

OUR VIEW

Voters invest in law enforcement

Choosing to make a sizable financial investment is never an easy decision for taxpayers, but the residents of Milton-Freewater who voted for a new police station in May made the right move.

More than 400 people voted yes — 241 voted no — for the \$7.7 million bond that will clear the way for a roughly 7,200-square-foot building. The structure will house city police officers and 911 dispatchers and include conference rooms, two holding cells along with offices and evidence rooms, and a lobby. The building will go up on a lot the city owns. The new station will take the police station out of the basement of city hall, where it has been since 1929.

The basement is cramped, and the police department probably should have been moved from it decades ago.

An up-to-date station will help the police do their jobs and, in turn, help the community. Police need resources to be able to effectively curtail crime and protect residents. A key resource, obviously, is a police station.

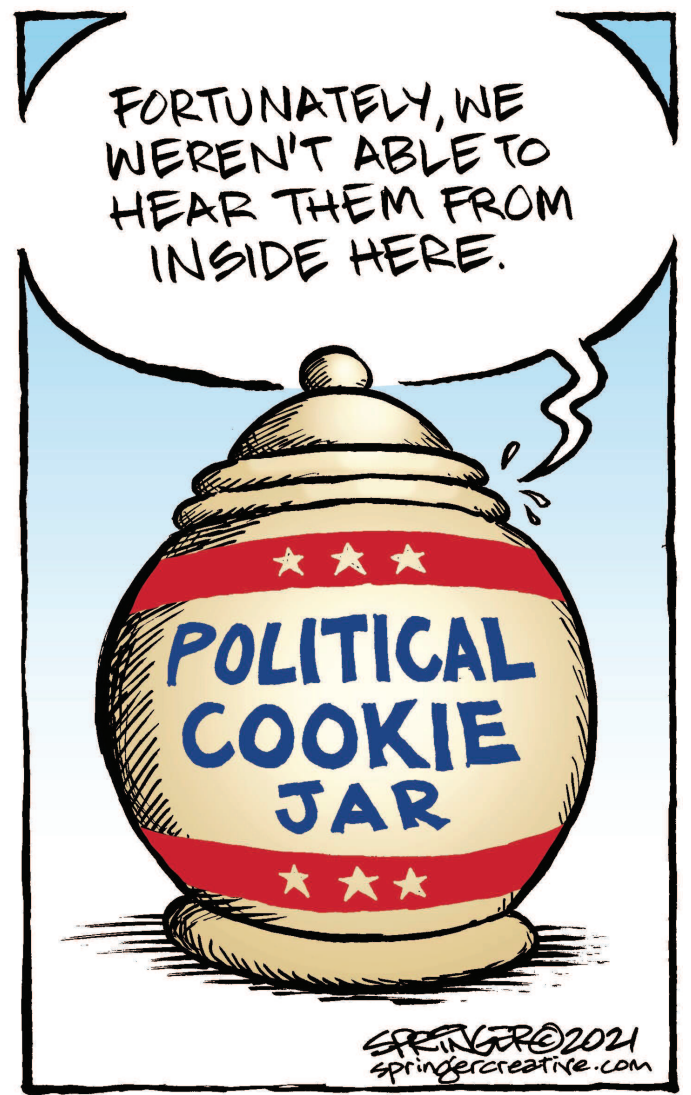
There is no doubt the price tag on the building is a hefty one for a small, rural town, but voters clearly looked at the issue from the perspective the money will be a real investment for the whole community.

Providing funds for police and fire services is never a bad idea nor a bad investment. True, rural communities do not have the type of monetary resources that larger metro areas can boast, so that makes any type of large investment daunting. But spending public money that will continue to reap benefits down the road is a good move, whether it is a new police station or new equipment for firefighters.

Of course, it would be nice if such investments simply were not necessary. However, we all must live in reality, and the reality is that police are essential to safeguard the community.

A strong police force, though, is just one of the solutions to crime, but it is the most important. Other elements, such as socio-economic factors, come into play with crime, but without a solid foundation of policing all solutions will be impossible to achieve.

The voters who gave the new police station a green light made a sacrifice. They decided to pay a little more on their taxes so the local police force could utilize a new building. The choice was a tough one, no doubt, but in the end it was the right one.



561,000 reasons to support superintendents of color



COLT GILL
OTHER VIEWS

Oregon's public schools are more diverse now than at any other time in our history, but the number of superintendents of color in our state is not just stagnant, it is in a highly concerning free fall. Only a handful of the 197 school districts in the state of Oregon are led by superintendents of color, and we believe this is a serious problem.

In recent years, student demographics have continued to shift in Oregon. Today, nearly two of every five students (38.5%) are racially, ethnically and/or linguistically diverse. There are 25 districts in Oregon where students of color make up the majority of their school's population. Meanwhile, the composition of our educator and administrator workforce is changing very slowly. The 2020 Oregon Educator Equity Report shows that just 11.7% of teachers and 12.5% of administrators are racially, ethnically and/or linguistically diverse.

This disparity is glaring in the ranks of our school superintendents. After five departures this spring, less than 5% of Oregon superintendents today are leaders of color. Put another way, Oregon now has so few superintendents of color

that they could all ride together in one vehicle.

Why does this matter? Because these numbers indicate a frightening trend that will not benefit students, educators or communities. And this lack of visible representation conveys a perception that Oregon is not a welcoming or supportive environment for leaders of color, making it even more challenging to recruit, support or encourage educational leaders to consider the superintendent role.

Decades of research provide data about the positive impacts of educator diversity on academic achievement and social and emotional development for students of color and tribal students, as well as their white peers. Studies show that students of color benefit from higher teacher expectations and from seeing members of their own race/ethnicity as role models in respected professions. Our experience in Oregon has demonstrated that districts led by superintendents of color attract a more diverse educator workforce and welcome otherwise — unheard community voices in district decision making.

But today, our school boards are challenged to find and keep leaders that reflect the makeup of our schools. Our school communities — and the organizations we lead — are challenged to support and retain leaders of color. For this to change, we have to change. We need to change our systems, our behaviors and our approaches. Our students need lead-

ership who directly reflect their identities, and we need both immediate and sustainable long-term solutions. It's imperative that school districts communicate a goal to hire leaders of color, and prioritize their support and success. School boards have a specific role and responsibility here, given that superintendents are their one and only employee to directly support, supervise and evaluate.

The Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon School Boards Association, the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators, the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission and the Oregon Educator Advancement Council commit to immediately commission a study to examine the difficulties Oregon is facing in recruiting, hiring and retaining superintendents of color. The study will identify what factors contribute to their successes or career challenges as well as recommendations for change and improvement.

Also important is Senate Bill 334, which requires equity and governance training for school boards. We encourage the Legislature to pass this important legislation. These actions, and the hiring decisions around them, will have significant repercussions for students.

We have nearly 561,000 students in our K-12 schools. That's 561,000 reasons to get this right.

Colt Gill is the director of the Oregon Department of Education.

YOUR VIEWS

SB 865 would hold free speech hostage

Senate Bill 865, co-sponsored by Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, would make it a fineable offense to serve simultaneously as a state officeholder and an officer of a state central committee of a political party. While generic in its official language, the bill's most immediate effect is to challenge Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg, who earlier this year was elected chair of the Oregon Republican Party. It would also take aim at Sen. Dennis Linticum, R-Klamath Falls, a Heard ally who was elected the state GOP party treasurer.

Yet on May 19, Findley and Hansell requested that a hearing on Senate Bill 865 set for the afternoon be scrapped.

Today SB 865, the attack on free assembly and free speech, remains in hiding in the Senate Rules Committee — meaning it can be passed on one-hour notice by the Senate Democrats, Findley and Hansell with the green light from Senate President Peter Courtney.

This is a major reason the Republican party is maintaining a fractured status and is not effective at challenging the Democrats' hold on Oregon and its laws. One by one our state leans closer to a one-party rule, and it's not difficult to figure out where the problem is!

Rich Weaver
Milton-Freewater

Eastern Oregonians fleeing to Idaho bring their issues

Why would Oregon residents voting with wheels join the rush to the Snake River Valley in Idaho? Quite simply, the seat of power in the Willamette Valley has increasingly disenfranchised those east of the Cascade Mountains.

This isn't anything new because they have long looked down on over-the-mountain folks.

In the early 1840s they made it clear that Blacks and other minorities were prohibited from settling in the Oregon territory, which was governed from the valley.

When Oregon statehood was applied for, they emphatically stated that they didn't want anything east of the Cascades, for it was fit only for "coyotes, rattlesnakes and hostile Indians."

One hundred and sixty years later, we still have coyotes and rattlesnakes. As for hostile Indians, I couldn't say, because the Native Americans I know all seem peaceful.

The Greater Idaho movement is symptomatic of the growing rift between rural, urban, red and blue states. As the disgruntled flee it's of concern to us natives that they are bringing their issues with them.

Michael F. Hanley IV
Jordan Valley

What's fair for goose should be fair for gander

My life psychology has always been "Plant a seed or perspective and then watch to see how it grows."

I personally believe a state policy and/or regulation should be positive for all concerned, both rural and urban. Let's stop and look at the topic of predator controls from a broad sense.

One only has to review past statewide votes to observe who is supporting policy for introducing wolves back into our state. I remember a statewide vote to protect bears and cougars. Where did that support come from? Now I wonder how the urban folks would vote for bears, cougars and wolves being reintroduced in their backyards?

Statewide legislation and regulations affect all Oregonians, right? Therefore, shouldn't those wild creatures be released evenly throughout?

Yes, a really wild (pardon the pun) idea but what is fair for the goose should be fair for the gander. There are many semi-rural areas in the Interstate 5 corridor that would be ideal for all three species.

After all, years ago they roamed all across the land that now is the state of Oregon.

Ken Parsons
La Grande

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