

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Elections are crucial to a democracy

Oregon voters may well secure one of those rare election moments in November when they can choose from three candidates for governor, but the key, as always, is that all residents take advantage of the opportunity to vote.

That may prove to be quite a challenge, though we hope not.

Now, three candidates — Betsy Johnson, Tina Kotek and Christian Draza — are vying for the state's top political position.

Kotek is on the Democratic ticket while Draza is the GOP front-runner. Johnson, who is unaffiliated with any party, recently turned in enough signatures to get a spot on the Nov. 8 election ballot.

While there will be plenty of bombast and wide sweeping proclamations by all the candidates between now and November, what is really key about the election is that enough Oregonians vote.

The right to vote is more than just a nice, quaint concept about America. It is the key element to our democracy.

Multitudes of people have died on distant battlefields for us to enjoy that right. Many brave souls during the Civil Rights era marched and faced danger to ensure everyone held the ability to vote.

As voters we owe them all a great debt, but if we do not use what is the key tool of our democracy then our very future is at risk.

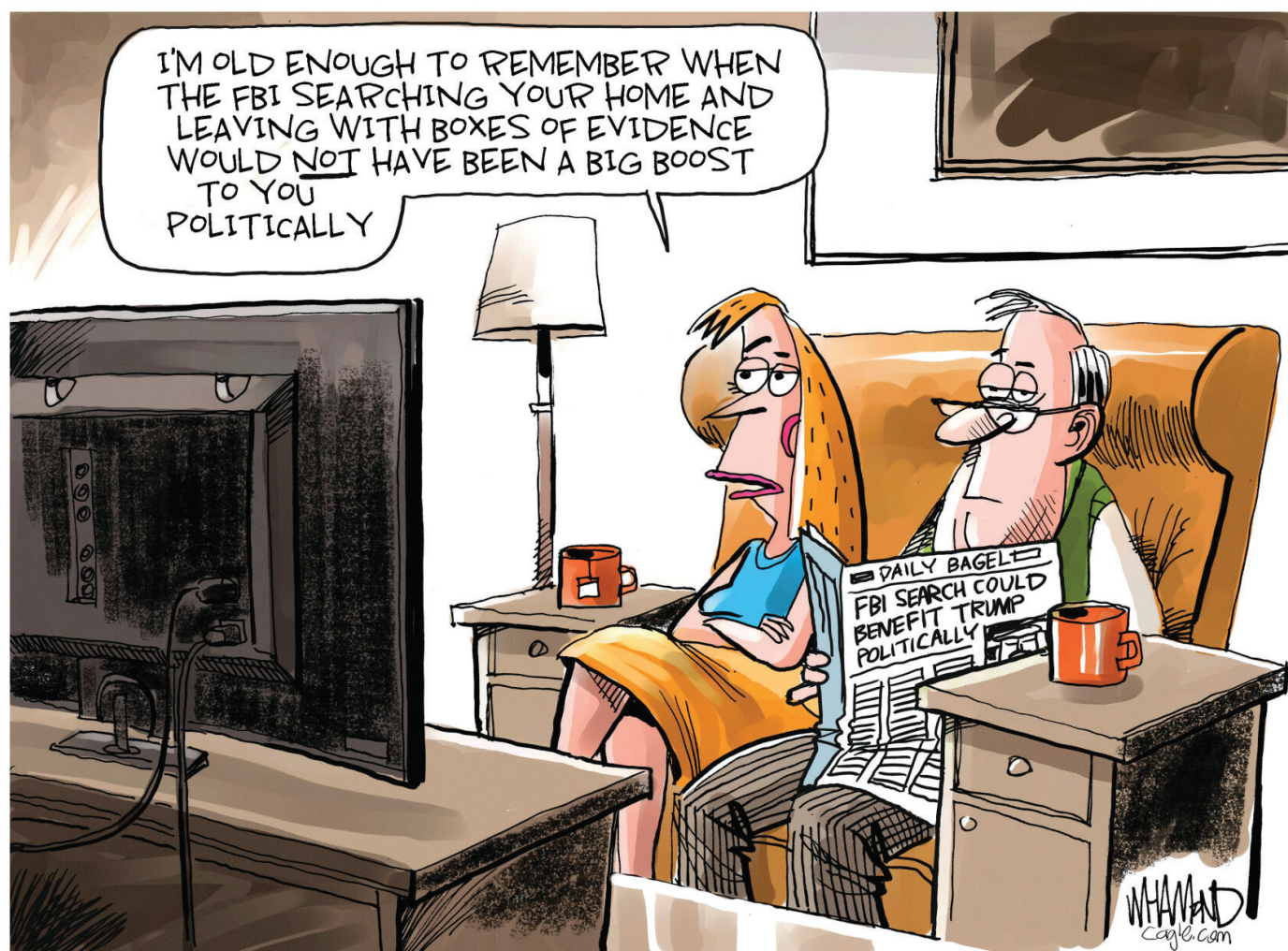
Sure, at least for now there isn't a whole lot of variety within the candidates. Kotek is as solidly Democrat as Draza is Republican. Johnson is trying to capitalize on her role as a political outsider to get elected.

In other words, this election doesn't appear to be one that will be needlessly complicated. The battle lines are drawn. The issues are familiar. Now all that needs to happen is that eligible voters actually vote.

Regardless of what one reads or hears, every vote does count. We, as Americans, enjoy a specific ability to peacefully complete a process that selects those who will represent us during every election. Our right and privilege to vote — and it is a privilege — is only as effective as those who chose to use it.

We must guard against apathy and the dissonance created by modern day pop culture, toxic social media and political sound bites to focus on exercising our right to vote.

The state faces many challenges, no doubt about it. Yet we have the opportunity to do something about those challenges by voting. Every election is crucial in a democracy. Let's not allow our great privilege to be wasted.



# Moving with the rhythm of life



REGINA  
BRAKER  
ANOTHER MILE

The last few weeks have seen kids enjoying last opportunities to get in the best of summer, following their passions for sports, venturing off to church camp, or staying in town to join their peers in Rock and Roll Camp at the Pendleton Center for the Arts Center, theater camp at Blue Mountain Community College, music camp sponsored by the Oregon East Symphony. They've been showing up at a local church for VBS, the acronym a better label because it leaves unsaid the last word (vacation Bible school).

Or they were busy preparing their pride and joy 4-H project to show by summer's end. And still others made a habit of some daily time with siblings or friends at the splash park, waterpark or local swimming hole during the heat waves rolling through August.

Maybe work was top of the agenda, in a local business, as a farm hand, or learning the skills of a trade in construction or house painting. As they interact with the adults around them, young folks learn so much more than just the job they're doing.

Highlights of summer include cultural offerings bringing outdoor pleasure to audiences on pavements and in parks, in concerts, outdoor theater and powwow competitions. The events of the season are a whirlwind of activity

also brought on by the needs of producing our food supply, the results of the last planting, while the repair of damage from unexpected weather continues in the juggle of urgent tasks.

Local events showcase the best of the harvest coming in at farmers' markets and county fairs, and folks show off their skills at rodeos and stampedes. Some find themselves focused on completing home repairs and do-it-yourself improvements while the weather cooperates and then can look forward to a break to take in the local entertainment filling the calendar.

This year also includes a ramp-up in political activity as candidates in mid-term elections ready themselves for the final stretch in the months ahead, put in the miles for town halls or seek visibility in local parades, while local volunteers show up to talk with prospective voters. This year is particularly challenging in having conversations across the political divide.

How do we respond when someone's energy turns into a violation of personal space? When a friend recently experienced a repeatedly wagging finger in his face, he remained calm, and quietly kept the conversation going, asking questions to know more about what informed the claims shouted at him.

Sometimes there was negativity in a dismissive comment about the wrong party, when a couple realized they were talking with members outside of their political bubble, and quickly backed away. This was at a political party booth, but productive conversations were also possible at the Umatilla County Fair.

The most successful interactions were not necessarily with folks who stated their support for candidate X, Y or Z. It was the give and take with individuals who approached the booth to state opposition that led to an exchange about something we had in common, followed by some willingness to learn more about a new candidate making the rounds. Though rare, they were valued all the more when they came about.

Even when we know that our neighbors vote differently than we do, we still share many of the same rhythms of life, the simple pleasures of summer, and the patterns and traditions of the other seasons.

Perhaps we share in supporting those youth programs that help our kids thrive. Or we have faced a difficult challenge, lived through a medical problem that they experienced too. And where there are problems to solve, we recognize that we can come together in our communities and rely on one another to create the solutions we need.

The rhythm of life during summer brings special moments for all of us, whatever our age. There is lazy relaxation combined with projects and events that offer a chance to recreate ourselves, learn new skills, meet new people and add new sparkle to our multi-faceted personalities. Some of it is difficult, perhaps frustrating too, much of it a pleasure, yet all of it essential to healthy living.

*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

### Bentz's actions show little support for veterans, while Joe Yetter's show care

"Thank you for your service," is a glib statement many make when supposedly demonstrating their appreciation of and concern for veterans. I suppose Rep. Cliff Bentz has said it a time or two. But Bentz's actions, his votes in Congress show only disregard for our veterans.

Bentz has voted against four pieces of legislation that would support veterans in real and important ways. One such measure provides health care for those soldiers exposed to toxic chemical waste at various military bases. Can you imagine? The very housing the Army and Marines place their men and women in are contaminated from burn pits. Many suffer from cancer and other diseases due to exposure to chemical waste.

What reason can Rep. Bentz have to vote against the means to care for these veterans? He only follows the party line. That is not the way to support Oregonians who have served this nation.

Joe Yetter, his opponent, has served in the military himself. He has cared for other soldiers as a surgeon in the Army.

Yetter has demonstrated his care for our country and his fellow soldiers. He won't vote no on such critical measures that actually do thank veterans for their service.

Joette Storm  
Bend

### The bus barn saga continues

The recent article on Pendleton's proposed bus barn highlights the various funding sources for the project, once again short-changing one fund to bolster someone's pet project. Usually when the city takes on a project of this magnitude, city officials are tripping over each other praising its advantages and how residents will prosper once the project is completed. That seems to be missing.

They have yet to provide a plausible explanation as to how the construction of this facility, so far away from the center of town, is going to increase and improve bus service for our city's residents. Seems the only one applauding the effort is Byrnes Oil Company, provider of the city's fuel.

Rick Rohde  
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