

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Wyden committed to representing everybody

Oregon U.S. Sen Ron Wyden isn't going to collect a huge majority of votes from the Eastern Oregon counties he represents because of his party affiliation, but his continued focus on sponsoring town hall sessions in even the most conservative areas of the state show he is committed to democracy.



Wyden

Wyden was in La Grande last month for a town hall meeting where he discussed a range of issues, including the lack of affordable housing and homelessness across the state.

Eastern Oregon is a deeply conservative area and the majority of its voters subscribe to Republican values. Wyden, a Democrat, visits this section of the state on a regular basis for town halls and other information-gathering exercises.

Wyden has repeatedly stated he represents all of Oregon, not just the voting block that elected him. That should be good news for voters.

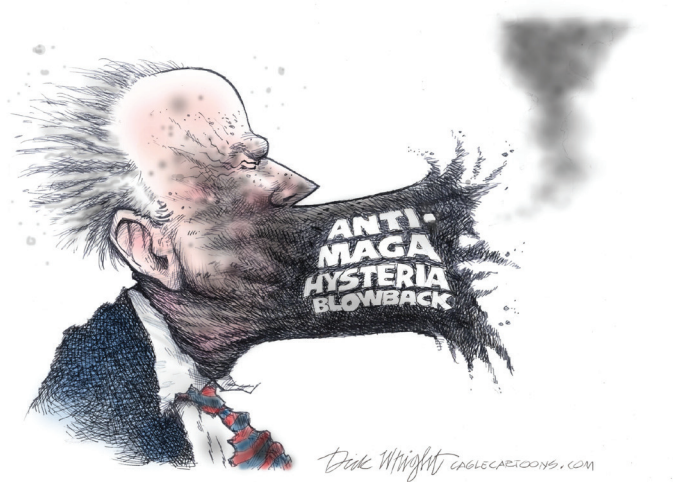
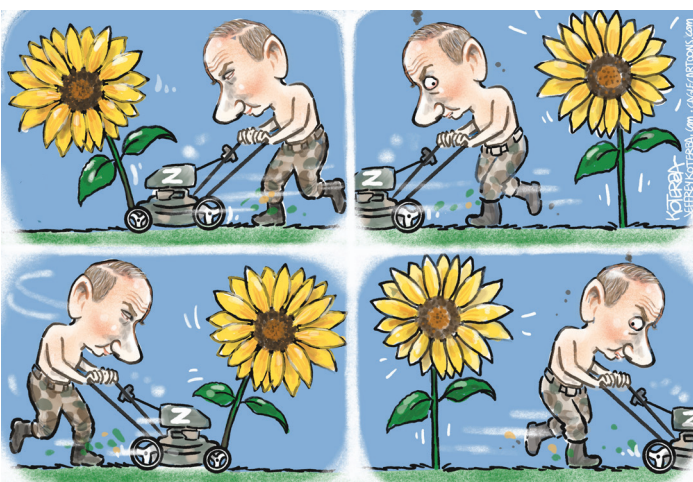
Wyden, like his Senate Democratic colleague, Sen. Jeff Merkley, both spend a lot of time in areas where their brand of politics probably isn't very popular and they do it because they view their job as one that encompasses all residents, not just the ones that adhere to their own political views.

The nation needs more of that kind of political outlook. At the end of the day, whatever an individual's political persuasion, the issues in Joseph, Enterprise, or La Grande are the issues faced by all Eastern Oregon residents. Whether a senator is a Republican or a Democrat doesn't really matter when viewed against issues such as the availability of water or other natural resources challenges. No, what matters is whether are elected representatives — be it at the state or federal level — gets things done.

The nation has become a polarized entity politically where a commitment to blind dogma is pushed across all political spectrums. Our issues — the problems we face at the local, state and federal level — demand more than just a business as usual, narrow political view. Instead, we must face each problem from a holistic point of view and seek solutions that cover a broad spectrum of ideologies.

Wyden's visits are a testament to a lawmaker that cares about all of the voters in Oregon. You might not agree with his politics, but his commitment to traveling to areas such as Eastern Oregon to gather input is a good sign democracy is vibrant in our corner of the Republic.

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

Endorsing Tim McCloud

It is time for the midterm elections and I would like to urge all of Eastern Oregon to exercise its right to register to vote. ... and then actually cast a ballot. The midterms are important and dictate who our choices are on the general election ballot in November.

This month we vote to select our candidates for governor and as a self-described "centrist Republican" I have carefully deliberated and decided to endorse and vote for Tim McCloud (R) — his positions on almost every issue align with mine, and most rural Oregonians.

He is the one candidate who can bridge the divide between rural and urban Oregon, represent both communities equally and finally, I believe he is the only Republican on the ticket who can actually win in Oregon and I hope other Republicans will vote for him on their primary ballots as well.

Steve West
La Grande

The last state boundary change

The Red River is the boundary between the states of Minnesota and North Dakota. In the late '50s or early '60s an Army Corps of Engineers flood control project changed the course of the river stranding two parts of Minnesota — a 12.76 acre parcel and a 9.78 acre parcel — on the North Dakota side of the river.

In order to reestablish the Red River as the actual state boundary, bills had to be approved by both the House and Senate of North Dakota, the House and Senate of Minnesota and finally by the House and Senate of the United States. This occurred Aug. 24, 1961, and was the last state boundary change in the U.S. All that for 22.54 acres.

Can anyone really believe the Oregon House and Senate would approve transferring virtually half of the state to Idaho just to accommodate a pretty small minority of Oregon voters?

Don McAlister
Enterprise

Putin is to blame, not Biden

Ukrainians are being killed; their homes, farms, businesses are being obliterated by Putin. In the U.S., even if we were not appalled by this moral outrage, we would be disgruntled that this war affects our cost of living. We want to blame someone for making us pay more for gasoline to get to work or to vacation.

The one to blame for this situation is the president of Russia, not the president of the United States. Putin sent his military forces to invade Ukraine for no other reason than to gain power over more territory. There is every reason to believe that taking over Ukraine would not satisfy his greed for power and if he is successful, he will continue overtaking other countries. The whole world is in danger of economic destruction and worse because of this man.

President Biden is bringing together the countries of the free world in opposition to Russia's threat. It makes sense that the citizens of the United States would support freedom and democracy on the planet. It does not make sense for people of good will to ignore the overwhelming destruction and loss of life when Russia is threatening the entire world. It does not make sense to condemn the U.S. leader who is championing freedom. Nor does it make sense to approve of Putin and those who support him.

In the face of domination by greedy oligarchs and the possibility of losing our constitution and our freedom, it seems so petty to be obsessed with concerns like being asked to wear masks in order to

help stop the pandemic, or require others to live their lives a certain way, or move a state boundary, or accept a majority vote, or pay taxes that allow us to have the conveniences our society demands.

If mankind survives the present threat of authoritarian control and nuclear disaster, we will be able to work on solving other threatening issues on earth like having air to breathe, clean water to drink, and sustaining life on earth. Let's get our priorities straight and stop whining about lesser things.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

County residents up the lake without a dock

After four years of contacting county commissioners each spring about getting the dock in at the county park before tourist season and getting excuses from the senior Commissioner Susan Roberts, I am ready to vent.

There is no legitimate reason why the dock cannot be put in soon after the ice is gone. It is not "rocket science" to understand that this is a yearly job that can be planned for, allowing county residents to enjoy early fishing before the tourists arrive. It costs no more to install the dock in early April than it does in late May.

County residents pay for boat and trailer licenses, fishing licenses, property taxes and commissioner salaries. Why do we not get consideration? Also, the safety of fishermen is at risk when they have to unload, load and board their boats without a dock at the head of the lake. I wonder if the county dock will become a priority now that the dragon boat enthusiasts want to use the lake?

Mike McNall
Joseph
Fifth-generation
Wallowa County resident

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