

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Voters need to know about candidates

Umatilla County voters apparently are going to receive a long run-up to the contested election for a seat on the board of commissioners.

That's a good thing.

In a recent story in this newspaper, the race to fill George Murdock's position on the board took centerstage. Susan Bower, Pendleton, and Cindy Timmons, Milton-Freewater, both kicked their campaigns into high gear. Bower especially appears to already be in full campaign mode.

The story outlined some of the candidates' campaign spending, and while that is instructive in terms of setting an early theme for a race that will not culminate for seven months, the real key for voters is they will secure an opportunity to fully vet these two candidates. A third candidate, Alvin Young, also is in the mix for the soon-to-be-vacant commission seat.

The long run-up will be good news for voters because it will allow them — at least with the two of the candidates — to get acquainted with and understand their views on a broad range of subjects. Voters should have ample time to review and fact-check each candidate, to understand their platform and, if they feel it, disagree.

Bower and Timmons — though they might not realize it — are doing a great service to the voters of the county by gearing up their campaigns so early. The longer they are in the mix, the more they are visible and the more voters will know.

That's never a bad thing in a democracy.

However, while Timmons and Bower — at least for now — are doing their part, the residents of the county, who can vote, will have to fulfill their role as well. That role means a certain degree of participation in what we call democracy. The role means asking questions — some of them hard — and seeking fair and reasoned answers.

Voters need to review everything they can on all the candidates and then make their own judgements after prudent thought.

That can be a difficult task as we all try to make our own livings and take care of our families. Yet, ignoring the election or the candidate until the ballot arrives in the mailbox isn't going to help democracy. We must always strive to know more about our candidates — for any elected position — and hold them accountable.

A post on the county board of commissioners is a crucial one for a rural county in a rural part of Oregon. Voters must ensure the best person for the job gets elected.

CARGO SHIPS
ARE BACKLOGGED...

AND THERE'S A
TRUCKER SHORTAGE...

Joe Heller ©2021 HELLERTON.COM

Finding pleasure, beauty in problem solving



REGINA
BRAKER

ANOTHER MILE

Around here there's a tradition of making quilts for kids when they graduate high school. Recently a congregant at church shared the design and block he had drawn up and completed to use in the quilt he was helping out with, a beautifully crafted piece for the center of the quilt when finished.

I was moved by his commitment to this project, sharing fabric combinations for the pattern he envisioned, and making sure the family whose daughter just started her senior year was on board with his efforts. It's an example of the close supportive relationships that take place in small rural towns throughout our region. They happen across generations, beyond family ties, interwoven connections between neighbors, where helping one another out is how things get done, and everyone's survival has always depended on it.

Twenty years into an early retirement that brought him back to our region, he's young for his years because he stays so involved. Active in community projects, in musical endeavors when available here in town, and with a local quilting group, he's put in a second career in service to his rural hometown. When I first got to know him, it was through singing together, and we shared some laughter about how we voted.

Recently, the harmony came about

with the ringing of individual bells. My friend spent part of his childhood in Hillsboro, and some of it here in Pendleton. Sickness in the family required him to live with his aunt. Later, while at the University of Oregon, he lost his mother.

During the height of the Vietnam War, he ended up in the Navy, where he helped save downed pilots in sea rescue north of the Demilitarized Zone. The Navy's electronics and transmitter training taught him the value of furthering his education, and he committed to a long journey through college with many interruptions and restarts, with some adventures along the way. Lack of information to a first-generation college student was in part a cause of the first detour.

The Navy paved his entry into electronics engineering. In California he started his career as analyst, working full time, taking a couple of classes each term toward his long-term college completion goal, all while starting a growing family.

In his career he found success as a problem solver, by designing software and training users, with long-term stints in Australia, England, and consultation travel to Germany and across the U.S. There's a special joy in knowing you are the expert others around the world turn to, even if for a seemingly obscure need. What matters is a well-designed fix to the problem.

Upon retiring to Umatilla County, and service on the city council of his town, he saw problems that needed his expertise, best offered in the role of mayor. New sidewalks, repairs to the water system, installation of a new

well at the city park and street paving are among the projects he shepherded through. A long-term project in the renovation of the historic school into a modernized city hall continues to call on his abilities to write grants and support next phases of improvement.

There were needs in the school district in unfilled jobs, one that called out to my friend. Glad to get back into the world of work, thinking back on the rich experiences he gained in volunteering as a parent when his daughter was still in school, he made himself available to coach the after-school robotics program.

When you can help kids with little interest or aptitude for academics become successful programmers, see them win regional competitions four years running, and in the process demonstrate gracious professionalism by helping other teams troubleshoot their programs, there's a great sense of pride and satisfaction in swimming in a small rural pond as a nurturing older fish.

These days he's retired from some retirement gigs, while still maintaining availability to civic projects. Sharing different perspectives with friends at church and doing new things is important to him. Making things of beauty, in woodworking projects, and in his new hobby as he learns quilting techniques on his long-arm machine, is just a part of his life's motto: Solving problems is a life-long pleasure.

Regina Braker, of Pendleton, is a retired educator with journeys through many places and experiences who enjoys getting to know people along the way.

YOUR VIEWS

Wolves contribute to elk displacement

Bill Aney's recent column about elk on private property caught my interest. The author seemed to object to property owners charging to hunt elk on private land, even though this is done in every state with big game. The author also noted that projects completed locally have provided the means to keep elk on public land. Why hasn't this been done? The author stated that motorized vehicles were the main reason why elk left public land. Somehow he forgot to mention wolves.

Studies conducted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department showed a very high correlation between wolf population and elk displacement from winter range and feed-grounds. In a summary of their data from 1995 to 2017, the populations of elk went from a high in 1995 of 51,187, deer population of 62,501, and moose population of 10,000 to populations of 36,839 for elk, 38,088 for deer, and 1,390 for moose. During that time there were no wolves

until 1996 and 210 in 2017.

The wolves in Eastern Oregon might well play a huge role in changing elk location. In the same edition of the East Oregonian, two different wolf kills of livestock were reported, one attack near Elgin and the other near Ukiah. Maybe the wolves have learned to drive motorized vehicles.

Mike Mehren
Hermiston

Enhanced protection by the River Democracy Act is an abusive override

Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley have co-sponsored this bill that has the potential to add 4,700 miles of Oregon waterways to the Wild and Scenic Rivers list. This would be the length of the mighty Mississippi and Missouri combined. Yes, this would be quite a remarkable achievement, so it needs to be asked, "is this necessary?"

What more protection is needed? Our public lands, which includes these waterways, are protected by numerous

government agencies that are aided by countless nongovernmental organizations. No project moves forward without an approval stamp from the NGOs. To name just a few — Nature Conservancy, Wild Earth Guardians, Oregon Natural Desert Association and Center for Biological Diversity. Just recently the Center for Biological Diversity used its weapon of relentless lawsuits to halt a project in the Ochoco National Forest. These extremist NGOs use litigation as a very effective tool of intimidation.

Access and utilization of the natural resources our public lands provide has decreased with the Wilderness Act and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We have ridden a wave of continued land grabs under the guise of preserving natural conditions.

The River Democracy Act is one of the most abusive overrides we have witnessed, plus it's an insult to what "wild and scenic" intended. As far as "protection and enhancement of outstanding remarkable values," protections exist presently.

Tork Ballard
Baker City

EDITORIALS

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