Liquor initiative has a dirty little secret

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That axiom is apt for the ballot initiative that would move liquor sales out of state-operated stores and into grocery stores. The measure is backed by the grocery industry. Petitioners will soon be gathering signatures.

When Washington voters considered this choice in 2011, it became known colloquially as the Costco Initiative. That's because Costco largely bankrolled the ballot measure campaign.

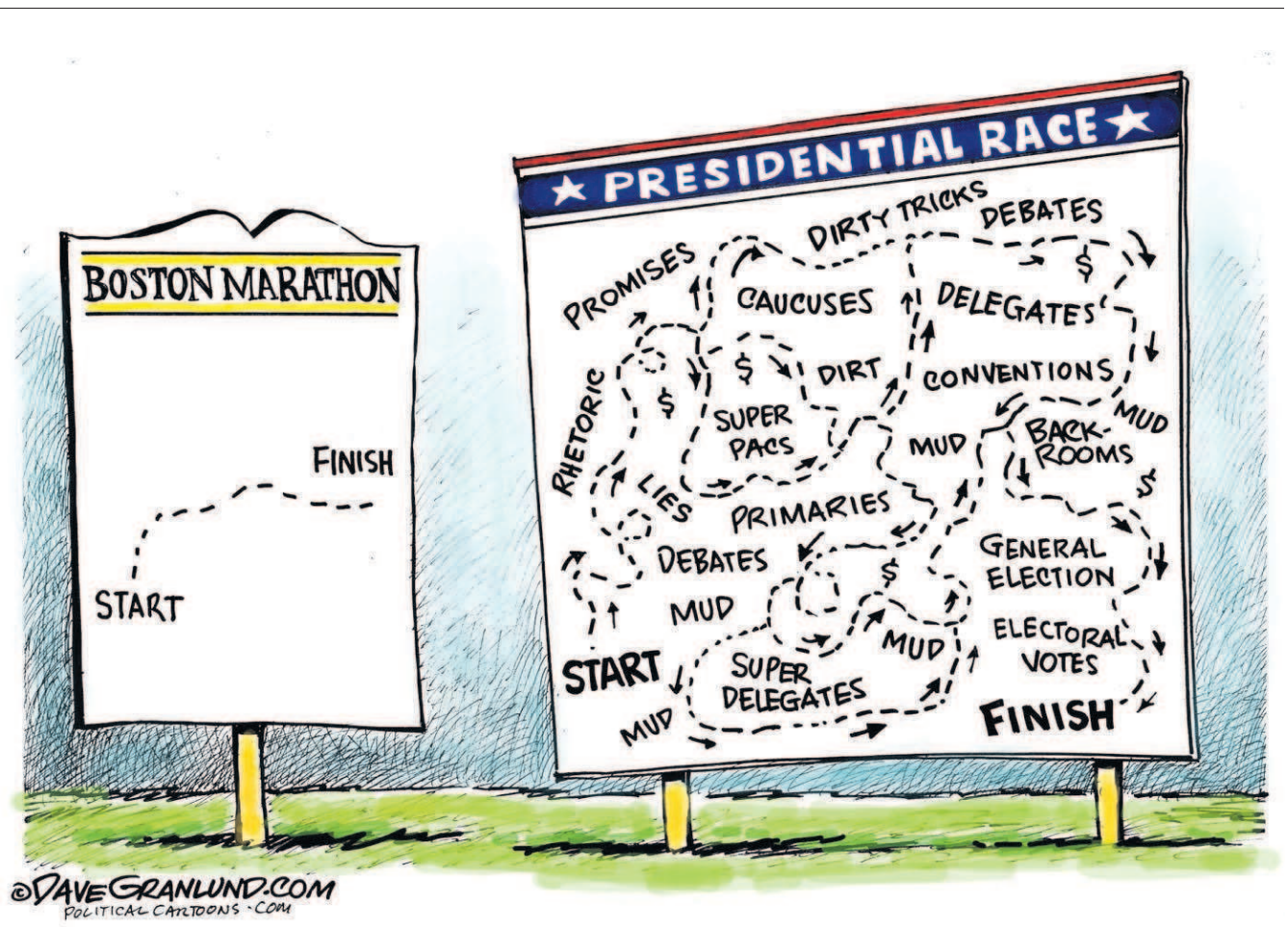
Oregon is one of 13 states that maintains state-owned stores. They are a considerable moneymaker for state government. How the state would replace that revenue is this ballot measure's dirty little secret.

On the other side of the Columbia River, there is a measure of buyers' remorse. The variety Washingtonians once saw in their liquor stores is gone. Restaurateurs find that particularly vexing. And the products cost more.

Oregon's burgeoning industries of craft brewers, distillers and winemakers oppose the initiative, because of what they see coming. Without the Oregon Liquor Control Commission stores, craft distillers would lose their access to a statewide retail network. If liquor is moved into supermarkets, brewers and winemakers will see their shelf space diminished. Grocery stores are a zero-sum game. If a body of new product gains shelf space, other products have less.

OLCC stores produce revenue in excess of $200 million that's used for state and local government services. The grocers' ballot measure assumes the state Legislature will find another way to generate that amount of revenue. Good luck.

Washington's Costco Initiative has demonstrated who really wins with proposals such as this. The craft distillers, brewers and wine makers have it right. They will lose, big time. So will consumers.



Spending time with cousins a great roadmap for life

MAIN STREET
Rich Wandschneider

My son and I took six kids/grandkids to California's redwoods over spring break — a 10-year-old, two elevens, two fifteens and a sixteen; four boys and two girls. His wife had to work, so it was the two of us, two cars and the six kids — brothers, sisters, cousins.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time with uncles, aunts and cousins. In Minnesota, I was the first nephew on my father's side and thus the oldest as new cousins and siblings came along. That meant special treatment: a "money tree" at Itasca State Park, carefully primed by the uncles so that when I shook it pennies and dimes fell to the ground; three weeks with Uncle Al, without parents, at his "Hideout" resort on Island Lake, where I learned to thread a minnow on a hook and caught my first walleye; and from a new uncle, a baseball autographed by Marty Marion, then shortstop of the St. Louis Cardinals. As siblings and cousins came along, I had to learn to share the stage.

But I was oldest and king of the Sunday picnic and Christmas Eve get-togethers until we moved to California, where maternal uncles had kids my age. I went from king to compatriot, as we older cousins put salt in the sugar bowl for the younger ones, and eight siblings/cousins traveled together in two station wagons with four parents pulling two travel trailers through Yellowstone and the Black Hills on the way to Minnesota roots.

The four of us in my nuclear family each got a summer month in Minnesota with Uncle Al. I was 15, and they gave me the keys to an old Buick to get me and a small aluminum boat to the lake — little Lengby had no police force, and careful families entrusted kids my age to drive in town.

Uncle Al is gone. I have not seen most of the cousins for years. I get regular Minnesota Christmas messages and wedding invitations from Al's kids, keeping me involved, however minimally, in the family. But I remember.

Remember something special about these relationships. You don't have to have a 4.0 gpa, be a super jock, sign up or pay an entry fee to be a cousin or a nephew. Uncles, aunts and cousins just are. And they are yours. You might grumble that one cousin is mean or that another pays you no mind, but you have to work it out. Parents and grandparents insist on the visits, so you learn to negotiate, forgive or forget — or just to get along.

I thought about this as the eight of us made our way from Portland to Crescent City and then Eureka and the Valley of Giants. We stopped to measure ourselves against the trees — even cool teenagers can be impressed by the old monsters — to eat clam chowder and sushi, find starfish in tide-pools, swim in a very cold ocean (kids can do that) and visit the Oregon Caves. And at night we crammed into a couple of motel rooms and sat in the hot tub, swam and played in the pool.

I think that we, as a society, have not learned to live in small families. It's only been a couple of generations. I am not advocating six and eight kids per family, but we need to think about what we've lost and make it up in other ways.

Two adults and six kids in two cars is easier than one adult and two kids in one car. Siblings and cousins fight and rearrange alliances, but generally work their way through things without adult refereeing. And because they know that they'll still be cousins tomorrow, there is not as much posturing and the competition and the grudges are short-lived.

When there is a gaggle of kids in a house, you learn to negotiate, and when siblings are a pain, there might be a cousin to commiserate with. Cousins — especially those just a little older — are good at teaching a new dance or making sure you know the right music. Cousins teach you that you don't have to be best friends or lovers to get along. And cousinhood is safe territory, with limits — unlike smartphones, texting, face-timing and porn videos — to learn to negotiate gender. Finally, right or wrong, the six of you have to get along or a parent or older cousin will set you straight — not much room for "child entitlement" and helicopter parenting with aunts, uncles and cousins.

But maybe the most important lesson of cousinhood is that not everything in life is a choice, especially not your choice, you lonely only child with no cousins. Sleep on that one.

Columnist Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph.

Correction

The Urban/Rural Exchange program is an OSU Extension Service Program and was started by Maureen Hosty in Grant County, not by Todd Nash in Wallowa County, as reported in an April 6 article. Nash was one of the first hosts for the program in Wallowa County.

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USPS No. 665-100

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Wallowa County's Newspaper Since 1884
Enterprise, Oregon

Member Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

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Published every Wednesday by:
EO Media Group

Periodical Postage Paid at Enterprise and additional mailing offices

Subscription rates (includes online access)	1 Year
Wallowa County	$40.00
Out-of-County	$57.00

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

See the Wallowa County Chieftain on the Internet
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POSTMASTER — Send address changes to
Wallowa County Chieftain
P.O. Box 338
Enterprise, OR 97828

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Volume 134

Government agencies want more and more

LETTERS to the EDITOR

It seems that every government agency wants more and more money. For what? More to create useless programs that hire yet more government workers? Putting in place programs that help nobody? How about wasting millions of dollars every year, when May and June roll around, to make sure the whole budget is spent — because if it isn't needed and used, departments won't get the same amount the following year, let alone an increase. Yet government needs more money, always.

It seems this wanting more money has not escaped the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. Once again, they have slid in a little charge that I suppose many people see as not a big deal.

We Oregonians were promised many years ago that if we lived in Oregon 50 consecutive years and were 65 years old we could, after all the years of paying to purchase licenses and tags, get our license for free. It was called a Pioneer license and was available only to those who met this once-in-a-lifetime criteria. So, after all the years of purchasing and supporting Fish & Game, we were supposed to be rewarded in our retirement years with a free license. Last year, I was rewarded with a free license, as promised.

Along comes 2016. Oh wait, it is $6 this year. Not free like last year? Why is it $6 all of a sudden?

In my opinion, if y'all don't say something right this minute about this little charge for your supposed "free" license, you will be sorry. After the charge is slipped in, what happens next? Once a charge is established, you will begin to see that go up in price, just like they all have done before. Pretty soon, you're paying $100 for your "free license". Say something now!

Doug Dutton
Joseph

Congress' version of resiliency

I had the opportunity to attend a Forest Resiliency Project meeting. I was surprised to find this program had kicked off at least two years prior to the federal act of a similar name. After all, how often can you come up with a title like "Forest Resiliency?"

After reviewing the House Bill 2647, the "Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015" (the title is a reflection of the USFS program) authored by Rep. Bruce Westerman of Arkansas, I was really curious to see how this was implemented. The USFS program is all about wildfire suppression and forest health through diverse scenarios. Whereas the congressional version of "forest resiliency" is clearly about providing corporate logging interests access to our forests by removing inconvenient obstacles.

Included are exclusions from EPA requirements, rules of bonding for costs of litigation before court action and reduction in the number of members for advisory committees. The bill reduces or eliminates oversight of logging activities in our national forests.

This is a very bad bill for the public and it has been approved by the House of Representatives, sent to the Senate and is currently in the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

We must consider why our representatives would approve such a biased bill.

David Ebbert
Enterprise

Puppet marionette

With the political election battles and dirt flying for the office of U.S. president and others, it has occurred to me that it is not beyond comprehension that Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump and other of their ilk are being controlled by unseen, unknown sources who are pulling strings for their own benefit and, indeed, cheapening and degrading the office of president — much to the delight of our country's enemies, both foreign and domestic.

Alfred Jones
Lewiston

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