

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Abolishing police is not the answer

At least at first glance, the idea that police departments should be abolished in favor of other methods of protection seems so counterintuitive, it's difficult to know where to begin.

Yet, a recent survey by the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center showed a total of 27% of respondents strongly, or somewhat, support the idea of abolishing their local police departments.

Instead of police departments, advocates suggest a system of social workers, counselors and mental health experts to fill in the police role.

The survey, though, also showed 67% of the people polled are against eradicating police departments. The polled consisted of responses from 1,400 adult Oregonians.

The issue was front and center last year during the George Floyd riots and protests as cases of police brutality gained closer scrutiny.

And the survey showed a slight majority of Oregonians back some type of reduced police funding and instead favor using the savings to pay for more public health, education and social services.

The results are interesting, but in the end, abolishment is a bad idea linked to emotion rather than common sense.

The 2020 protests did a lot of damage across the nation, but they did push the issue of police misdeeds into the national conversation. Ultimately, that was a good thing. In a democratic society, no public agency or employee is above the public's review.

The George Floyd incident was a terrible injustice and those who were responsible — mainly former Minneapolis Police Department Officer Derek Chauvin — were dealt with by the justice system. Chauvin earned a 22-year prison sentence for his role in Floyd's death.

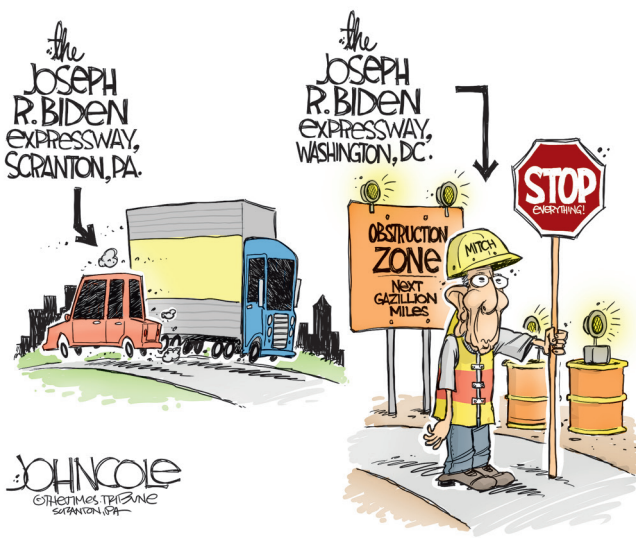
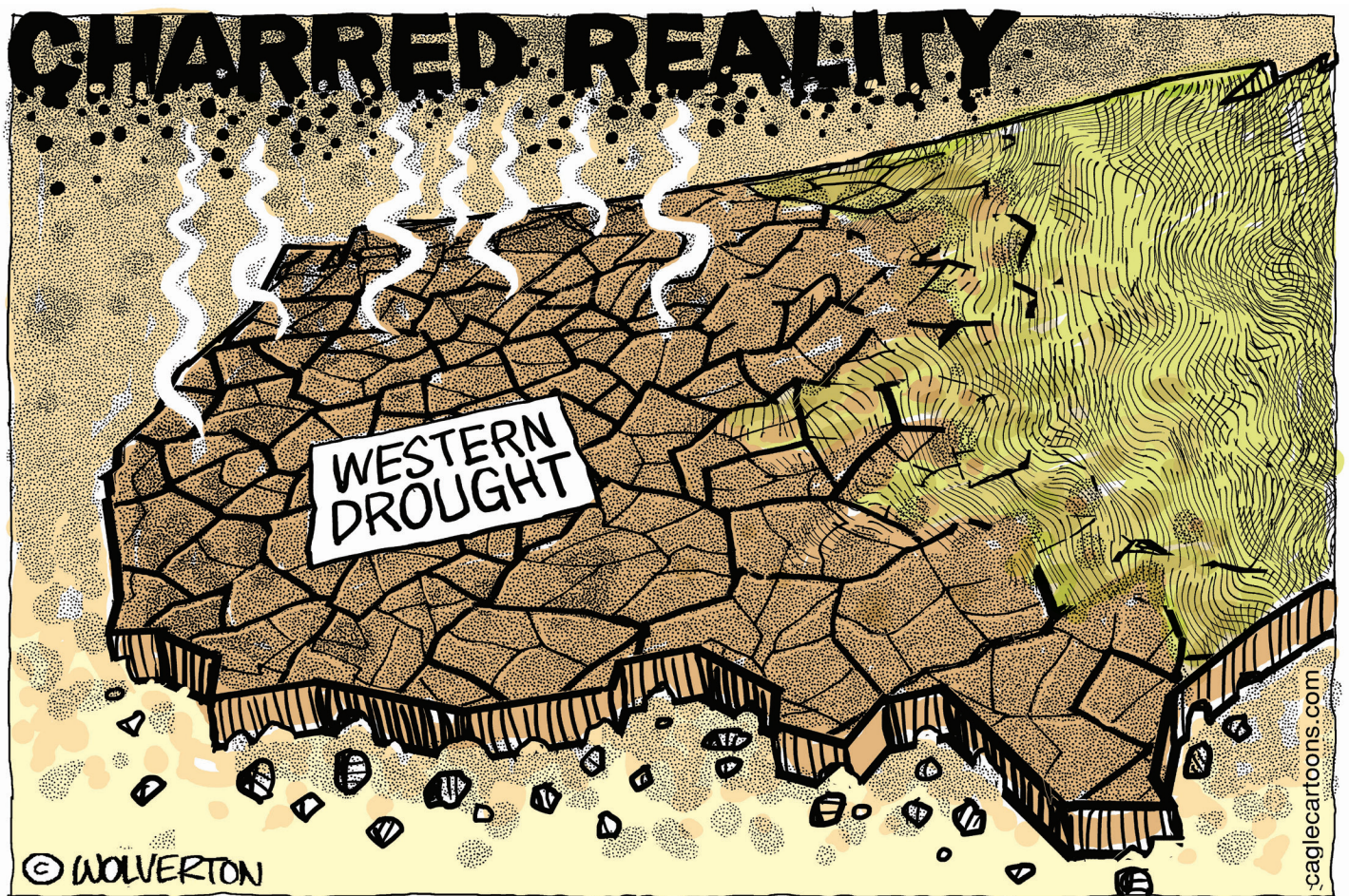
The problem is one of perception. A single horrendous act by a police officer somehow filled in as a statement for the entire community of law enforcement officers during the summer of 2020 protests.

Typically, police follow the law. They are not brutal. They are dedicated to serving their community and respecting civil liberties.

The issue isn't more social workers or mental health specialists — though they are needed — but better training and an acknowledgement that we need police.

Human nature being what it is, we always will need a force of dedicated public servants to safeguard our homes and property. Should there be close oversight of our police? Of course. The public owes it to itself — and to the men and women who wear a badge — to be vigilant about police tactics.

But abolish police departments? No thanks.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Tourists need to respect the rules, local residents

It seems tourism may have its limits. Although we, as those who live in Wallowa County, appreciate those that come to our beautiful county, shop at our amazing stores and support the businesses, we don't appreciate rude behavior. Those of us that live here must enjoy the lake during the same time those from out of town, come here to enjoy what nature has to offer, as well as the lake.

Over the Fourth of July weekend, tourism raised its ugly head, as parking at the North end of the lake became a war zone. There is a spot, as you pull into the lake, where a sign says, '15 minute parking.' Most everyone uses that area to prep their boats to launch into the lake, or unload picnic items, then move.

However, what we witnessed over the weekend made a parking problem a fiasco: someone in the 15 minute-parking area, a motorhome with its awing out. The rest of that area clogged with parked cars. When people tried to ask them to conform to the rules, they were confronted with a burst of hate. Absolute total disregard for

not only the rules, but for those around them.

To come here and enjoy our beautiful county and the lake does not call for the rudeness we continue to see.

We live here, and we follow the rules for a reason. Don't come here and disrespect us.

Doug Dutton
Joseph

Let's come together and rebuild our society

It's amazing to me the depths to which society has sunk in recent decades. Discourse, humanity, civility, respect ... all societal traits that are withering and dying, victims of the elimination of a common social morality. So many are committed to the idea that each person is a moral island. Such thinking dissolves the bonds of a society. Without a common social morality, we're all just drifting alone, instinctively clinging to any whose moral values mirror our own, transforming society into warring tribes. It seems when I was a child I might

see a relationship end, perhaps with some hard feelings but people would remain civil toward one another. Now everything seems to mandatorily become a melodramatic production and bitter feud. And now not just in divorce at the end of a marriage, but at the end of dating relationships as well. Children have studied the bitter divorces of adults and replicated them in their own relationships.

Too few remember that the human being possesses three areas of health in need of constant maintenance, sustenance and care: physical health, mental health, and spiritual health. If one suffers, it drags the other two down with it. This used to be common knowledge taught in health classes. Now children are instead taught how to procreate without consequence.

The human race needs and desires a return to civil society. And the only way this will ever happen is if individuals become more mindful of their health and sustain all three areas.

Rebuild.

Mark Elfering
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