Umatilla County Responds.

These engagements have allowed her a unique insight into the community's immediate and long-term needs. They have also fostered a deep relationship with other organizers, volunteers and nonprofit organizations throughout rural Oregon.

I am confident that Ms. Spencer will contribute to any district's learning community in countless ways as she has already for us here in the city of Pendleton.

Jessica S. Pedersen, LMT
Pendleton

Spencer can bring new facets to Pendleton School Board

I'm writing to show my support for Briana Spencer to be elected to Pendleton School District Board Position 7.

I believe Briana would be a great addition to the school board. This young

LETTERS DEADLINE FOR MAY 18 ELECTIONS

The *East Oregonian* does not run endorsements of more than 400 words. The *East Oregonian* will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day, if necessary. We run local letters of endorsement on a first-come, first-served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by 5 p.m. Friday, May 7. You can email them to editor@eastoregonian.com, or mail them to *East Oregonian*, c/o Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, 97801. We will publish our last letters on Saturday, May 15. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 18.

woman would be an active participant in the political aspects of the school district. Briana is a young lady who can make a difference in the overall quality of the education the school is providing, which Pendleton School District needs.

Briana is a person that knows being on the school board she will have to put in a lot of time that essentially amounts to a volunteer position, which she has been doing throughout our community for the past several years in the Pendleton area and the Nixyaawii community area on the reservation. It takes a good person like Briana to be a good school board member to help development and success of our children's education.

I see this school board member as one who will have arguable and questionable points that will have direct impact on nearly every facet of the school outcome, whether it be budget or common goals, daily operations, contracts or developing policy. She can do the job as your next elected school board member.

I'm asking you to join me in voting for Briana Spencer for our next school board member Position 7. Please vote on May 18.

Sally Kosey
Nixyaawii School Board member
Pendleton

Spencer brings insight, passion to her community

It is my privilege and honor to endorse Briana Spencer to the Pendleton School District Board Position 7. I have been a Hermiston and Umatilla County resident for the past 30 years, and I find it refreshing and exciting to see Briana Spencer run for the Pendle-

ton School Board position.

This past February, the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Coalition (HCAC), of which I'm a member, hosted our first Martin Luther King Cultural Diverse Community panel. Briana Spencer was one of our key presenters and we found her knowledge, insight and passion around diversity, equity and inclusion very insightful regarding its impact within our country and local communities.

Briana Spencer comes with a great deal of skills and assets that the Pendleton School District and its community would truly benefit from, which is why I'm happy and excited to endorse her for the Pendleton School District Board Position 7.

Jesus Rome
Hermiston

Sen. Hansell stands for Umatilla County

I would like to put in a good word for Senator Bill Hansell in his stand for constitutional law. It seems as if every time he stands up for what he believes in, someone finds a reason to object.

Senator Hansell has said he is not willing to deny a quorum on bills he doesn't agree with. We may not always agree with him, but he is usually on the side of the right. Let the people vote on it.

Senator Hansell's showing up in not supporting the bill shows his support for rural Oregon. Dissidence is not often a good position. One just has to dodge the bullets!

Dr. Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. PRESIDENT

Joe Biden
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

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Cliff Bentz
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
Medford office: 541-776-4646

GOVERNOR

Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582

REPRESENTATIVES

Bobby Levy, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-376
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.BobbyLevy@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

SENATOR

Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-415
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

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 letters 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.

SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801