

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

A complex issue that needs solved

Recent steps by area school officials to ensure students are safe should be good news to patrons and parents in light of the recent deadly Uvalde, Texas, massacre.

It is a deeply tragic fact that school shootings have become a part of our national consciousness, and the death toll continues to rise every year.

In Texas, 19 young students — children — were gunned down in yet another senseless binge of carnage and butchery.

The school shooting phenomenon is a huge subject, rife with competing theories, views and fewer solutions but the push to increase security in schools across the region — in places like Union or Wallowa counties — should bring a degree of comfort to parents and students.

Schools have added cameras, key cards and limited access over the past few years and learning centers have established protocols to respond to an emergency situation. Annual training of staff and drills for students are also another positive feature added at area schools.

Police are also deeply involved with mitigation efforts. For example, in La Grande, the police routinely add an extra patrol to school zones during the morning drop-off period.

That school and police officials are focused on such security measures is a good sign for our great communities.

The bigger question, though, is what can be done to stop the school shooting phenomenon. Punitive gun control measures are frequently mentioned as one step to stop the massacres but that suggestion is so loaded with local, state and constitutional issues it seems like too big a leap.

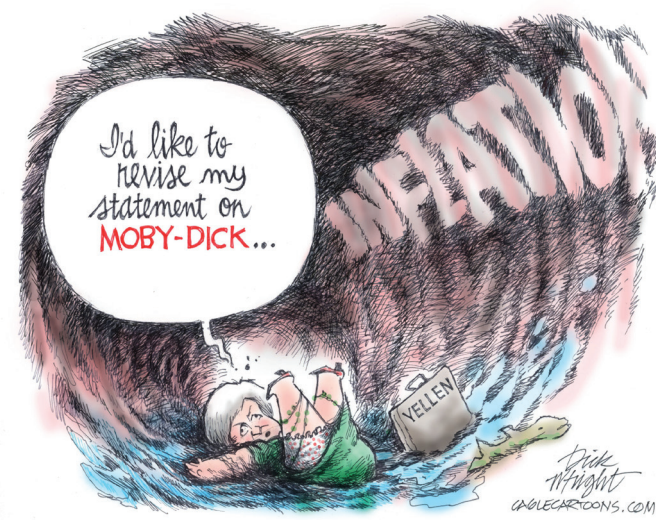
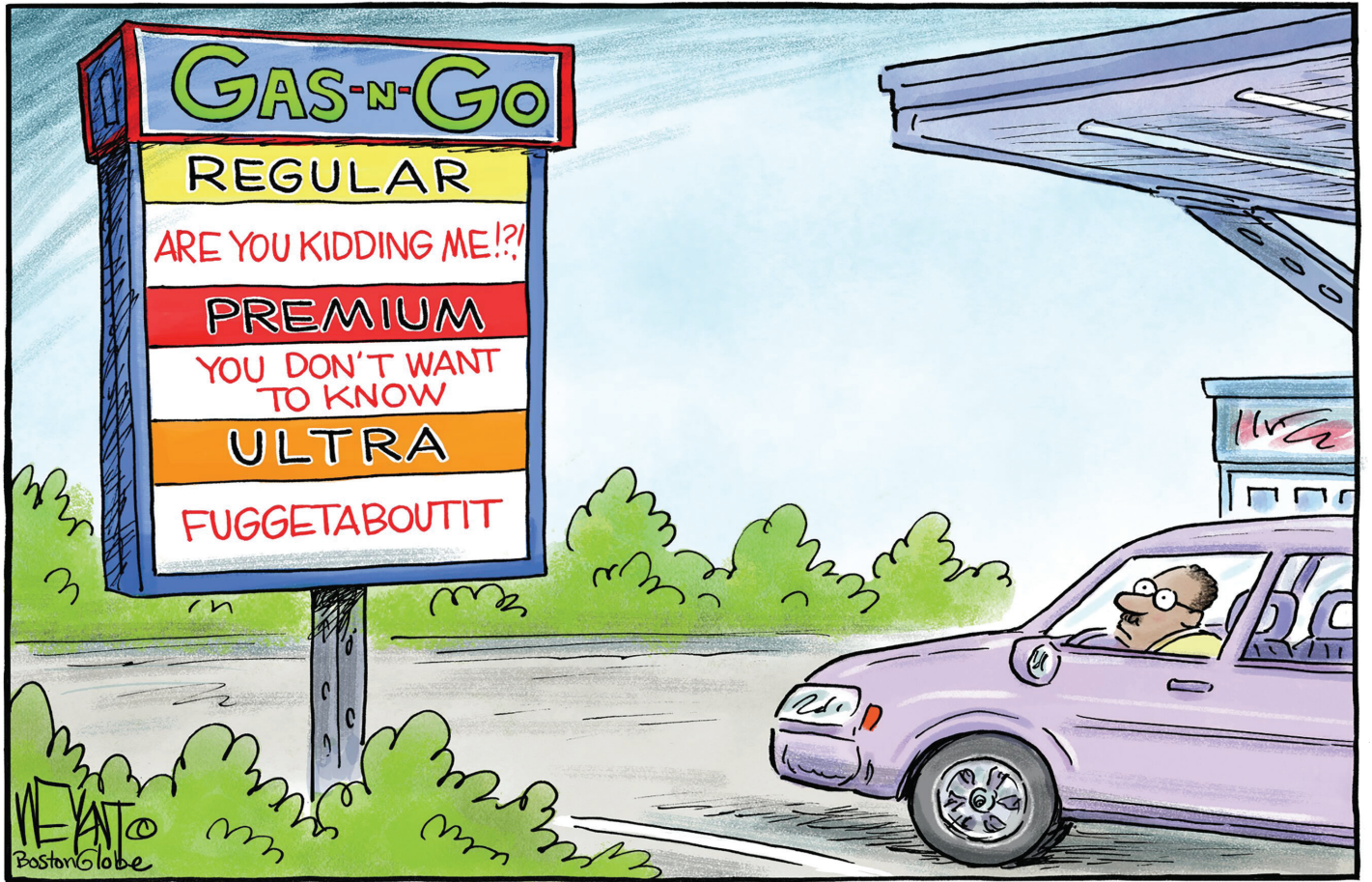
Better mental health infrastructure for youth appears to be a viable answer but, again, questions remain about how to implement such steps over a nationwide canvas.

There are plenty of laws on the books regarding guns and a fair question to ask is do we need even more such edicts?

Perhaps the question is too big, the implications too complicated to be solved easily or at all.

It seems, though, that for a nation that sent men to the moon and created grand infrastructure masterpieces should be able to find a method, a way forward, to eradicate school bloodbaths. We are a nation built on the ability to use ingenuity and know-how to achieve great things, yet we seem unable to collectively solve an ongoing problem such as school shootings.

Widespread and punitive gun control measures are not the answer and unconstitutional to boot. Yet, is there no other way to solve this ongoing problem?



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Response to Wally Sykes letter

Since we are having conversations about wolves, the public deserves a few more facts. Although Wally Sykes is correct about payments made to ranchers to compensate for wolf kills on livestock, he failed to mention that the payments are made to the specifications of the Oregon Wolf Plan, which was agreed upon by people on both sides of the issue.

Also, the compensation does not fully reimburse the rancher, and having received compensation myself, (as a livestock producer), I know it never will. It only addresses the body of the victimized animal, not the effect on herd health, future loss of calves due to stress related abortions and nonbreeding and extra expenses and time spent protecting animals, as the Birkmaiers reiterated.

Ranchers are also routinely turned down for compensation because, as Russ Morgan put it, "We have to meet about 60 criteria before we can confirm a wolf kill, otherwise the environmentalists sue us." As an example, on May 19 this year, a producer found six calves with injuries, but ODFW determined that just three of those were wolf related, even though it appeared they were all injured in the same time frame. The plan was not put in place just to protect wolves, but to make sure that a large segment of the economy of Oregon, i.e. cattle and sheep producers, were not unduly affected by the allowance of wolves to return to the state.

The majority of all wolf livestock kills in Oregon have been on private property! Wolves don't live in Wally's backyard, but he wants it to be OK for them to live in my backyard. I am constrained by a corrupt national Department of Fish and Wildlife to dealing with an unwanted predator, which is not endangered and never has been. There are over 60,000 wolves in Canada alone!

The purpose of putting the wolf on the endangered species list was only to introduce the wolf back into an area of our country that they want to re-wild, by driving all human activity out. There are maps of wildlife corridors the environmentalists would like to designate "for animals only," which includes Wallowa County and goes from the Canadian border all the way to Mexico! In order to accomplish this,

ranchers, farmers, miners, hunters, fishermen, small towns, resort areas and camping areas would have to be exterminated.

So basically what Wally is saying is, we should let the wolves multiply until they eat ranchers out of a livelihood, threaten children and domestic animals, run off the tourists and destroy the ability of residents of our county to make a living, so the town will shut down and the wolves can take over.

Maybe it hasn't dawned on Wally and his cohorts that that will mean they also have to move on, because there will be no grocery stores, no gas stations, no doctors or medical care and no motels to stay in for visitors.

Connie Dunham
Enterprise

USS Oregon

It seems to me we should keep the capabilities of the USS Oregon confidential and secret. We should not be printing the capabilities of the USS Oregon revealed to the general public.

This editorial does not help America and it's allies but does give information to our enemies on what our nuclear navy can do. This should not be public information and can spread internationally at a mouse click on the internet. Being a nuke in the Navy myself we kept classified information in the Navy and did not blab all over the local papers back home. This is a disservice to our country and jeopardizes our troops presently in the military. This emboldens our enemies and does not strengthen our country and its allies but reveals what should be held confidential and top secret.

Mike Brink
Gresham, Oregon

Partisan block votes must end

How have our congressional representatives come to this? Our senators and representatives vote as partisan block with no opportunity to compromise. Can we honestly believe they have no individual responsibilities to personal principals or public opinion?

A couple of glaring examples are very recent. Women's Health Protection Act, an act to codify Roe v. Wade, was defeated by a Republican Party block vote plus one Democrat, Joe Manchin. There has been an uncountable

number of gun-control measures introduced, everything from red flag bills to banning assault rifles and large-capacity magazines, while all were defeated by a filibuster threat requiring 60 votes and/or a partisan block vote.

These are issues the public are overwhelming in favor of and to vote against them is to ignore the constituents, while our federal representatives hide behind a partisan block vote. These "block votes," by Democrats or Republicans, are a contributing factor to the extreme division of our political parties.

Contact your representative!
Can individual principals be compromised with party policy?

David Ebbert
Enterprise

Lessons from a school shooting

The shooting in Uvalde, Texas shows the need to restrict the sale of assault weapons to just the military and police. The shooting revealed numerous factors contributed to the massacre, including warning signs that were missed on social media, the school was not secured and police showed ineptitude in doing their job.

Somehow, social media posts should be monitored for potential shooter comments, and people should report these warning signs to authorities.

Schools should have entrances reinforced and locked, and only one entrance should be used. Alarm systems should be installed on all entrances except the main entrance. Weaponizing and training a few teachers/administrators should be evaluated. Why wasn't the Uvalde school police officer in the school at the time of the shooting?

Nineteen Texas police officers stood in a hallway outside the Uvalde school classrooms for about 48 minutes waiting for a tactical police force to arrive. During that time students made 911 calls while sporadic shots were heard in the classrooms. These officers should have shot open the door and broken windows to confront the shooter. Local police officers should not be waiting for tactical support in a situation like this, but should immediately stop the shooter.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry, NH