

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Vote, our democracy needs it

As the next election draws closer it is important to remember the best way to participate in our democracy is to vote.

While we've spent some space and ink already on this issue, it is crucial we remind voters there is an election coming up and it is important to vote.

Oregon's made voting pretty easy. The ballot is delivered to your mailbox. The voter fills it out, puts it back into the mailbox and the job is done.

Still, off-year elections, such as the one coming up in May, typically do not draw the kind of voter numbers seen during a presidential election.

Yet off-year — and any — election remain important.

There is a lot wrong with our system of government right now. From the White House all the way down to the lowest run of the democracy ladder, we have a lot of items that need to be fixed.

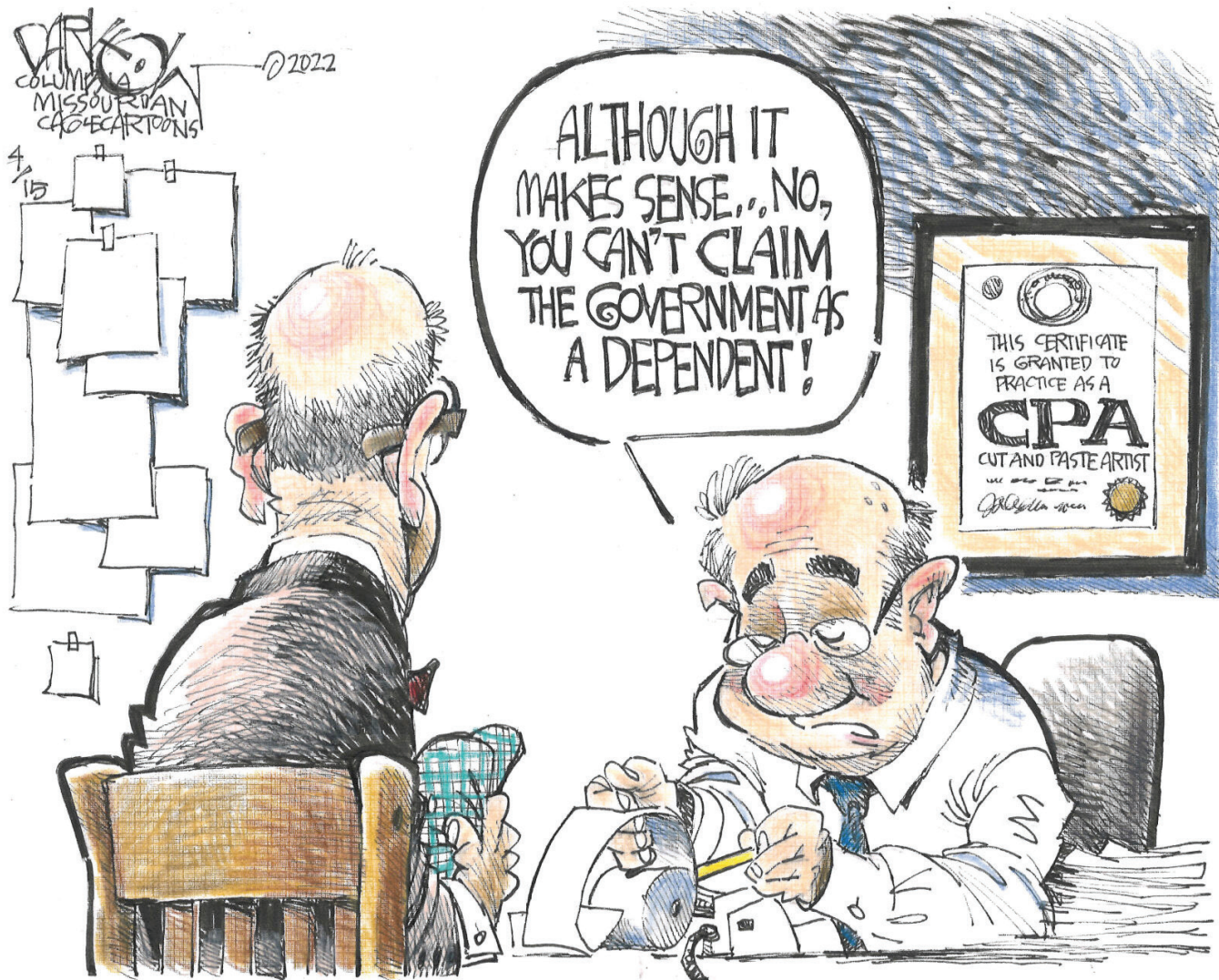
That's why it is so important that when you receive that ballot in the mail you take a good, hard look at the candidates. If you are unaware of who they are or what they stand for, do your research.

Independent research is probably the most potent weapon against the fake news and outright lies sponsored by those who are not invested in democracy.

Yes, research — finding out about the stance of a particular candidate — takes work. It means slicing out a section of time to discover whether a candidate is a person worthy of your vote but it is essential to making an informed choice.

Informed choices are not exactly legion nowadays, as dogmatic battle lines are drawn between political parities. So that means the more you know, the more you can research, the better decision you can make.

Our democracy depends upon the involvement of the voter. This upcoming election is as important as any other. So, when you get your ballot, don't disregard it. Take the time. Get involved in democracy.



Beavers and streams



ALEX HOBBS
PASTURES OF PLENTY

On a cool morning in early April, I stood in a circle of local volunteers waiting to embark upon a habitat enhancement project along the Crooked River. The work was spearheaded by BeaverWorks, an organization whose purpose is to educate and foster the coexistence of humans and *Castor canadensis* — beaver.

We went out armed with shovels and rakes and hammers and, most importantly, beaver food: Cottonwood, willow, sumac, golden currant, wood rose. We worked methodically, intentionally, until the sun began to slip behind the Cascades.

Our collective definition of a stream might entail swift-moving water, steep banked sides, white water churning around boulders and rocks. What is really happening, however, is a cycle of degradation and erosion. Scar tissue left behind by human intervention and the absence of beavers. These incised streams mean a reduced water table, reduced vegetation, reduced sediment — a cycle that will continue in perpetuity without restoration attempts.

What I can't stop thinking about in the days following the planting is the dichotomy of the incised, unhealthy stream versus the meandering gentleness of a healthy one. With our post-settler goggles, we see a stream's intended state as stagnant and sluggish.

It is easy to understand why we mistakenly think of these rapid, unnatural streams as better. The water is flowing from point A to point B faster,

without hindrance. This misconception offers us a glimpse inside our own shared beliefs. Chronically overproductive, terminally logged on, tuned in.

The lure of falling into the swifter stream is so strong, and wading through the murky waters of a beaver meadow seems so unpleasant. It is tempting to make rash decisions when what lies ahead us is anything but certain. Entrusting the wandering over the linear takes time, courage.

So we go to sleep, and in the morning, we plant willow and hope *Castor canadensis* returns.

Culture war boiling points

I have often joked that it's time to overturn *Marbury v Madison*, the landmark 1803 case in which Justice John Marshall cunningly legitimized judicial review. Rippling out from that little pebble, over 200 years of volleying between originalism, pragmatism and all the philosophical iterations between. This is the same institution, after all, which handed down the grotesque opinions on *Dred Scott*, *Plessy and Korematsu* — blights upon the American experiment. Cutting a swath in the opposite direction, the Warren Court established *Brown, Miranda and Loving* in an attempt to right historical wrongs. Political whiplash is unavoidable when there are lifetime appointments, shadow organizations and dark money circling the institution like vultures over carrion.

The entropy with which the Supreme Court is seemingly ordered naturally produced the cynical confirmation hearings of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. Political Kabuki theater co-produced by the Federalist Society, 4Chan forums and Donald Trump Jr.'s

Instagram account. At the head of the charge, Ted Cruz and Lindsey Graham — The Don Quixote and Sancho Panza of the Senate Judiciary Committee — watch as they tilt their lances at windmills.

The modern Republican Party makes no effort to hide the fact that it maintains its grip over its constituents primarily based on culture war crusades. Critical race theory, religious purity tests, allegations of being soft on child predators. All bad faith excuses to deny a confirmation vote to a woman with a near-perfect pedigree. Disturbingly enough, these arguments are all laundered versions of QAnon ideology. We watched as it went mainstream on Jan. 6, 2021. We saw how the majority of Republicans remained skeptical over the results of the presidential election despite evidence to the contrary, and just how many were willing to commit violence to keep Trump in power. It was only a matter of time until the same strategy was wielded in a Supreme Court confirmation hearing. But it is especially nauseating to see it happen to Justice Brown Jackson. Her treatment by the Republican senators and subsequent conservative media outlets has been shameful at best, malevolent at worst.

One can't help but wonder if Clarence Thomas and his activist wife will be held to the same standard of inquisition. After all, the Supreme Court still broadcasts itself as apolitical. Surely Sens. Cruz, Grassley, Cotton, Hawley, Graham and Blackburn will avail themselves to look into the pair's role on Jan. 6. Surely.

Alex Hobbs is a former educator turned full-time homeschooling mom. She has a degree in political science from

YOUR VIEWS

God is mentioned zero times in the U.S. Constitution

It's odd the writer of "Wake up, America" (East Oregonian, April 7) chose faith in God as the litmus test for which political party to support. Guess how many times God is mentioned in the U.S. Constitution?

Zero.
The Constitution purposely takes no position on theological issues and insists governments should derive "their powers from the consent of the governed." The Constitution seeks to "form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure

the blessings of liberty." These are secular goals, and the Founding Fathers knew it was up to us to provide them, not God.

The letter writer quoted from John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. I'll counter with his remarks to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association while campaigning in 1960. Addressing critics fearful his Catholic faith would dictate his decisions as president, Kennedy said: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute — where no Catholic prelate would tell the president how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote."

As for the writer's diatribe on the evils of godless Democrats, I suggest judging the parties by their actions, not their words.

That Grand Olde Party (GOP) inflamed the COVID-19 pandemic by spreading lies, refused the results of a fair election and resorted to an attempted insurrection, pushed through extreme voting laws to disadvantage minorities and the poor, passed a tax cut that made the richest even richer and insists on controlling women's bodies. They also denigrate anyone who has a different sexual or gender identity than they see as acceptable, held Ukrainian military support hostage . . . oh, and they want to end Social Security and Medicare (see Sen. Rick Scott's proposed GOP platform).

The Democrats' positions are the opposite and show much more so-called Christian charity.

Hal McCune
Pendleton

EDITORIALS

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LETTERS

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