

ANDREW CUTLER  
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN  
Owner

ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Editor/Senior Reporter

THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

## OUR VIEW

# State gives Oregonians whiplash on wildfire map

The Oregon Department of Forestry said it knew from the start that it did not have enough time to do public outreach for the new state wildfire map.

Why wasn't it upfront with Oregonians?

The state released the map on June 30. It notified more than 80,000 property owners that their properties were considered at high or extreme risk for burning. Most of those owners could face new requirements for removing vegetation around any homes and new building codes.

And now the map has been pulled. The notices to property owners are withdrawn and any appeals to the state that concerned property owners have made are canceled. That's because the map is likely going to be changed.

Could this have been implemented more poorly? It would have taken some work.

Property owners may feel like they have whiplash courtesy of their government. Surprised by the announcement. Surprised to learn what they might have to do. Surprised to learn that the state has not finalized what they would have to do. And then surprised as they gather information to appeal the classification of their property that the state cancels any appeals.

It's not how Oregonians want their government to treat them.

It's unfortunate because Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Legislature got serious about wildfire with the legislation that led to the creation of this map — Senate Bill 762. The law required so much important action to reduce wildfire risk — utilities needed to have wildfire plans, the state needed to look at building codes and the wildfire risk map.

Those are all things the state should be looking at. It's how the state did them that is the problem.

The core of the bill was the wildfire risk map and new requirements for property owners. The state didn't do a big ad campaign to notify Oregonians this was going on. It didn't announce that it knew public outreach was insufficient because the deadline dictated for the map by the legislation came so fast.

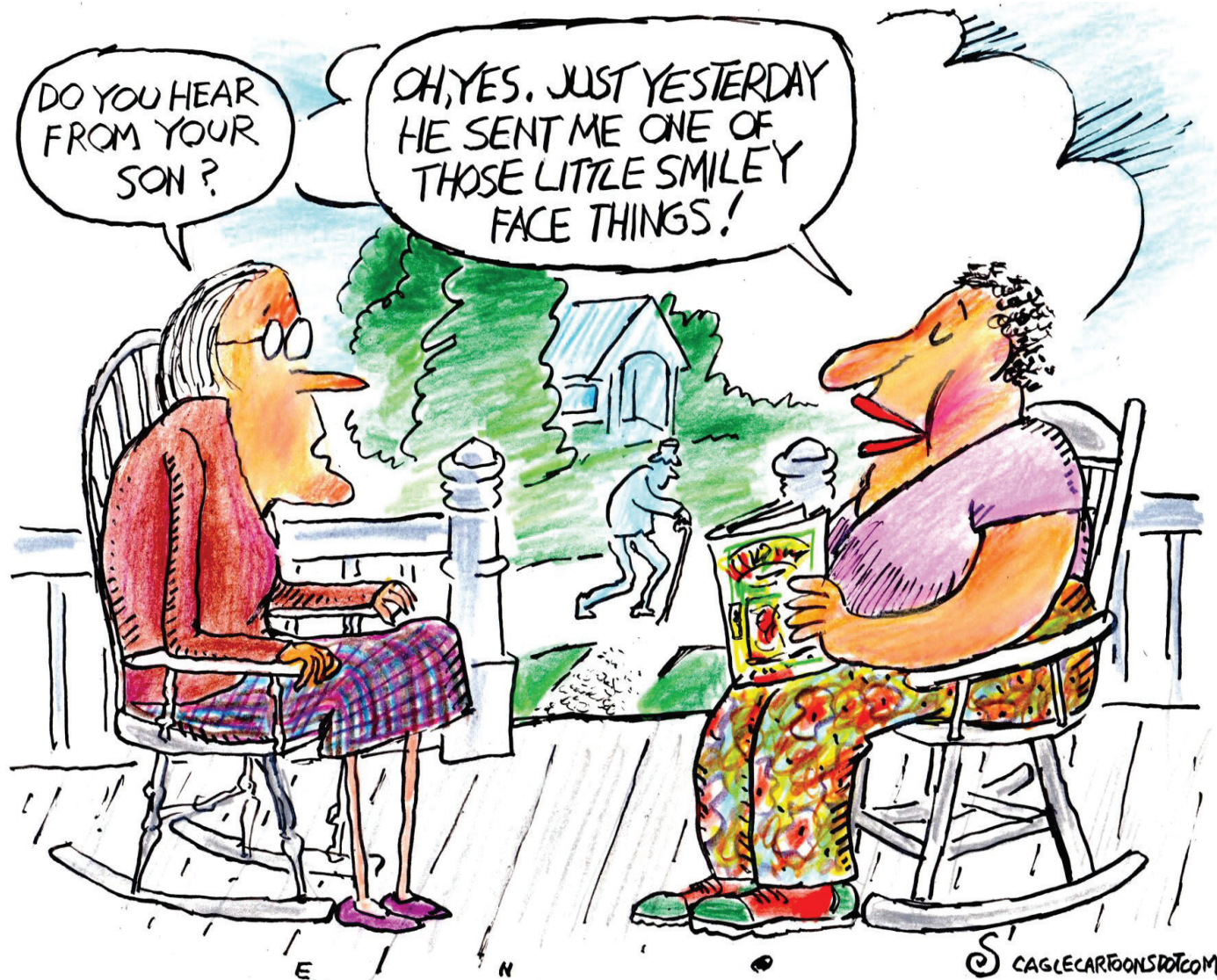
When Doug Grafe, the wildfire programs director in the governor's office, gave a presentation in early June to a Senate committee about wildfire and SB 762, he didn't have slides highlighting the possible problems. He talked about how much Oregon was doing on wildfire. He joked he was a bit overwhelmed by the eight grant programs and six sets of rules and codes in progress.

"I'm reaching my peak ability to keep up, honestly, with all the goings on," he said.

If he is in charge and was having trouble keeping up, it's no wonder Oregonians are, too.

To be fair to Grafe, he did know property owners were going to be concerned. Grafe and Mark Bennett, chair of the wildfire programs advisory council, both acknowledged that in response to questions from the committee. Should that concern, though, of how a state program would impact Oregonians — no matter how well intentioned — have been the focus of the presentation?

The best thing that can be said about the way the map was implemented is that it raised a ruckus. If Oregonians didn't know what was going on before, many more surely do now. But it's going to undermine confidence in the map and the ability of the state to implement programs.



## Denying or repressing history is profoundly illogical



BRIGIT FARLEY  
PAST AND PROLOGUE

Another Washington State University summer term is in the books. I taught World War II in the Pacific this time, a conflict that always sparks discussion about how people respond to difficult moments in their past.

The Pacific war features several events that cause controversy decades later: Japan's invasion of China, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the internment of Japanese-Americans, discrimination against African-Americans and the atom bomb. All of the latter constitute a rich vein for discussion and reflection. Yet segments of U.S. and Japanese society insist on distorting, or repressing discussion of these and similar episodes.

Japan's 1937 invasion of China numbers among the best-documented events of the 20th century. There are numerous first-hand accounts plus video detailing Japanese soldiers shooting and abusing Chinese civilians during what is now known as the "rape of Nanking." Yet some Japanese have labeled this unimpeachable evidence "fake news." Author Tanaka Masaki titled his book on the Chinese war "What Really Happened in Nanking." Masaki maintains variously that the Nanking atrocities represent a Chinese smear campaign against Japan, that no Japanese newspaper reported on this at the time (Japanese media was heavily censored) and that civilian deaths "happen in every war."

By the same token, the curators of Tokyo's Yasukuni shrine, which commemorates soldiers who fought in Japan's wars between 1895 and 1945, assert that Japan fought the U.S. for national survival. In this version of the war, Japan was the innocent victim of

U.S. barbarism in the deployment of the atom bomb. To be sure, these are not majority opinions, and one well-known Japanese museum invites visitors to think critically about the war's origins. "When you fight another man, and hit and kick him, he will hit and kick back," an exhibit reads. "One side will win. Do we recall that we were kicked, or that we did the kicking ourselves?" Still, it is hard to understand why some Japanese cannot discuss their nation's checkered 20th century history in a fact-based way all these years later.

U.S. citizens too have had difficulty with controversial aspects of World War II. In 1994, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., decided to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Pacific war with an exhibit starring the Enola Gay, the B-29 aircraft that dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Museum leadership hoped to encourage discussion about the decision to use the bomb by including materials demonstrating the toll it took on Japanese civilians. Air Force Association and American Legion representatives objected, labeling any consideration of the bomb's negative impacts off limits and potentially treasonous. Attempting to respond to these groups, curators revised the script, which then drew charges from antinuclear activists that the bomb's horrific impact on Japan was being whitewashed. As the exhibit ultimately pleased no one, it was eventually scrapped.

In 2022 America, objections to the teaching of aspects of World War II echo the Enola Gay exhibit criticism. In Muskego, Wisconsin, a school board recently rejected a novel entitled "When the Emperor Was Divine," which chronicles the internment of a Japanese family in 1942. Its critics deemed it "unbalanced" and "too sad." The internment of Japanese-Americans on the west coast remains a well-documented chapter in what Americans routinely refer to as a

"good war." It is outrageous that a school board would veto a well-regarded novel depicting internment's impact on an ordinary Japanese-American family. It is a fact as well that African-Americans faced discrimination in defense employment in World War II America — President Roosevelt had to issue Executive Order 8802 to help remedy this problem. They also had to endure segregation in the ranks of the armed forces and on military bases as they prepared to fight Nazi racism and Japanese militarism without full citizenship in their own country. Students in Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, Tennessee and elsewhere will likely never know about these things because their governors and legislators decided that discussion of racism in America would make them feel bad.

Denying or repressing history is profoundly illogical. Each human is a mortal and fallible being. Most will admit as much. Yet somehow, in the minds of the history deniers, when those imperfect individuals come together as a nation, they are somehow above criticism. Groupings of imperfect people will make mistakes or go rogue. That is inevitable. It is essential to teach and exhibit history, warts and all, so that those imperfect people can learn how to avoid decisions that lead them down destructive paths. President George W. Bush likely had Japanese internment in mind when he made a public show of refusing to scapegoat American Muslims for the sins of the 9-11 hijackers. Honest appraisals of history are particularly important for Americans, whose founding document states that they wish to form "a more perfect union." If we acknowledge the unvarnished truth about the American story, we'll come closer to that elusive goal.

*Brigit Farley is a Washington State University professor, student of history, adventurer and Irish heritage girl living in Pendleton.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### City of Pendleton firing people without a truthful explanation

No surprise the city of Pendleton is at it again firing people, such as the airport manager, without a truthful explanation. In 2002 they did the same thing to my husband, Gary Ward, who was the city of Pendleton's police chief.

They fired him, deciding on their own that he was guilty of misconduct. The hearings board that was convened found the following, and I quote, "No specific factual circumstances other than the irreconcilable and irremediable break-

down of the employee's relationship with the employer were found or determined."

We were not aware of this determination until years later. The city kept it from us. If it hadn't been for our persistence we would never have known that he was found innocent of misconduct. No specific factual circumstances were found that corroborated any evidence of misconduct.

The city manager had the authority to fire my husband without cause, being a supervisory employee. What he didn't have the right to do was lie to the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training about the accusation of

misconduct. He disregarded the hearing's board findings and instead notified DPSST that my husband was guilty of misconduct. My husband's police certificates were revoked, which kept him from accepting any other law enforcement job.

We have tried repeatedly to get the East Oregonian interested in telling our side of the story and mostly to quit using the term misconduct in any articles pertaining to my husband. He was not guilty of misconduct and the hearing's board confirmed that.

You can't fight city hall.

Kathy Ward  
Pendleton