

OUR VIEW

Historic vote is about people

Jackie Linton's elevation to the Hermiston City Council marks a milestone in terms of the effort to add diversity to the elected board, but for voters the key piece is her outlook on life.

"It's about the people. You look at the people, and you do what you can to help them," Linton said in a recent story in this newspaper.

There is no doubt that more diversity is needed on elected and appointed boards across Eastern Oregon, not just in Hermiston.

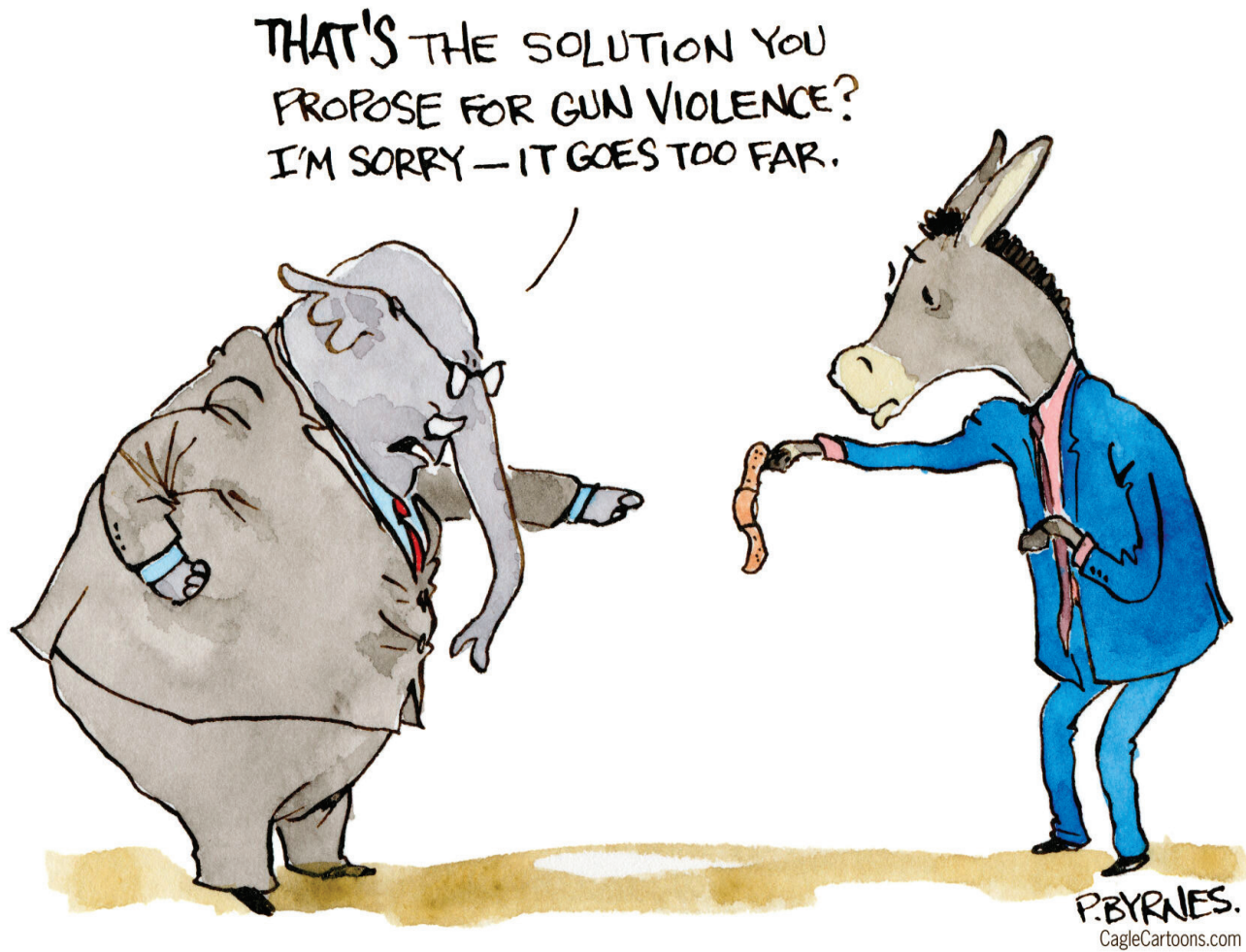
America's democracy is built on a number of pillars, including the notion that all people, all citizens, should be represented. That doesn't mean some should be represented and some not. That's why our nation, our state and our region is stronger when all of its diverse cultures are represented on an elected board.

Linton's election victory can be seen on its face — a Black woman, in a predominantly white or Hispanic area, was elected to a city council position. While that is hugely significant, what is even more important is the person behind the name, the individual who will sit on the council.

Her comment about people is a good doorway into the type of person, and, we hope, leader Linton is. It's not about race or culture but about people. Black, white, Hispanic, Native American — we are all people, all with similar goals and hopes and dreams. We all want generally the same things — prosperity, respect and the ability to take care of our families in a safe environment.

Linton's victory signals that voters are keenly aware of the need for diversity, but her win also shows that a person with solid goals and with a balanced outlook on life can be supported by her fellow citizens. Yes, Linton's win is a win for diversity, but it is also a triumph for our democracy, a sign that as we change as a society all the assorted voices of our region can be heard.

Diversity is what makes our nation so great and another one of our inherent strengths. Linton, though, in the end is correct. It isn't about race or gender or religion but about people. About all of us, as we strive to make it in an increasingly competitive and complicated world.



Time is a four-letter word



DANIEL WATTENBURGER
HOMEGROWN

I saw a number this week that made no sense in its context. The digits "2029" were printed across the back of my daughter's T-shirt commemorating her final days of school as an elementary student. They represent the year, I am led to believe, that she and her class of fellow children will graduate from high school to take one of the most significant steps into adulthood.

That year exists, in concrete and inevitable form, in this current decade. It is still the future, but no longer some distant future for some future version of myself to deal with.

Even though time is literally the most predictable force in our world, passing at the same steady tempo since the world started turning, it still manages to surprise at every turn of the calendar.

Every graduation party you will attend this season includes some version of the conversation "It goes by so fast" and "I can't believe how quickly they grow up." For parents of young children, these are shared as words of advice —

enjoy it, don't take it for granted. And even as I relish the individual days with my children, from roughly the midway point I can't help but be astonished by the fleeting years.

But my interest in the next generation isn't solely raising two human beings who are prepared to positively engage with the world around them and lead lives of purpose and joy. I am interested in seeing an entire generation prepared to take on the challenges on the horizon, especially the ones we're passing on to them.

Reporting and editorializing in the East Oregonian has recently taken a close look at what we're doing to prepare this generation. Last week the editorial board wrote a scathing indictment with the headline "We are failing our children," and it's a spot-on assessment of the wide canyon between what we should be doing for young families and children and what we are doing.

We haven't shown the resolve necessary of good investors. The full dividends of early education aren't seen for 20 years, but we've consistently failed to create, fund and stick with programs long enough to prove their effectiveness or learn how to improve them. Educational opportunity for children in the first five years of life is insufficient, and further sets back progress of students as

they enter the school system.

Failing to educate our children will only hinder their ability to solve many of the large, consequential problems that are growing more treacherous with time. From immediate threats such as gun violence to the unfolding hazards of climate change, we have opted to take a mostly wait-and-see approach. Even if we become truly motivated in the next decade to tackle such looming existential threats, it will be up to our children to carry on that work.

A good first step is to admit the future is coming. The investment or neglect we put into today's children will be magnified in the next generation. If we don't show the resolve to ensure their safety, protect their health and educate their minds, how much value are we putting on their lives?

Every parent's goal is to provide a better life for their children, but we need to make that a societal ambition, not just a personal one. Because it may be hard to imagine the future getting here, but it's on its way.

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YOUR VIEWS

Above averages wages, an economic necessity

Creating jobs that pay above average wages should be the primary focus in local economic development. The jobs created by Pendleton's unmanned aircraft systems program are proof possible given qualified management, adequate funding and unwavering support by city hall. It bodes well for the health of the city's economy while also contributing to an increase in new housing construction as a byproduct. It's an example of what's possible when grants are used prudently.

The city's public transportation system is primarily, perhaps totally, supported with grants, grants funded with various taxes. Most recently, Salem has passed a new transportation tax, a 1% additional income tax on wages paid only by working stiffs. Retirees and those no longer seeking employment get a break on this one.

Pendleton's city manager has appointed the finance department's manager to develop and oversee our public transportation system. Day-to-day operations have been contracted to Elite Taxi through a bidding process, naturally going to the lowest bidder.

Here we have two programs made possible with grants, but that's where the similarity ends. The UAS program brings revenue into the airport and has relieved the financial drain on the city's budget. The city's public transportation

system does not. The UAS program has created jobs that pay well above average wages with benefits, health insurance and retirement programs. Elite Taxi? If you're satisfied with a minimum wage, dead end job, so be it. Food stamps, and assistance programs for rent, utilities and child care are available through various government programs.

Do they really think they are actually saving money with the current transportation program? Are they too stubborn to recognize there are alternative programs that work better and are readily available? Contrary to statements made by our public transportation management, not all programs require purchasing vehicles or construction of a bus barn. Having the right people in the right places has made a huge difference at the airport. It's time for a change in attitude at city hall. Hiring more staff and an advertising agency to push a failing program is not the answer. Throwing good money after bad solves nothing.

**Rick Rohde
Pendleton**

BMCC slashes budget for full-time teacher salaries

Blue Mountain Community College President Mark Browning claims, "cuts over the last two years were almost entirely in administrative staff." That's nonsense. The college took \$1.1 million out of

faculty and only \$635,000 from staff, and now they're going to put \$235,000 of that back in, while cutting faculty further by another \$1.2 million. So, over the last three years faculty will have been cut by \$2.3 million while staff cuts were \$400,000. Not even close to "almost entirely staff."

In his latest press release, Mr. Browning contradicts himself. The "marketing" and "data research" positions are new exactly because they are not there now ... regardless of the fact that they were there three years ago. That's just double talk. Besides, they're cutting the adult basic education program that has never needed "marketing." What's the point of marketing anyway if you have significantly fewer courses and programs to offer?

After the planned cuts to courses and programs only one in four dollars spent on personnel will pay for full-time teachers. Full-time teacher salaries will be less than 12% of the budget. Most community colleges in Oregon spend almost half of their funds on instruction. BMCC will be way off that mark.

Teachers at BMCC make the same money as Pendleton K-12 teachers. So, contrary to Mr. Browning's claim, they are not "overpaid." Isn't the whole point of a school to put students in a classroom with the best teachers? You wouldn't know it given the new budget priorities, where less than \$2 in \$10 pays teachers.

**Robert Hillenbrand
Pendleton**

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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