

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

## OUR VIEW

# Making smart choices with federal money

**P**endleton will have an array of choices regarding where it can spend its share of the mammoth federal \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act.

Hopefully, the city's elected leaders will choose wisely.

The choices are not easy. There are a host of competing priorities and needs that seek a one-time infusion of funds, but what elected leaders must do is sift through the ideas that sound grand and decide where the money is needed the most.

A plan developed by a local group that consists of the Pendleton Economic Development Department, the Pendleton Convention Center, the Pendleton Chamber of Commerce and the Pendleton Round-Up Association to receive \$250,000 to create a broad-based effort based to beef up tourism is not a bad place to start.

Tourism is an important element the vitality of any community, and Pendleton is in a unique position once a year with the Round-Up to capitalize on the large influx of visitors that arrive.

Yet, there are other pressing concerns city leaders must carefully consider. Infrastructure improvements should be at the top of any list regarding where to use the infusion of funds. The Vert Auditorium and the Pendleton Aquatic Center, for example, both need upgrades because of deferred maintenance. Other city infrastructure — not least of which are roads — also could use some repairs or outright replacement and the federal money could be used for those projects.

At its last session, the council seemed to like the idea of spreading the money across tourism, infrastructure and the general fund, and that may be the safest — or least controversial — avenue.

Yet, city leaders should be wary of making compromise decisions that spread the cash too far over too many subjects. If there is a need, such as an infrastructure improvement, that could be solved with a large infusion of the money then elected leaders should not be shy of saying so and voting for that approach.

No one discounts how difficult monetary decisions — especially when it is free and there are so many competing needs — can be. Yet, part of the job of being an elected leader revolves around a certain degree of fortitude. Sometimes when the table is full of money the possibilities can seem endless. Yet, at least in Pendleton there are some key options that probably need to be at the forefront of elected leaders when it comes to making firm decisions.

The city is lucky to be able to count on the money. We just need to make sure we spend it wisely and for items that truly need the money.

## EDITORIALS

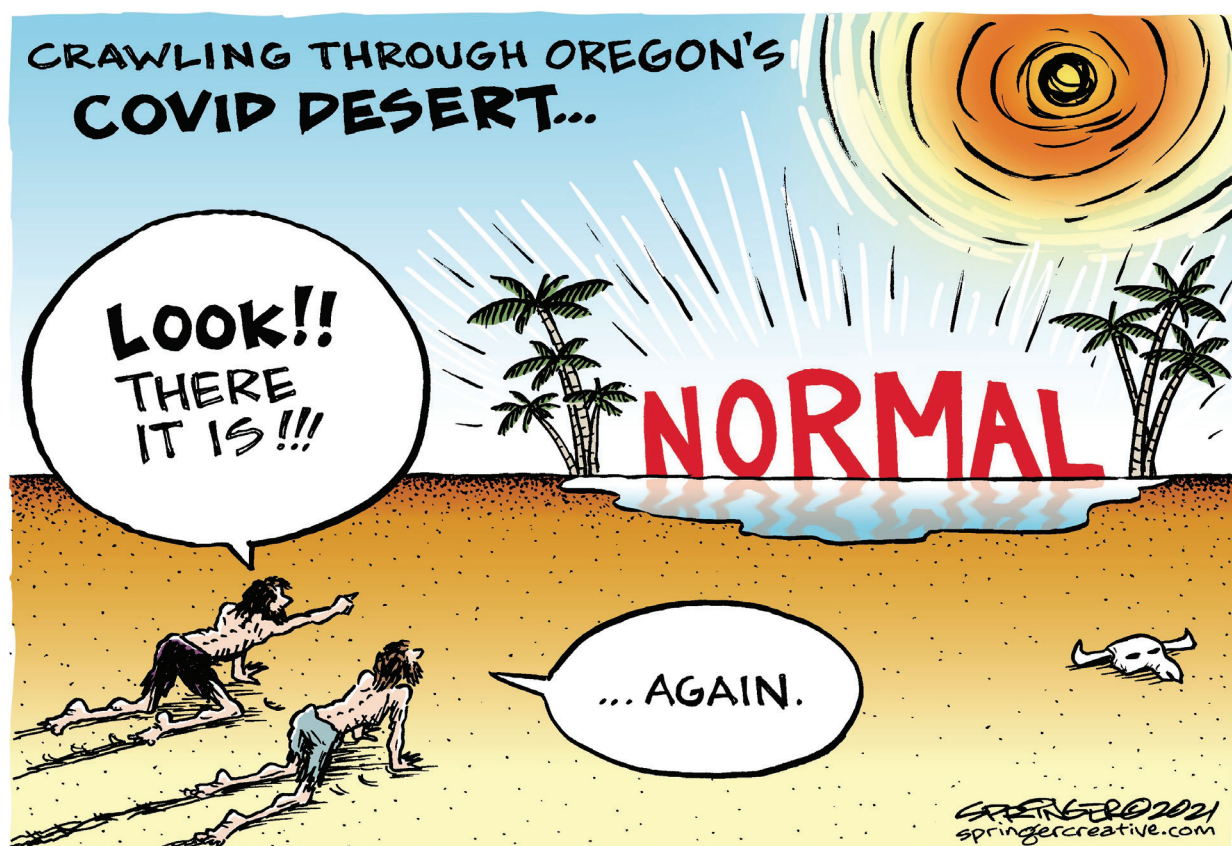
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## LETTERS

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.

## SEND LETTERS TO:

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or via mail to Andrew Cutler,  
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# There and back again



ALEX  
HOBBS  
PASTURES OF PLENTY

**I**n J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings," Khazad-dûm is an ancient dwarven stronghold used to mine Mithril: a precious metal renowned for its strength and beauty. Unfortunately, the dwarves dug too greedily, and from the depths of Moria rose the Balrog.

What awaits the villages of Eastern Oregon when they dig too deep? When all that remains are concrete bunkers, with their incessant technological whirl and perpetual illumination? When all the treasure to be found sits beneath the talons of the Dragon in Seattle?

Let's leave the Shire and find out.

The first smell to hit you will be the camphor and terpenoids of sagebrush. Perhaps you will be lucky enough to experience its intense fragrance after rainfall.

Next, and if your immune system can handle it, you'll smell the Russian olives. Though not in bloom until August, their sweet scent is unmistakable, their khaki-green leaves a juxtaposition upon a brown horizon.

Perhaps in the distance, you'll catch a whiff of a body of water. A pond that has long gone eutrophic. At its bottom, an organic alchemy you can practically feel smush between your toes. It is home to a dizzying assemblage of life.

Above you are stars. Millions of

them. Constellations that bear little resemblance to their namesake burst out of the sky's inky fabric. They pulsate so vibrantly it becomes easy to forget the objects that tether us to life back home. Somewhere, the Milky Way greets you shyly like an old friend. Its gossamer belt of color still shimmers faintly in Eastern Oregon.

The click and flit of bats. The chirrup of the katydids. A silence and darkness not often found elsewhere. But the village leaders tell us this land is cheap and worthless. Crops can't be grown here. After all, it's just sagebrush. What better use for it than to tear it away. To build a monument to man's ever-decreasing attention span.

They begin to rip the earth apart. Suddenly, a behemoth erupts from the ground like the cataclysmic lava flows that once carved this land. Hard and angular, bending the earth to its will. Its teeth bared and gnashing. Its black spikes, an armor around its stony perimeter. Its electric buzz is wholly unlike the hoot of a burrowing owl.

The monster comes under the guise of a gift. But its perfume is too strong, its smile too saccharine, and beneath it lingers something rotten. It is not like the sage, which offers us the gift of stars and sweetness. With hands outstretched, the inhuman monster offers the parched desert dwellers a long drink of water.

Some of the local village leaders drink heartily from those gnarled, cupped palms, their tongues lapping up the cool water greedily.

"I am smart," they think. "I have

water to drink while others go thirsty." And so the village leaders let the monster smash his way through a land that offers up other gifts. Gifts of mutuality. One by one, other monsters take root, like the noxious thistle, choking out the stars with their eternal illumination.

Soon the stars recede from their velvety home in the night sky. Dust rolls across the land, choking out the sun. Homes become inundated with the perpetual, electric din of the monster and all its progeny dredging up water from their poisoned wells.

But someday, the wells will run dry. The monsters will no longer have any cool water to offer the insatiable village leaders. Their tongues will cease lapping. Unlike the Balrog, who sits and waits, these monsters will uproot themselves in search of other village leaders to beguile.

In the end, the monsters will run out of room in Northeast Oregon. Their life source becomes cheaper elsewhere and eventually, they have to pay taxes. Above all else, the monsters loathe paying taxes.

The village leaders try to figure out what to do with the exoskeletons left behind by the monsters. But they are too vast. Within, the defunct internal organs begin to collect dust. Absent from this silence is the sound of wind rustling through the sage. In its stead, the sterile silence of absolute nothingness.

*Alex Hobbs lives in Irrigon and is a former educator turned full-time homeschooling mom. She has a degree in political science from Oregon State University.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### Spencer a dedicated champion of worthy causes

I readily endorse Ms. Briana Spencer for a member of the Pendleton School District 16 Board. I, as the executive director of a nonprofit organization, Enough-Is-Enough, as well as a Mission and Pendleton local, have had many opportunities over the years to witness the growth and drive of Ms. Spencer.

Briana shows great empathy for our joint community's citizens and is willing to listen to the voice of the people and advocate for them to be heard. Ms. Spencer has an adept ability to empower the youth and community through her example of compassionate leadership. She has a history of serving in her communities through responsible activism, affecting lasting, real, and diverse solutions to challenging issues.

Ms. Spencer serves with a level head and just heart as a dedicated champion of worthy causes. She voluntarily commits to taking on challenging tasks and has raised significant monetary support for community awareness. She knows how to coordinate with inter-agencies across multiple counties to meet a need and facilitate direct action for policy change.

Ms. Spencer is a multicultural member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, has been a resident with the CTUIR and Pendleton communities for most of her life, and knows many families here. Briana brings with her knowledge of the local

### LETTERS DEADLINE FOR MAY 18 ELECTIONS

The East Oregonian does not run endorsements of more than 400 words. The A 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.

people and area, contemporary ideas, understanding, determination, and the ability to create a positive and productive work environment.

For these reasons and further reasons listed in the above letter, I believe she will be an exceptional addition to the Pendleton School District 16 Board.

**Willa Wallace  
Pendleton**

### Spencer brings people together for the common good

The Pendleton School Board is in need of fresh leadership.

Briana Spencer, candidate for the school board, position 7, has qualifications that will bring a new and exciting perspective to the school board.

I have known Briana for approximately three years. I really got to know her during the Pendleton BLM 2020. I was amazed at the organizational skills she demonstrated bringing the

city police, city manager and numerous other entities to highlight the concerns of many.

Briana brings uncanny knowledge and innate abilities to help young and old with organizing food distributions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Christmas dinner program for the CTUIR and Pendleton communities was another example of Briana's ability to bring people together for the common good.

Briana is preparing for public office by completing a seven-month program called Emerge Oregon. This program identifies, trains, and inspires women to run for all levels of office. The program also encourages women to participate in committees and community-based advocacy organizations.

Let's bring a new energy to the school board and school district 16R.

Vote for Briana Spencer for School District 16R, position 7.

**Sue Peterson  
Pendleton**