

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Lawsuit is a failure on both sides

A recent move by a coalition of conservation groups to file a lawsuit to topple a decision made by the Trump administration that negated a rule that banned logging of large trees on national forests east of the Cascades is ultimately a sad reminder that little progress has been made regarding nonlegal solutions to environmental challenges.

At the heart of the issue is what is known as the 21-inch rule — an edict that restricted logging of live trees larger than 21 inches in diameter measured 4½ feet off the ground — that dates back to the mid-1990s.

The rule was created to address concerns from environmental groups about the safety and viability of old-growth timber in national forests across our region.

The environmental groups assert the Trump administration's move to lift the ban violates federal law — specifically the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act — and officials should have crafted an environmental impact statement to review the impacts of a decision to lift the ban.

Proponents of lifting the ban contend abolishing the rule gives agencies such as the Forest Service more flexibility in its effort to manage forests to diminish wildfire risk.

The suit — filed in the U.S. District Court in Pendleton — is yet another example of failure for both the conservationists and the U.S. government.

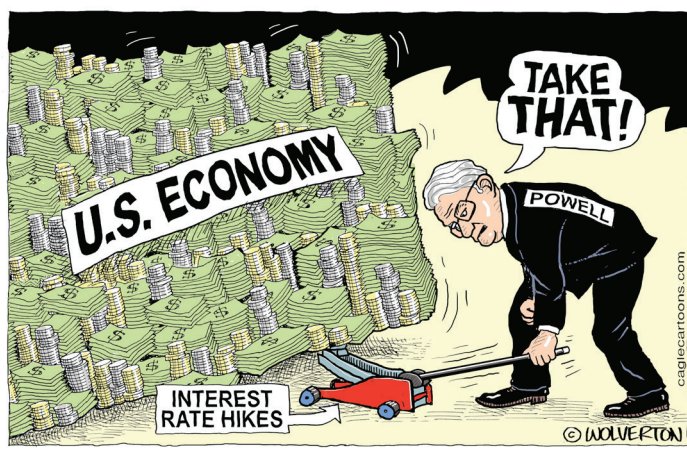
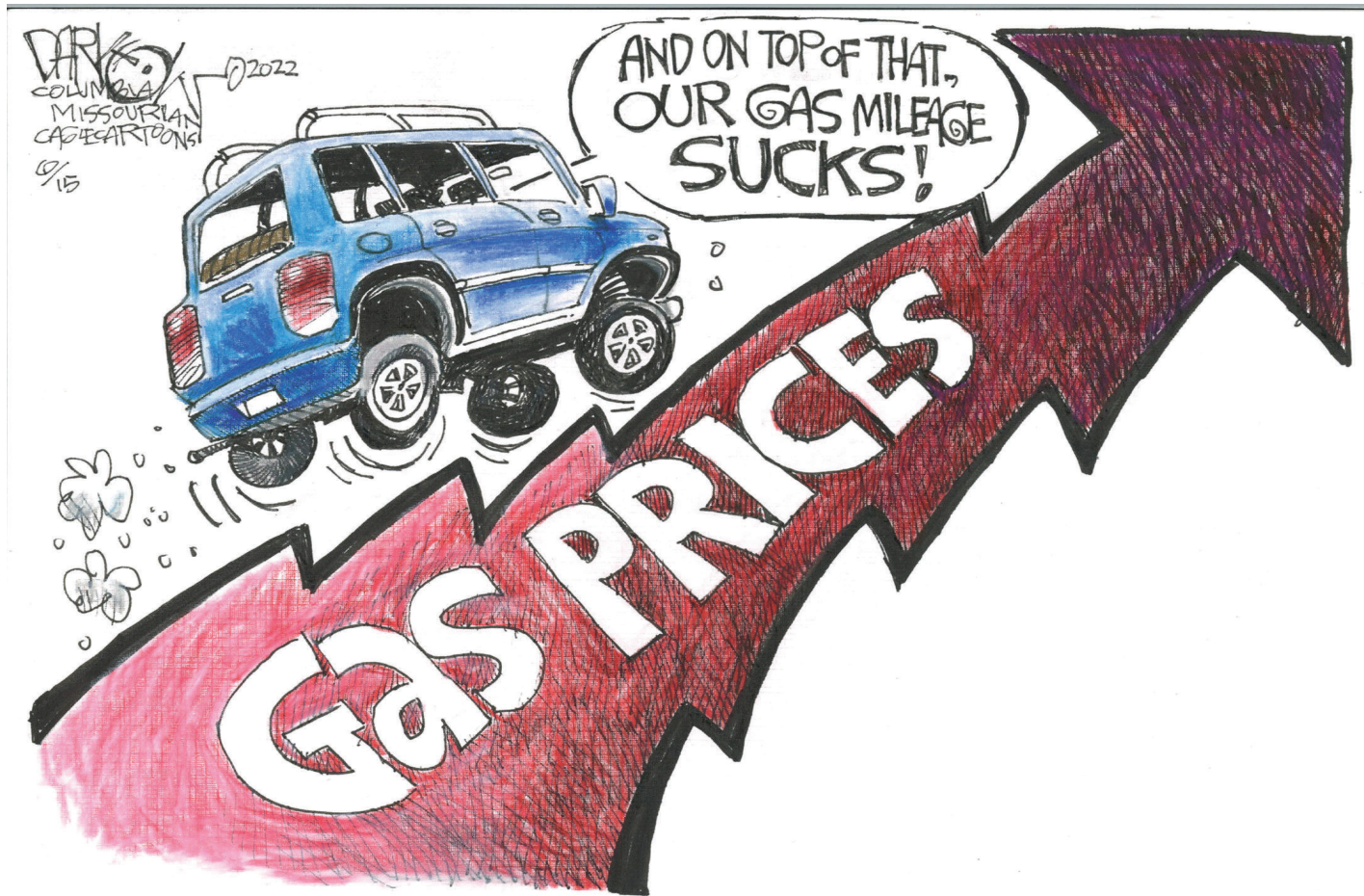
Most — but not all — environmental lawsuits over flashpoint issues should never end up in a courtroom. That's because both sides of any such issue not only carry the capacity to work these challenges out but also hold a responsibility to do so.

That responsibility isn't to a long-held belief in a specific dogma or blind obedience to a new edict delivered in the waning days of an administration.

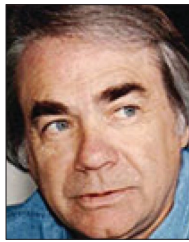
No, the responsibility should be to those who live and work and play in areas such as Eastern Oregon. The voters of our region deserve better than yet another long legal battle that consumes time and money.

Opposing sides of any issue can sit down and work out a compromise. There is no better example of such a circumstance than the effort spearheaded by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden regarding the Owyhee Canyonlands in Southeastern Oregon. There, for years, environmentalists, ranchers and others squared off on how best to preserve pristine canyonland. In the end, Wyden led the effort to work out a compromise between the two groups.

Was everyone satisfied? No. Did everyone get what they wanted? No. Yet that's how democracy is supposed to work. Compromise and the goal of working toward a viable solution should be the focus, not going to court.



Jan. 6 hearings aren't changing minds



OTHER VIEWS

Carl Golden

As the congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U. S. Capitol heads into its final public hearings phase, early indications are that — despite compelling testimony — the needle on the public opinion meter has barely budged, and the impact on the congressional midterm elections as well as the 2024 presidential contest will be minimal.

In short, despite predictions the much-hyped committee's findings would shake the nation to its core, it's been neither a mind-changer nor a game-changer.

National Democrats overwhelmingly continue to demand former President Donald Trump be held accountable in a court of law for his role in egging on his supporters to storm the Capitol and prevent the certification of Joe Biden as the next president. Meanwhile, Republican leaders for the most part are adamant that the committee is a blatant politically driven effort to blame their party for an assault on democracy itself and prevent Trump from seeking to regain the office in 2024.

The competing versions are locked in, and any hope one side can persuade the other to come around to its way of thinking is futile.

While a clear public majority supports a congressional inquiry into the events of Jan. 6 and what role Trump, his associates and staff played in them, other polling suggests it is not a top-of-the-mind issue that motivates significant voter turnout.

With the president's approval rating plunging to less than 40 percent and a stunning 70 percent of Americans believing the nation is headed in the wrong direction, Republicans are on the cusp of seizing control of the House by a handsome margin and a slim Senate majority is within reach.

The deliberations of the Jan. 6 committee and the revelations of misbehavior and persistent falsehoods at the highest level of the executive office will have little influence on the election outcome.

Biden and his party's congressional majorities were brought to the brink of a seismic loss of power by the ravages of unprecedented inflation, erosion of wages, shortages and soaring costs of essential commodities, gasoline crossing the historic \$5 per gallon

threshold, and rising rates of violent crime.

All have exacted a personal toll and continue to do so, undermining public confidence in the ability of the administration to deal effectively with them. Increasing speculation that the nation will tumble into a recession has exacerbated the disquiet gripping the country along with rising pessimism that the administration is adrift and lacking a sense of urgency.

As horrific as the assault on the Capitol and its aftermath of lies and deceit have been, voters will respond on their individual experiences and hardships and a belief that a massive reappraisal is necessary to restore economic vitality.

Nearly 18 months ago, millions of Americans watched in real time as mobs breached the Capitol, fought with law enforcement, trashed offices and sent members of Congress fleeing to safety.

Trump, to his everlasting discredit, stood by, refusing all entreaties to urge the protestors to withdraw and leave the building. He continued to baselessly insist he had won reelection and was cheated out of his victory by massive voter fraud.

He spent months pursuing one avenue after another to delegitimize the election, culminating on Jan. 6 by demanding Vice President Mike Pence reject the state electoral outcomes, an act for which there exists no constitutional or statutory basis.

Trump's actions, according to the committee, were part of a broad conspiracy to stage a coup, overturn the election and remain in power.

He relied upon sycophantic advisers who played to his belief that the election was rigged while ignoring those who attempted to convince him his arguments were fantasy and warned that continued efforts to change the outcome risked crossing into criminal conduct.

Whether the committee will deliver criminal referrals to the Department of Justice is a matter of internal dispute at the moment.

But, for the Democratic Party to overcome the funk into which the nation has fallen by relying on tales of widespread misconduct by the previous administration — no matter how egregious — is equivalent to the toils of Sisyphus in pushing the boulder up the mountainside.

Being crushed by it appears to be a foregone conclusion.

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LETTER to the EDITOR

Chukar sighting

On a recent trip to Eastern Oregon, I saw my first chukar, which compelled me to revise an old pheasant rhyme and regale my Oregonian friends with a resounding recital, repeated three times, of ...

I'm not a chukar plucker
I'm a chukar plucker's son
And I'm only plucking chukars

'til the chukar plucker comes
Happy plucking!

Martin H. Samuel
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

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