

## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



**A tip of the hat** to the prospective of a Pendleton Round-Up in 2021.

During a Tuesday, May 11, press conference Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said she “would fully expect” for the Pendleton Round-Up to go forward as planned this year, with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention like mask wearing in place.

“There may be some CDC guidelines around masking that we will want to align with as we’re meeting Oregon’s needs, but I would fully expect that we will be able to Let’er Buck, so to speak, in September,” she said.

That should be music to everyone’s ears. After a year without Round-Up, the first time Round-Up had been canceled since World War II, having an event that generates about \$65 million for the local economy will be good for all.

Of course, in order for us to get to that stage, 70% of Oregonians over the age of 16 need to receive at least their first dose of the vaccine, according to Brown. Once that happens, capacity limits on restaurants, bars, stores, gyms and venues for athletics and entertainment, as well as limits on people who can gather for events, such as Round-Up, and festivals, would be lifted.

Our actions now will determine what events, such as the Pendleton Round-Up and Umatilla County Fair, will look like later this year.

**A tip of the hat** to the everyone involved in the completion of the East Project irrigation system, which was dedicated before a crowd of about two dozen along the Columbia River on Tuesday, May 11.

The more than \$50 million project aims to provide farmers with river water in lieu of pumping from the ground in an effort to recharge depleted aquifers and allow farmers to grow higher value crops.

“It wouldn’t be possible unless there was a lot of people supporting it, and then the benefits are going to be broad,” said Carl St. Hilaire, president of JSH Farms in Hermiston. “Just as the support was broad, the benefits will be broad in terms of economic benefits for the entire community.”

The East Project, which is owned and operated by the East Improvement District, joins the \$31 million West Project, completed by the Columbia Improvement District in May 2020. A third project, previously known as the Central Project and now called the Ordinance Water Supply and Aquifer Restoration Project, will run through the former Umatilla Chemical Depot. In addition to the pumps and main lines for those projects, farmers have also spent an additional \$39 million on supply lines, distribution lines, water rights management and administrative costs to utilize the water being pumped from the river.

With water becoming an all-too scarce resource, it’s gratifying to see so many private landowners and agencies work together to ensure the success of this project and help prepare future generations for success.



## Restoring faith in Legislature requires rooting out conflicts of interest



BILL HANSELL

OTHER VIEWS

**I** recently introduced Senate Bill 865 and it has generated some controversy. The bill is about rooting out conflicts of interest in our government, but I wanted to provide my constituents with what I hope is helpful background.

One fundamental American ideal is checks and balances. Oregon’s government, which is elected and governed by the people, must not only protect the rights of Oregonians, but must also have their trust. In regard to trust, our representative democracy needs all the help it can get. Polling shows that faith in our government is at an all-time low.

Principles of checks and balances are intended to root out conflicts of interest in our elected officials. In the words of James Madison, the author of the American Constitution, “ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”

One way the Oregon Constitution seeks to counteract ambition is by prohibiting elected officials from holding multiple offices at one time. According to Article 3, Section 1 of Oregon’s Constitution, as a state senator, I cannot also serve as a county commissioner at the same time, nor can the governor serve as the attorney general, and judges cannot be state repre-

sentatives. The goal of this is to ensure that different people are carrying out different parts of our government. If one person was controlling all aspects of our government, we would call that tyranny.

However, the Constitution is silent if elected leaders can also lead their political party as elected officers. While currently legal, the same ethical and practical concerns apply. Political parties are tasked with fundraising to help their candidates get elected. Yet, elected statewide leaders make policy that directly influences elections, campaign finance, and even the structure of the political parties themselves.

If political party leaders are also elected to public office, they can too easily change the rules of the game to benefit themselves. That’s called corruption, and one of my goals as a Republican official is to ensure that the Republican Party avoids all appearances of corruption.

There has long been an understanding that there should be a separation between the “people’s work,” which we are sent to Salem to do as elected officials, and political party politics. That is why we, for example, cannot use taxpayer dollars for our campaigns.

As a lawmaker, one of my primary responsibilities is to ensure that my constituents trust their government. I want every Oregonian, regardless of political ideology, to have faith that conflicts of interest do not have the final say on the laws that govern them. Without that funda-

mental trust, we do not have a government by, for, and of the people.

This is why I introduced Senate Bill 865. The law would prohibit an elected official to state office from simultaneously being an elected officer on a political party’s state central committee. This bill would codify neutral standards of transparency and accountability.

I have been contacted by several of my constituents who are concerned about potential conflicts of interest among the current Oregon Republican Party leadership. Let me be clear — this bill is not about individuals. It’s about establishing clear ethical boundaries to which all political parties can agree.

I can only imagine the rightful outrage from my Republican constituents if Gov. Kate Brown controlled both the state government and the flow of millions of campaign dollars as chair of the Democrat Party’s central committee. That would be a clear problem. While we are nowhere near that point yet, we needn’t wait for such obvious abuse of power.

As your senator, I feel a deep responsibility to make our government as transparent and accountable to “We The People” as possible. That sometimes means doing things that some in my own party won’t like, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t the right thing to do.

*Sen. Bill Hansell represents Willowa, Union, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and parts of Wasco counties.*

## In any community, the living world is essential



BETTE HUSTED

FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

**R**eaders in Eastern Oregon have loved the books of Molly Gloss since we read “The Jump-Off Creek,” set in the Blue Mountains, in 1989. So we were happy to learn that she was recently named the recipient of Literary Arts Charles Erskine Scott Wood Distinguished Writer Award “in recognition of an enduring, substantial literary career.”

Stories connect us. In a deep sense, they are all that does. And Molly Gloss’ work explores the connections that lead to community. While traditional Westerns emphasized a lone male hero who rides into town, shoots, and then rides away — a story fueled by violence and, ultimately, racism — the arc in Molly’s works, from the story of a woman homesteader to a disillusioned Hollywood stunt rider, takes us away from that damaging mythology into the reality of the American West.

Her people — women as well as men — lose husbands and brothers and ranches and, heartbreakingly, children; they die of cancer and botulism. But they stay. They do the hard work that family and community require of us.

How best to build community? Indigenous people remind us that community includes the living world: humans, animals, plants, water, rock. From her earliest novel, the young adult fantasy “Outside the Gates,” Gloss has recog-

nized animals as essential to community. The young protagonist in that story is rejected — put outside the gates — because animals commune with him. And in “Wild Life,” Charlotte learns about her own connections to (and through) the lives of Sasquatch-like creatures.

Horses seem to appear when Gloss’ characters need them. In one of my favorite stories from “Unforeseen,” her collection of speculative short fiction, a woman knows when an earthquake is going to happen, but she doesn’t know where.

“It’s science,” she says. “They’ve made recordings. There’s this droning, or purring, or swishing, it might be the oceans banging against the sea floor, always moving, or something else, maybe it’s just the sound of the globe turning on its axis, they aren’t sure, but it’s a sound that’s always going on under our feet, only nobody can hear it.”

What if, Gloss asks us, someone could feel this “everlasting humming” intensifying but be unable to warn people of coming disaster? What if painful experience has taught her not to even try?

A moment of relief comes when the woman leans her face against an old, wet horse and feels the slight tremble in his body, “not his heartbeat but his essential being, his aliveness” and for a moment his “calm, steady hum against her scalp overrode the humming of the earth.”

Just as the circle of story requires both teller and listener, the relationship with horses (or any animal) is reciprocal: We need them, they need us. In “The Hearts of Horses,” a team of frightened

Belgians leans into Martha Lessen, and “she told them steadily how brave they were. She could feel her own heart thudding against the hearts of the horses.”

When things go badly wrong a few moments later, she hangs her weight around each horse’s neck, “the kind of reassurance you give a child when you hold him tight, ‘I’ve got you, I’ll hold you, it’s all right,’” and the horses are able to calm enough to save both her life and their own.

So it seems particularly appropriate that the Distinguished Writer Award is named for CES Wood, because there’s a horse story involved. Wood, who recorded Chief Joseph’s words of surrender, would later sent his son Erskine to live with Joseph for two summers. He told the boy to ask Joseph what gift he would like in return, but when Erskine was embarrassed at the modesty of the request — a stallion to increase Joseph’s herd — he failed to pass on the message.

When Erskine died, his descendants, knowing his adult regret, presented a 3-year-old black and white Appaloosa stallion to Chief Joseph’s descendants in a ceremony at Willowa Lake.

The horse was not a gift, but a promise kept, Joseph’s great-great-grandson Keith Soy Redthunder said. And “if there is a promise that can be fulfilled after 104 years, surely you have to have hope.”

It’s a story about our need for each other, a story about connections. About community.

*Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T’ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.*

### EDITORIALS

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