

## OPINION

### VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

# Rivers act needs more input

Political hyperbole aside, U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz's concerns raised during a floor speech of the U.S. House of Representatives regarding a bill to protect more than 4,500 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon as part of the federal Wild and Scenic Act are valid and deserve more than a passing glance by voters.

On Jan. 11, Bentz lambasted the River Democracy Act, a bill sponsored by U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, and labeled it as a sure way to create more, rather than fewer problems for forests in the eastern part of the state.

Bentz implied the act would leave forest dangerously exposed to become, essentially, tinderboxes.

At first glance, the legislation — now stalled in the congressional committee — appears to be a common-sense way to protect the forests and watersheds we all enjoy. Supporters of the River Democracy Act contend it would add protections to waterways, lessen wildfire risk, enhance drinking water and expand recreation to help rural economies.

The act also promises that only federal lands would be protected while private property and water rights would be safeguarded. A key piece of the legislation is a move to widen the area along protected waterways from one-quarter mile to half a mile.

There are a few problems with the legislation, though, not the least of which is what appears to be a lack of input from rural lawmakers at the county level. While supporters of the bill proudly proclaim voter participation through "nominations" from 2,500 Oregonians, the plan triggered resistance from several Eastern Oregon counties.

Commissioners in Union, Wallowa, Grant and Malheur counties have called the legislation into question with a variety of concerns, including lack of detailed maps and federal overreach.

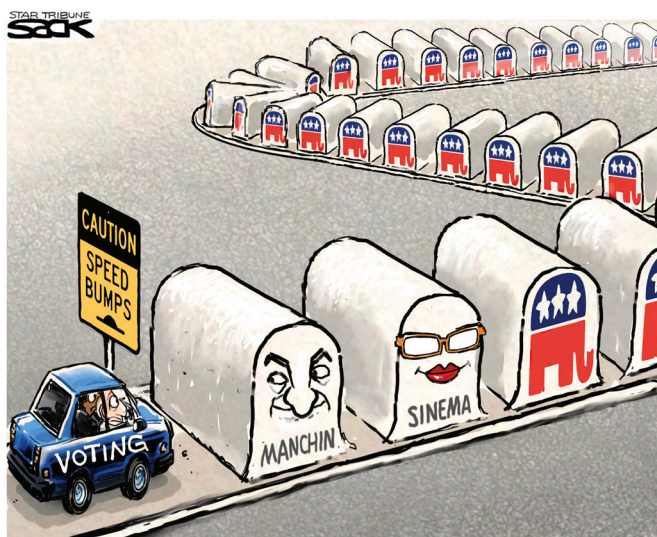
One of the act's most serious problems, though, isn't visible up front. Legislation safeguarding public spaces is crucial and deserves support. Yet, there are already numerous state and federal laws on the books — including the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act — that provide a firm foundation for conservation. Too often legislation is created without a careful study of unintended consequences.

The bill may appear to be a winner for urban voters who wish to utilize Eastern Oregon as a handy natural resource-rich theme park for tourists, but for those who live and work in this area, its possible unintended consequences are a real worry.

However, the bill needs more input from local county lawmakers.



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### LETTERS to the EDITOR

#### Kudos to Chieftain staff for response

Thank you to the Chieftain for responding to my complaint. In October I wrote a letter that called out the paper on covering boys sports more thoroughly than it covered girls. The editors responded and have had good, balanced coverage for both girls and boys sports teams since my letter was published.

Kudos to your team for making sure all of our athletes get the coverage they deserve.

Benjamin Curry  
Joseph

#### Election fraudulent only because Bentz's candidate lost

Oregon's District 2 Rep. Clifford Bentz, who represents a grand slice of Oregon, is telling us, according to EO Media Group, that the 2020 was fraudulent. He cites information written in the

Federalist that a group of people who had the money to do so, donated funds to the Center for Tech and Civic Life.

First, The Center for Tech and Civic Life is an organization of and for election workers across the country. It offers courses for how to conduct safe and secure elections. Anyone can go into their website and check out the courses they offer for election workers, including the content of the courses. I suggest everyone do so before accepting Mr. Bentz's word that the Center for Tech and Civic Life acted to influence people to vote a certain way or for election workers to swing the election one way or another.

Next, I found an article from another organization that calls itself 2022 Influence Watch that has much information about what the Center for Tech and Civic Life has done. If the information is correct, it is specific as to where funding went to electoral offices around the country. I did not see any proof in their article that proves that the CTCL is in any way partisan. My problem with this article is that it starts out by naming the Center for Tech and Civic Life as a "left-wing" group.

There are several reasons I disagree with Mr. Bentz. One, the Federalist is, and always has been, a mouthpiece for the Republican Party. Two, I find it illogical to infer that the Center for Tech and Civic Life turned the election in favor of President Biden. The center provided information to election workers about doing their job fairly and effectively. One would expect that the influence of the CTCL would cause the election to be conducted fairly and effectively. It is not logical to say that President Trump lost just because of the training given. Anyone can check the content of the training to discern whether it favored any candidate.

My conclusions are: Giving a person or group a name, such as "left-wing" or "right-wing" does not provide the validity or nonvalidity of that person or group. "Correlation does not equal causation" is still the case in any logical argument. I would also infer that Mr. Bentz believes that any election is fraudulent in which his candidate is not the victor.

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