

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Federal policy needs to support families

Family policies being decided at the federal level now will have a major effect on Americans for years to come.

This should be a bipartisan effort. There are plenty of Republicans and Democrats alike who understand how child tax credits, support for child care centers and universal preschool could have a huge positive effect on their constituents — not just families with young children, but also on business owners who depend on a strong workforce.

The lack of affordable child care and the serious shortage of child care in general are keeping parents out of the workforce, discouraging couples from having children and hurting the economy. This is a long-standing problem exacerbated by the pandemic.

When parents can find and afford quality child care and preschool for their children, they are free to work or continue their education and job training.

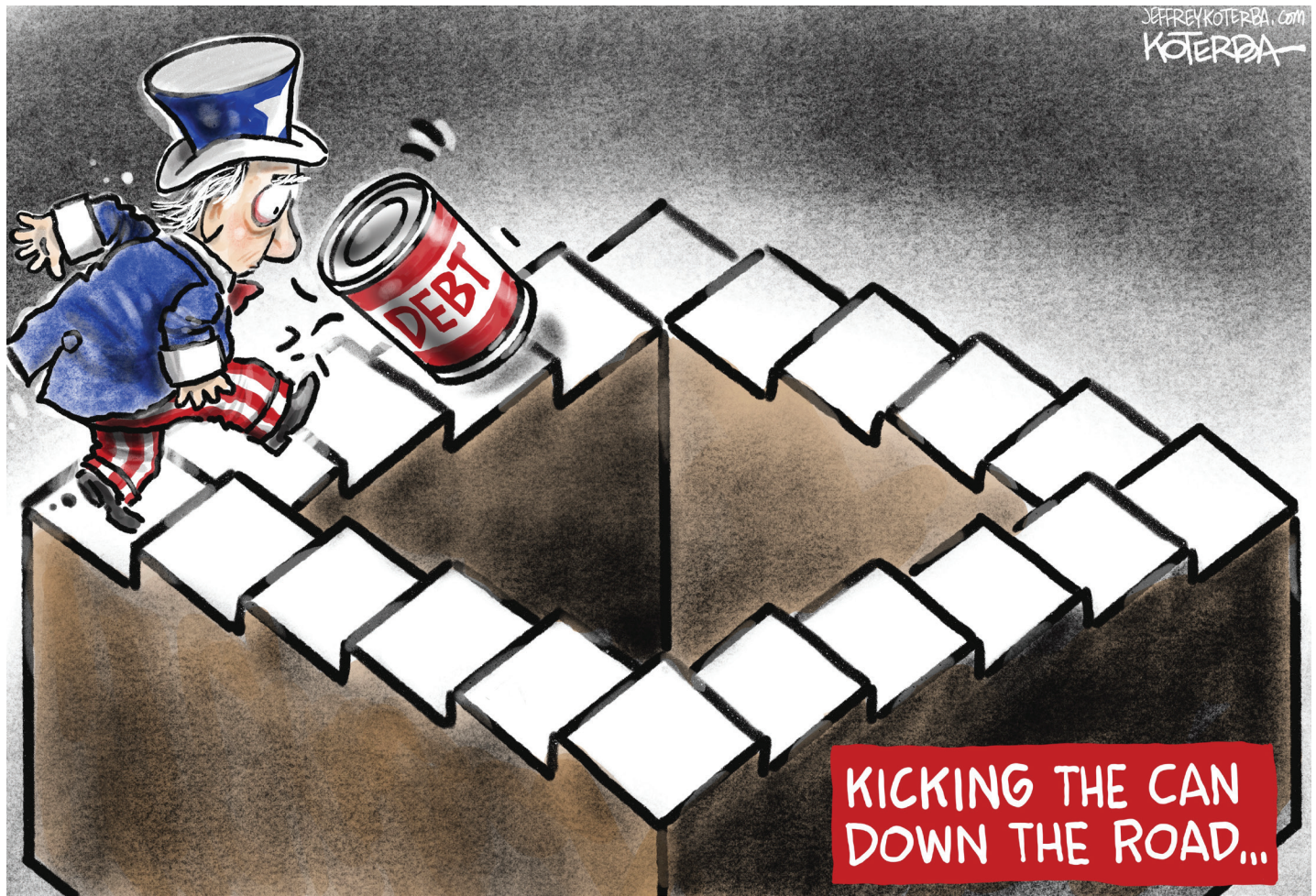
We believe child tax credits for low- and middle-income working parents to spend as they please on the best child care they can find would drive the market to create more quality child care options (both home- and center-based), and raise wages for child care providers.

The greatest challenge for most rural communities is the demand for child care far exceeds the supply. Building child care centers is expensive because of the specific needs of infants, toddlers and preschoolers and often onerous state regulations that govern child care facilities.

Federal grants to communities to build and maintain child care centers (which then could be operated by nonprofit organizations or cooperatives, with local control) would go a long way to shrink the child care shortage.

A recent analysis shows universal preschool for 4-year-olds will save the existing taxpayer-funded K-12 public education system over \$83 billion per year. It's clear that having young children spend three or four hours a day at a high-quality preschool — learning how to follow instructions, manage their emotions and work and play with others — means they will be ready to learn in kindergarten. The K-12 savings come from reduced need for special education and grade repetition.

We want to see Republicans and Democrats working together to allow parents to have choices about child care and preschool, to support low- and middle-income families for whom child care and preschool is currently a significant economic burden and to encourage adults to work. Family policies that support marriage, children and the economy are within reach.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

'Show some patriotism, get vaccinated and wear a mask'

I would like to thank both Harold Weight and Evelyn Swart for their words in the last Chieftain. Both letters showed a refreshing clarity and understanding of our duty as citizens of this country.

It seems to me that there is a disturbing trend in this country where so many folks equate patriotism with individual freedoms and unwillingness to compromise or consider the safety or needs of others. One definition of patriotism is, "Willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good."

In much of the discourse and actions today, what I see is a disturbing lack of such willingness, not just to sacrifice but to even be momentarily inconvenienced by wearing a mask. What would our fathers and grandfathers who sacrificed so much to defeat fascism think of such petty, self-centered comments and actions?

I implore my neighbors to stop listening to the paid voices of disinformation and think of your neighbors and friends. This pandemic has gone on long enough. We all know how to end it, so show some patriotism, get vaccinated and wear a mask.

Apply previous logic to many other issues for a better America.

**John Chlopek
Lostine**

Visitors shortened stay in the county because of a lack of masks

My wife and I visited Joseph and Enterprise last week and were stunned to find so few people wearing masks. People at the Wallowa Lake Lodge, retailers, servers at restaurants, and even the man who ran the RV park we stayed at did not wear masks.

They are putting everyone at risk of catching a deadly disease. We do not comprehend what this is about. Is it some type of political statement (about a virus?), childish "you can't tell me what

to do" behavior, just plain ignorance or what?

No matter what the reason, we had planned to stay for a number of days in this beautiful area, but left the next day to go someplace we felt safer.

People here need to realize that you are not only putting yourself at risk, you are putting your children, families and visitors at grave risk.

Yes, wearing a mask can be a pain. But it is not that difficult and the little hassle it creates is nothing compared to the pain of causing someone to catch a serious illness or die. Come on people: Think about the health and well-being of others, not just your own desires.

**Bob Doppelt
Eugene**

Commissioner offers pen response about River Democracy Act

To Mack Birkmaier:
Thanks for the letter concerning the River Democracy Act (RDA).

We have been consistent in asking three basic questions to Sen. Ron Wyden's staff:

1. Who nominated these "rivers"?
2. What criteria was used for nomination?
3. Can you provide detailed maps with designations of each segment?

Question 1:
I have not gotten an answer to this question from the senator's office, but we do know, by Sen. Wyden's statements, that fifth-graders nominated segments. We do not know where these fifth-graders reside. I have not heard from one person that has nominated a "river" or is in support of this bill. I did, however, receive a "request for public records" sent by Oregon Wild concerning RDA. I'm only left with the assumption that Oregon Wild is in support of this bill, and I will let the readers of this letter to draw their own conclusions.

Question 2:
Apparently no criteria was needed;

unlike the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 that had strict guidelines and robust public involvement, the RDA has neither. As commissioners, we have repeatedly invited the senator and his staff to public meetings and have been turned down citing not wanting to have the press there. Sen. Wyden's staff has been strategic and somewhat successful in meeting with individual commissioners and getting them to stay neutral on this issue.

Question 3:
When this bill was first presented to me, I and others asked for maps so we could have time to study the areas and better understand the impacts of RDA, both positive or negative. We were repeatedly told that they would provide detailed maps, but that has not been the case. Sen. Wyden does have detailed maps but has not made them available to the public.

They have shown maps to various commissioners, but refuse to leave copies or even allow them to take a picture. Wallowa and Union counties did hire an engineering firm to produce maps of our respective counties. The 404 miles of RDA added to the nearly 300 miles of our wild and scenic in Wallowa County is a startling image with half- and quarter-mile buffers well defined. To better illustrate, Wallowa County has 700 miles of county roads — imagine half-mile off all dirt roads and a quarter off paved on either side, and that's how much territory we are talking about.

Mack, to your last bullet point; the board of commissioners are on record in opposition to the bill (S. 192) and have asked that all 404 miles in Wallowa County be removed. We have the largest wilderness in this state and have lost most timber production from Forest Service-managed lands and we have more vacant and closed grazing allotments than active ones.

We do not need another layer of bureaucracy added to this complex beautiful landscape we have the privilege of calling home.

Thanks for your 90 years dedication to Wallowa County, Mack.

**Todd Nash
Wallowa County commissioner**

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LETTERS: The Wallowa County Chieftain welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that 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.

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