

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Wishing the 116th a safe return

It is never an easy task to say goodbye to some of the region's best, but we want to wish the members of Hermiston's Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry (Armor) the best as they depart on an overseas deployment.

The recent ceremony for the 75 members of the Oregon Army National Guard outfit at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center sent the citizen-soldiers off in style as they will travel to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete training for the deployment to somewhere in southwest Asia.

The deployment is certainly an important milestone for the regional Guard unit, but the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry is no stranger to overseas duty.

Twice during the war on terror, the 3rd Battalion deployed to Iraq. The battalion also can trace its lineage — or history — to units from the 41st Infantry Division that deployed to the Pacific Theater during World War II.

The key point to the deployment is a simple one and as old as the nation. When citizen-soldiers are deployed to foreign shores, they represent their towns and regions in a very real way. When Guard soldiers are sent overseas, their actions are linked directly to Main Street.

They are not regular Army personnel who come from all over the nation but natives of a specific region with strong ties to their communities. In a sense, when they deploy, so does a piece of Hermiston or Pendleton or La Grande or Baker City.

That is the unique aspect of the Oregon Army National Guard. They are men and women plucked from the rural heartland and will complete their mission and then return to civilian life and a part-time gig with the National Guard.

For the first time in a long time the nation is not at war, but the deployment of the 75 citizen-soldiers is no less meaningful or, to some extent, dangerous. The world is a complicated, messy place, and while we wish the very best to our Guardsmen, we hope the community understands their commitment and courage.

We wish the citizen-soldiers of the 116th Cavalry Godspeed and a safe return.

EDITORIALS

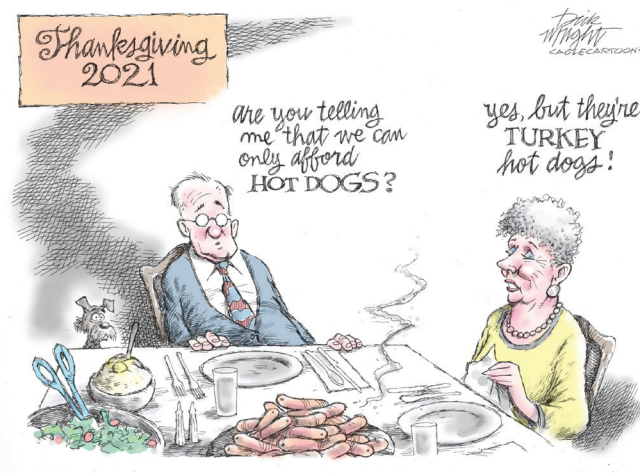
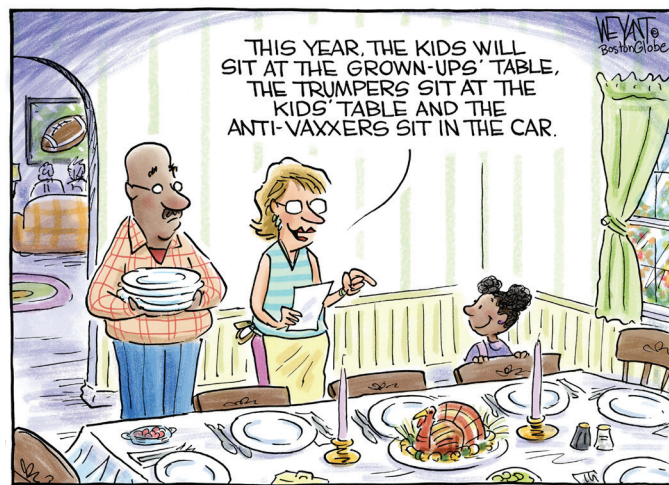
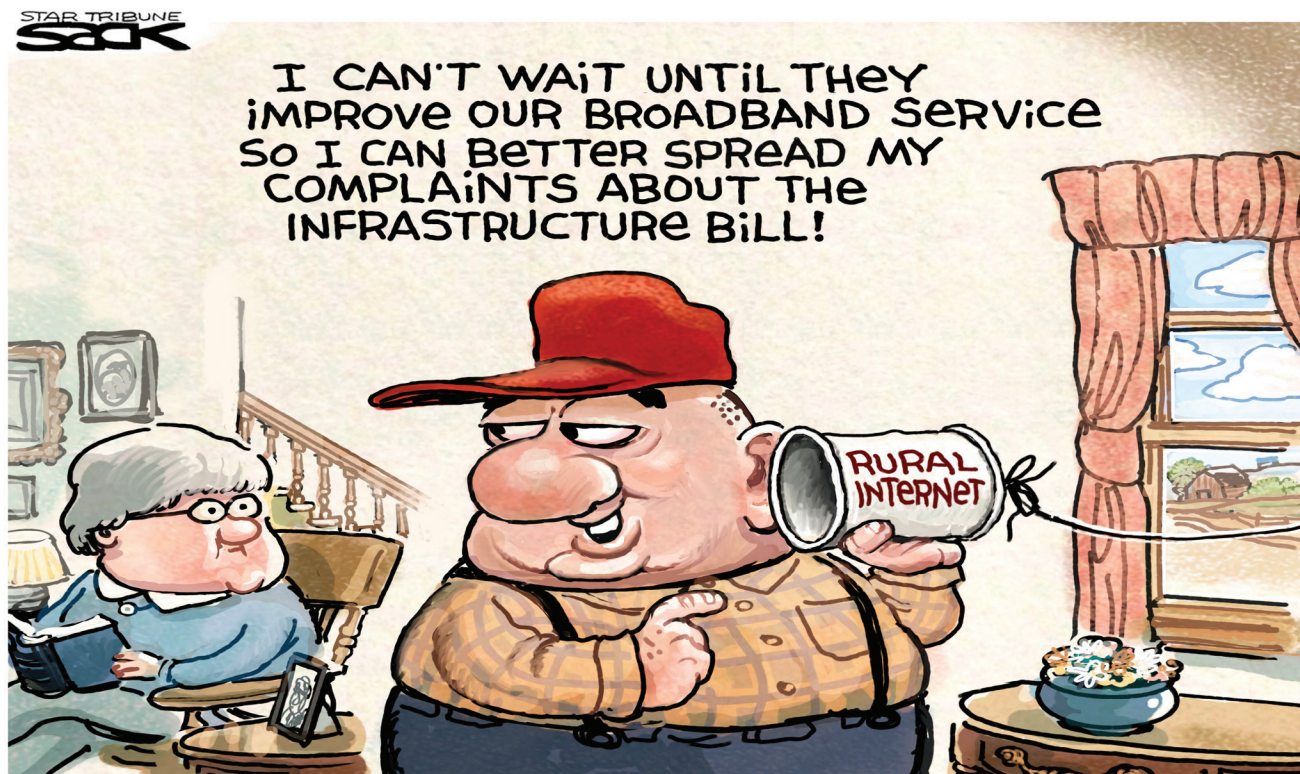
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YOUR VIEWS

Let's face climate change together

I'm not a Democrat or a Republican. I'm a Christian.

I believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But I don't believe in climate change. Come to think of it, I don't believe in gravity either.

Why? Because gravity and climate change are just facts of physics — observable, measurable and predictable — not to be believed so much as understood and respected.

Gravity and climate change are also very consequential. For instance, if I choose not to get out of bed for several weeks, my muscles will eventually shrink until I can no longer stand on my own two feet. So, gravity, if I fail to resist it long enough, will take away my independence. Climate change, if we fail to resist it long enough, will take away our civilization.

Will we resist, or will we retreat?

While my faith doesn't have much to say about physics, it has a lot to say about right and wrong. Unlike gravity, climate change has serious moral implications. We caused it (not natural cycles); we have known that for over 30 years; and yet we are still making climate change worse. Every year the risk increases for you, me, the place we call home and the people we love.

That is why I went to Glasgow, Scotland, earlier this month to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference. I was there to watch and pray as a member of the international Christian Climate Observers Program. I was also there to help launch a movement called #ClimateVigil.

While world leaders gave speeches and delegates attended to tedious negotiations, Christians gathered at a historic church in Glasgow to pray, sing and light candles. Many more joined us around the world in their churches and homes. It was a global candlelight vigil to show our solidarity in the face of the climate crisis — and our commitment to respond with faith, hope and love.

You can still experience the global vigil at ClimateVigil.org. You will hear new music from The Porter's Gate Worship Project. You will also hear inspiring messages from Christian leaders, including Katharine Hayhoe, Ruth Valero and Thomas Schirrmacher.

Still not sure about climate change? You can check the facts for yourself at climatevigil.org/learn. But don't stop there. Consider the facts in light of your most deeply held values. You might even pray about it. That's what I did, and it changed my life. I realized I could no longer look away or sit on the side-

lines. I had to make a decision — for the love of God, my neighbor and my kids.

Love is what moves us. Do we have enough love to get out of bed, stand up and resist climate change? Or will we pull up the covers and watch the darkness overtake our family and friends? Either way, climate change will be one of the hardest things we ever face. So I say we face it together.

Will you light a candle with us?

Peter Fargo
Baker City

Wyden is mucking around in our forests again

Sen. Ron Wyden is mucking around in our forests again.

I attended a meeting in Wallowa about 10 years ago. There was fewer than 10 people there and Wyden was one of those attending. I'd gone that day to report on federal funding for the Wallowa-Union Railroad Authority.

Minutes into the meeting a local business owner thanked Wyden for securing \$12 million for federal purchase of a large piece of agricultural land in the Imnaha River canyon lands. Upon hearing this, my focus changed completely as I recognized the big story being the federal government purchasing thousands of acres of private, agricultural land.

The parcel had been acquired by a private entity during the era of the failed Blue Mountain Land Transfer around 2006. During the same time, the land purchaser had actually been working with Rep. Greg Walden on legislation that would have forced certain private-to-public land transfers. When that conflict of interest became public, Walden backed away from the legislation and BMLT died on the vine. This left the land purchaser in a pickle with thousands of acres of land and a large loan from a local institution.

Next, that piece of Imnaha property becomes the highest priority, top of the list, for federal land acquisition; in steps the Nature Conservancy, United States Forest Service and Wyden.

After about five years, the Nature Conservancy purchased the property from private land purchaser and holds the property while Wyden works to get federal funding, from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, so the Forest Service can purchase the property, circa 2009-12.

When I learned all this, problems began to surface. First, I learned that the private owner, Nature Conservancy, and Forest Service all used the same land appraiser. Next, a well-respected, local ag-land appraiser claimed they'd violated

laws, including the "larger parcel rule" after the private purchaser submitted a verbal plan to construct a 11-parcel housing subdivision. I was informed this inflated the land's value by about 3.5 times.

Now we see Wyden mucking around in our forests again and I wonder to whose benefit.

Brian Addison
Baker City

Infrastructure bill will 'do a lot of things for all of us'

It is exciting that the new infrastructure bill will do a lot of things for all of us. It is especially gratifying that we will begin to have access to more electric automobiles and less expensive transportation. Three years ago, my husband and I decided we needed a second car. We wanted one that would fit into the space we had in our garage, so we carefully measured the garage. Then we began to search for a car that the space would accommodate. We measured a lot of cars and finally found the one. It was available as either a gasoline or an electric version and we decided on the electric version.

So, we got our used 2015 electric smart car for less than \$10,000 and I have seldom driven anything else since. The certification was a little more expensive because we would not be paying gasoline tax and the state required a contribution toward highway maintenance. The car we purchased came with a 110 hookup so we could plug it in anywhere; but we put a 220 in our garage to be able to charge it faster.

When it became time to recertify the car, I checked with the Oregon Department of Transportation and learned I could pay a lesser fee by signing up with a special program for electric cars. Now I pay 3 cents a mile for transportation in my electric car. Quite a savings, right?

Lately, while checking the electric vehicles on the market, it appears that prices are going down and now they are not far above the prices of gasoline driven cars. That is, unless you feel you need something super big or fancy. The new infrastructure law will install thousands of charging stations along highways and throughout the country. Already, I am told that there are at least six public charging stations in Wallowa County.

Good things happen! The sooner more of us are using electric vehicles, the cleaner the air, the healthier life for everyone.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph