

## OPINION

### OTHER VOICES

## The next 10 years of elections will be decided by you

The process of redistricting is well underway this year, and by the time it's done, some of our state legislative districts could look completely different. We're also guaranteed to have a brand new congressional district somewhere in Oregon.



Rep. Bobby Levy

Required by the Constitution once every 10 years, redistricting ensures that political boundaries reflect population changes. The major development this year is the new, sixth congressional seat, which will increase Oregon's representation in Washington, D.C.

We don't know what these new legislative districts will look like yet, but we know one thing for sure: your involvement can change everything.

For residents in Congressional District 2, you have a chance to voice your concerns during virtual public meetings that will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 8, starting at 1 p.m. and Friday, Sept. 10, starting at 8 a.m.

If you miss these times, anyone can sign up to testify on Monday, Sept. 13, between 1-4 p.m. and 5:30-8:30 p.m.

It's important for Oregonians to participate in the process of redistricting because of the impact it has on a variety of issues, including where to put Oregon's sixth congressional seat and possible changes to who your elected officials can be.

That's why you're encouraged to take part in these virtual public meetings. You can influence how maps are drawn, and without your voice it will be harder to draw district lines that reflect your interests.

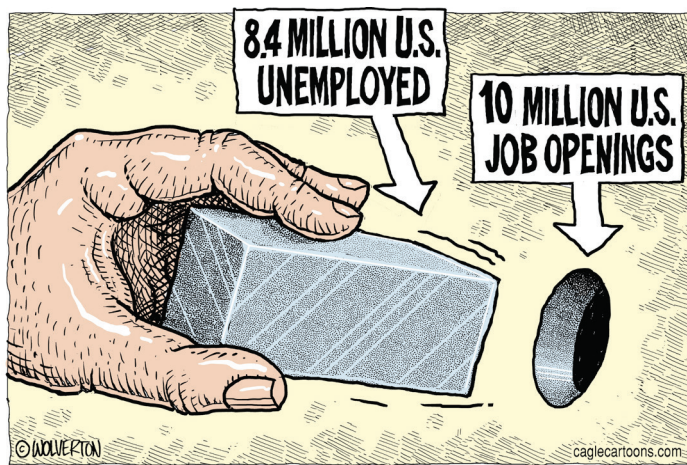
Oregon is at a high risk of gerrymandering this year, according to reporting from sites like Axios. This would favor one political party over another. Strong public participation can greatly reduce this risk.

You will get to weigh in during these public meetings, and you can even draw your own maps using the tool at the state's redistricting website, found here.

As you consider what is important to you regarding redistricting, a collection of different criteria used across the country can be found at this link.

I look forward to hearing about the strong public participation from our community on this extremely important issue. For this or any other topic, feel free to reach out to my office for questions or concerns.

*Rep. Bobby Levy represents House District 58, which includes all of Union and Wallowa counties and a portion of Umatilla County, in the Oregon Legislature.*



### LETTERS to the EDITOR

#### Many value 'freedom' to infect others

The people of Wallowa County are known for their warmth, kindness, and generosity. My personal experience has borne that out — at least until the pandemic reached its current level of lethality. Now, going to Safeway, where about half the folks are unmasked, it has become increasingly apparent that what many of my fellow citizens value more than the lives of their friends and neighbors is their "freedom" to infect others.

I just hope that the day never comes when the leaders of one of our two major political parties and their partisan media surrogates declare drunk driving to be an inalienable individual right. At that point, our roads will become as dangerous as our grocery stores are now.

Stephen Ducat  
Joseph

#### Think of others if you decide not to mask, vaccinate

To those who oppose the use of masks or receiving a vaccination, please realize that the ICU bed that you may occupy could be used for a child who has been in an automobile accident or is fighting a serious illness other than COVID. Also, please think of the hospital staff that you are putting at risk.

If you have the guts to take on COVID, more power to you, but could you please not be so selfish and do others a favor by having the guts to take it on in your own home.

Jeff Irish  
Enterprise

#### Local educators need our support

There is conflict occurring within our communities pertaining to COVID-19 protocols and masking mandates and it is negatively affecting our school districts and our kids' education.

Through the governor's mandates, agencies are providing direction to every school district in the state pertaining to COVID-19 protocols. There is no choice in the manner as school district are required to follow the laws/policies.

There are people who have threatened to turn in schools in for not following the mask mandates. Conversely, there are folks who are condemning the schools for following state law because it conflicts with their rights.

Personally, I understand both sides. My concern is the "energy" is being applied to the wrong entity. The mandates/rules are not coming from the school districts. None of it. The school districts are required to abide by them or be subject to fines and/or loss of teaching credentials.

Our teachers and administration are getting "brow beat" from all angles. All they want to do is teach. They care about our kids and their future. They want to prepare them as best they can for the life that's ahead of them. There are tremendous distractions keeping them from doing this to their fullest extent.

My hope is people redirect their energy to the root cause of these issues. The school districts have supported "local control" and I truly believe this is in alignment with the community in general. We, collectively, need to support them in educating our kids. Not tear them down.

Matt Howard  
Wallowa

#### We need to remember courageous health providers

The coronavirus pandemic, hurricanes and flooding, wildfires and the plight of refugees are fueling the division and political unrest in the United States, as well as the entire world. It is tempting to join in with the weeping and wailing and anger and blaming. And it tempts those of good will to sink into overwhelming depression and helplessness, not knowing how to deal with the suffering of so many human souls.

We forget to reflect on the courageous health providers who work long hours, sometimes unceasing, to care for the tragically sick and dying in our community and across the country. We forget to be thankful for the majority of citizens who care for the welfare of others in the community enough that they get their vaccinations and wear masks in public in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The astounding bravery of those people working to save the stranded in floods and devastation and to reconstruct the communities that are suffering is worthy of thankfulness, gratitude and praise. The tireless firefighters facing the wildfires life-threatening danger.

The American service men and women, grateful for their assistance facing the enemy in Afghanistan, are providing an example of human compassion and brotherhood. Those workers and volunteers serving homeless refugees all over the world attempt to soften the suffering of so many without food, clothing and shelter.

I thank God for the compassionate people who work for the welfare of others and provide hope for us all.

Evelyn Swart  
Joseph

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infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

**SEND LETTERS TO:** editor@wallowa.com, or via mail to Wallowa County Chieftain, 209 NW 1st St. Enterprise, OR 97828