

# Get ready for Measure 101 in January

In 2017, it seemed like we never got a break from politics. And there will be no rest for the weary once we turn the calendar to 2018.

The political season will get off to a fast start next year, with Oregon voters having an important referendum in January, followed by important primaries in May and a critical election awaiting again in November.

## EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

So what's this January thing about?

It's Measure 101, a referendum on health insurance premium taxes that were approved by the state Legislature during the previous session. Opponents of the taxes gathered signatures to put pieces of that package before voters.

The process has been controversial since the beginning. Some argue the referendum process is a bad way to set complicated tax policy. Others say the ballot language is biased, arguing the semantics of "tax" against "assessment." And they argued some over the date that the vote will take place. (It's Jan. 23).

All this ... and we haven't even gotten to the meat of the issue, which has both sides taking principled and impassioned stands on how critical their victory is.

Opponents say the tax allows legislators a "back door" to suck health care into the general fund, which will eventually lead to worse health budgets and outcomes.

Proponents of the tax say this is the least-harmful way to take a step toward guaranteeing health care for more Oregonians, perhaps as many as 300,000, including nearly 1,000 in Wallowa County, by some estimates.

We're digging deep into the issue over the next month, so look for editorials on the subject before ballots go out.

Take this seriously. You are likely to hear exaggerations from both sides, but there is no debating the fact that this is an important issue that will be decided by relatively few informed voters. Do your best to make sure you are one.

## Scrap teacher gifts entirely

I was surprised to read Ann Bloom's column in the Dec. 13 Chieftain, "A Perfect Gift for a Teacher," because I have worked in several school districts in which it was forbidden for a teacher to accept gifts from students. It was an embarrassing problem for me as a teacher to be given a gift that I was forbidden to accept, and a confusing dilemma to avoid hurting a child's feelings by refusing it.

There are good reasons for parents to refrain from giving gifts to their child's teachers. One of the best reasons is that not all children will be able to bring a gift to the teacher. The child whose

## LETTERS to the EDITOR

parents are unable to supply gifts to her teacher may love her teacher as much or more than the other children but be hurt that she cannot give a gift.

A second reason is that all gifts are not the same. Grateful parents want to express their appreciation for their child's teacher with a special gift. However, children are not immune to making comparison judgements.

Bloom's suggestions toward nutritious gifts make good sense, but they are still gifts.

An obvious and less honorable gift would be one given with the intent to please the teacher and influence him or her to look upon the child more kindly. I have never known a teacher who would appreciate this kind of gift.

I believe that the most important reason for not giving gifts to teachers is when the gift is given as a substitute for an acceptable salary or for insufficient supplies in the school budget. A lot has been said recently about the amount of personal money teachers spend on classroom supplies for their children.

Unfortunately, Bloom recommends this. I find it somewhat demeaning to give teachers a gift because they have too little money for supplies. A more respectful way to help teachers get supplies would be to request the school board to provide a more generous supply budget for their classrooms.

A child's homemade card expressing his own feelings for the occasion will be something a teacher will be able to treasure.

The teachers I have known over a 30-year career in education are the most generous people you will know. They thrive on the love of their students, the respect of parents and the community, and the accomplishments of their students.

If they believe their students need another item or school supply, they will see that they get it. That will not change.

Evelyn Swart  
Joseph



# Fear and hope in Wallowa County

Too long ago for almost all of us to remember hearing in its time, with the Great Depression breathing hard across the country, Pres. Franklin Roosevelt told us that the "only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror, which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

I believe that current fears — fear of the political party we are not, the religion or color or gender we are not, fear for our health and health care bills, for our children's futures, and even for our individual capacities to retire; fear of other nations tampering in our elections or opposing our will in the Middle East or sending their farm workers and computer geeks to take our jobs — this bundle of fears permeates too much of our private and public lives.

I had a notion to scrap my column entirely for FDR's 1933 inaugural speech:

*Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men... The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.*

It is hard to imagine the current President or any of his Democratic challengers rising with these words in the current climate. All feel compelled to address the minutia of how anything affects growth and profit of the country or of some segment of the population, some of us as we are members of an



## MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

economic, religious, or ethnic group.

The tax bill will lower or raise my income; Obamacare does or does not make my or my mother's or my children's health care more precarious; gun registration or assault weapons legislation restricts my freedom or endangers my children.

That said, there are legitimate fears: women fear the harassment and assaults of employers and drinking college men, the powerful men who stay in hotels where they work, the coaches and ministers they go to for help; in some communities African-Americans fear for their own teenage lives and those of their sons and grandsons; Mexican-American citizens fear harassment and "dreamers" fear deportation.

If you think we are rurally removed from these thoughts, I remember driving then-candidate and later governor Ted Kulongoski from his Enterprise motel to the rodeo in Joseph on Hurricane Creek Highway a few years ago. As always, there were extra state police on duty.

We passed a car pulled over by a pair of them and Kulongoski, Oregon's Attorney General at the time, remarked casually that it looked like a DWM "driving while Mexican" event. He said that unconscious racial thinking was difficult to uproot.

Sometimes wounds have to fester before they heal, and my hope is that we are coming through a great festering that will put us back on FDR's

road. I believe that America is at its best when it is most egalitarian.

Tax relief was not the topic of the day in the '50s, when the GI Bill was sending millions of Americans to college and helping them buy homes and farms. Evangelical fervor was not aimed at political opponents when a Civil Rights Bill was in the offing.

The '50s and '60s, when I was coming of age, were far from perfect. Equality in education and the workplace did not extend to women and people of color, but as we rolled into the '70s there was every hope that those concerns too would be addressed. And, frankly, the reason you are watching girls' basketball games and going to women doctors in Wallowa County is the advent of Title 9 in 1972.

I believe that we as a country and in our individual concerns lurch forward in this democratic experiment that said from the beginning that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

"All men" did not include Indians and African-Americans at the time, nor were women part of the equation. But we have grown through hard times and good and the hope is that this troubled time too will give way to such growth.

And with "creative effort" and a concern for "social values" rather than "evanescent profits," and a very large dose of hope rather than fear and despair, we can, together, make 2018 a better year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Columnist Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph.

# Finding Wallowa's true Christmas spirit

This is our Christmas edition.

You'll find one tradition in a special section in this week's printed version. Santa letters are always heart-warming. I hope you enjoy them as much as we did bringing them to you. Thanks to all of the teachers who participated.

I got wind this week of several good things people had done, and I decided to share those in my Christmas column. After all, what's more in the Christmas spirit than doing something for your fellow man.

The first one came from Lorri Fischer, an instructor in the Enterprise School District. You may have read the story we did about Hannah-Kate Sheehy having the lead role in a recent Elgin Opera House production. She is a student at Enterprise Elementary.

In recognition of her performance, Lorri told me during one of the performances, her classmates traveled to Elgin to cheer her on and then presented her with roses in a special ceremony onstage.

"It was a magical night," Lorri said.

I can only image how special for both the students and Hannah-Kate. It's an experience these children will remember for the remainder of their



## WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

lives.

The second recognition goes to Claire Webb, a student at Joseph High School. She is a member of the school's FCCLA Club, which conducts a wreaths and greenery fundraiser each year.

Claire was honored recently for having sold an amazing \$1,463 worth of product for the sale, which one school official told me was a record high for individual sales in the past 25 years.

She did an outstanding job. Claire, when Jennifer Powell in the Chieftain advertising sales department decides to retire, there me be a job for you.

In addition to being a crack salesperson, Claire also attended Oregon Leadership Institute and is working on an FCCLA project with the Humane Society.

Way to go, Claire!  
I have slightly fewer details on the

third Christmas spirit award. A gentleman called the office shortly after the Dec. 6 edition was published. He had just read the amazing story about the friends of Kathy Jenkins and their quest to purchase eSight glasses for her.

He attempted to use the online link mentioned in the article to donate; however, it didn't work.

We had carefully checked the address to be sure it was correct, but what we didn't count on was the computer system that justifies our columns having a mind of its own. It decided to break the URL and inserted a standard dash, which looks for all the world like it is part of the address.

This was an individual who does not live in Wallowa County. He was so determined to donate to a good cause, he went to all the work of calling us to get the correct information. We called him back and provided it with our apologies.

Now that is the Christmas spirit if ever I have seen it. Most people would have figured, well ... I did my part and it didn't work so I'm off the hook. Here's wishing all of our readers a Merry Christmas. May your days be merry and bright.

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P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828  
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.  
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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**Reporter** Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com  
**Reporter** Kathleen Eilyn, kellyn@wallowa.com  
**Newsroom assistant** editor@wallowa.com  
**Ad sales consultant** Jennifer Powell, jpowell@wallowa.com  
**Office manager** Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

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