

## OPINION

### VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

# Elections are crucial to our democracy

Oregon voters may well secure one of those rare election moments in November when they can choose from three different candidates but the key, as always, is that all residents take advantage of the opportunity to vote.

That may prove to be quite a challenge, though we hope not.

Now, three candidates — Betsy Johnson, Tina Kotek and Christine Drazan — are vying for the state's top political position.

Kotek is on the Democratic ticket while Drazan is the GOP front-runner. Johnson, who is unaffiliated, recently turned in enough signatures to get a spot on the Nov. 8 election ballot.

While there will be plenty of bombast and wide sweeping proclamations by all the candidates between now and November, what is really key about the election is that enough Oregonians vote.

The right to vote is more than just a nice, quaint concept about America. It is the key element to our democracy.

Multitudes of people have died on distant battlefields for us to enjoy that right. Many brave souls during the Civil Rights era marched and faced danger to ensure everyone held the ability to vote.

As voters we owe them all a great debt, but if we do not use what is the key tool of our democracy, then our very future is at risk.

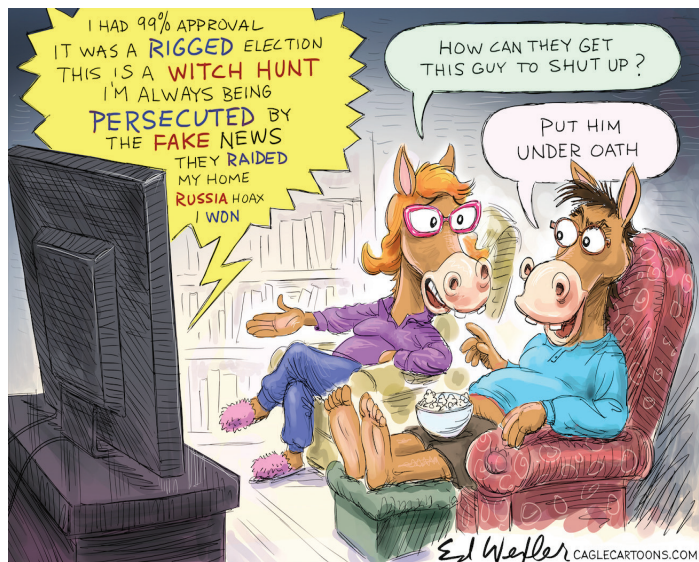
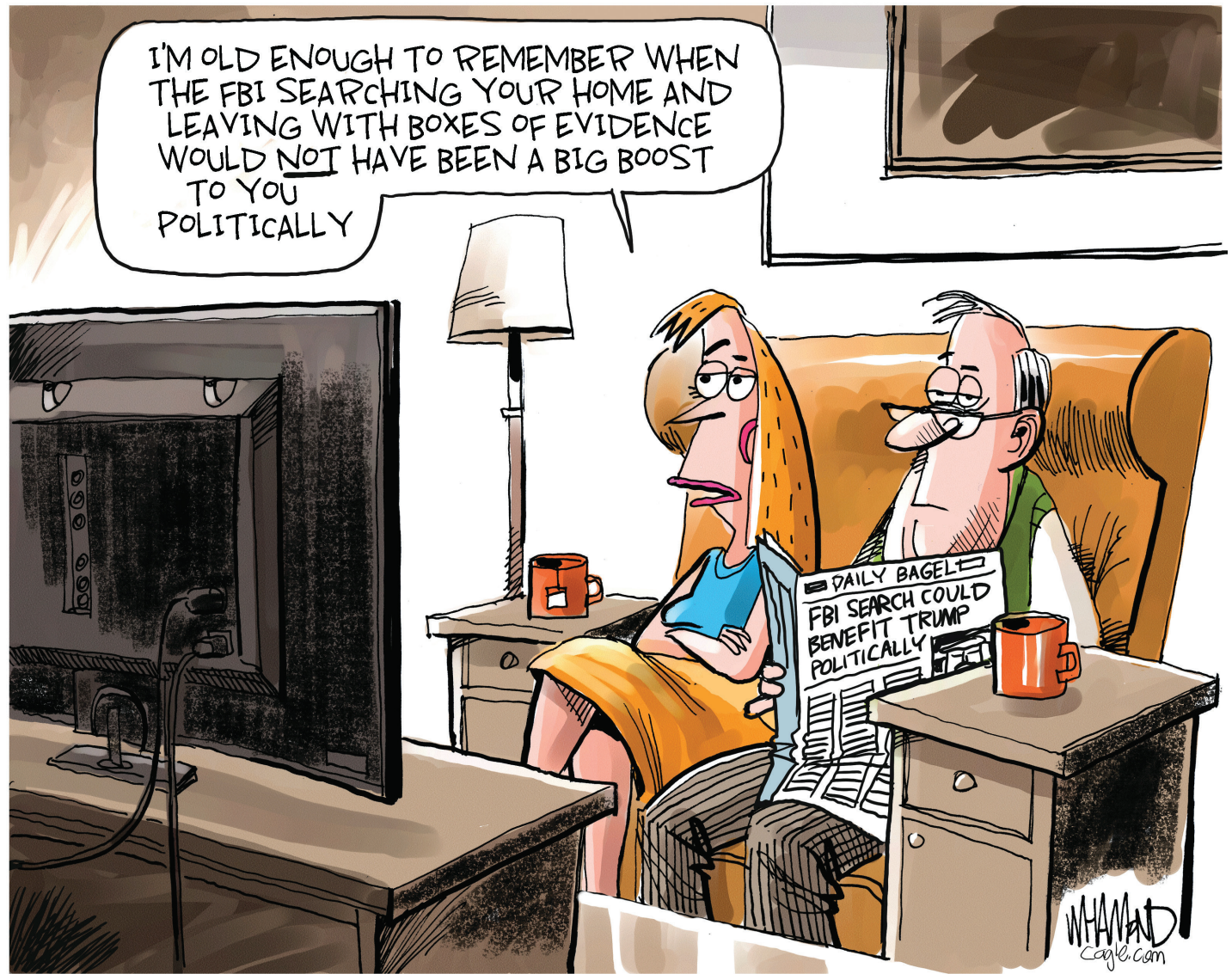
Sure, at least for now there isn't a whole lot of variety among the candidates. Kotek is as solidly Democrat as Drazan is Republican. Johnson is trying to capitalize on her role as a political outlier to get elected.

In other words, this election doesn't appear to be one that will be needlessly complicated. The battle lines are drawn. The issue is familiar. Now all that needs to happen is that eligible voters actually vote.

Regardless of what one reads or hears, every vote does count. We, as Americans, enjoy a specific ability to peacefully complete a process that selects those who will represent us during every election. Our privilege to vote — and it is a privilege — is only as effective as those who chose to use it.

We must guard against apathy and the dissonance created by modern day pop culture and political sound bites to focus on exercising our right to vote.

The state faces many challenges, no doubt about it. Yet we have the opportunity to do something about those challenges by voting. Every election is crucial in a democracy. Let's not allow our great privilege to be wasted.



### LETTERS to the EDITOR

#### We enjoy the show at Chief Joseph Days rodeo

To those people who have issues with our small-town rodeo, I will make this simple: Stay home. I would suggest to head to the other side of the state to Portland, which I hear has lots of downtown activities that are always politically correct.

The attempt at "country folk/rodeo" lingo is condescending.

Thank you, Jody and John. We enjoy the show and appreciate your love of the sport of rodeo, our country and those who serve it, our Lord and Savior and our rural lifestyles.

Most of us are not participating in the slow murder of America. God bless the USA.

Lori Butterfield  
Joseph

#### You have the freedom to not attend rodeo

As a longtime county visitor/then resident, I want to address the comments made regarding our Chief Joseph Days rodeo. Long before there was tourism, there was ranching — and rodeo. Our way of life should not be made to change because someone from Portland says so.

When you come to visit our county, we have welcomed you warmly with open

arms, despite the fact you speed through our small, quiet towns and run down the animals that help make our county so lovely. We accept your rudeness, impatience and forgive you for the trash you leave on our trails, parks and along the highway.

We don't tell you how to think, or what to say — but you think you can tell us how to put on our rodeos?

We pray, we stand and salute our country's flag, we openly support our law enforcement and military. So if you don't like what you hear, then just put on your "big-boy pants" and deal with it. Because we call that freedom of speech and we defend those freedoms.

If you choose not to come here and go to the rodeo, that is your freedom to do so. So stay home. We will miss your money, but we will not miss your attitude.

Ruthmarie Lavezzo  
Lostine

#### Bentz campaigning throughout district on our tax dollars

Many of us were surprised by the appearance of House Rep. Cliff Bentz, who held town halls that were seemingly scheduled last minute with little to no media attention.

But this was precisely what Cliff Bentz wanted to do after receiving news

that his opponent — Joe Yetter — had completed a district-wide road trip in early August. During Cliff's town halls, he and his campaign team maintained that these town halls were "official Congress business." Bentz's campaign team kept these town halls largely underpublicized, so Bentz could get away with campaigning on the taxpayer's dime.

Bentz can use taxpayer money to travel throughout his district if it's associated with his term as our congressman. Meanwhile, Bentz is holding town halls in every county of CD-2, maintaining that he's there for his people, while using the time he spends in each district to campaign for his upcoming reelection.

Once the House breaks for campaign time, Bentz will likely call on the fact that he has already visited every county in his district and not grace us with his presence again. The last thing we need is to reelect a big-money-funded politician who happens to be a lawyer and knows his campaign finance laws and who uses our hard-earned taxes to fund a hush-hush campaign tour of CD-2.

Cliff sits on over half a million dollars given to him by super-PACs and chooses to use our tax dollars to fund his secret campaign tour.

Not a good look, Cliff.

Devon Maxwell  
Enterprise

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published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

- Longer community comment columns, such as Other Views, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot and a one-sentence biography. Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Submissions must carry the author's name, address and phone number.
- Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

**SEND LETTERS TO:** [editor@wallowa.com](mailto:editor@wallowa.com), or via mail to Wallowa County Chieftain, 209 NW 1st St. Enterprise, OR 97828