

EDITORIALS

Take responsibility for playtime at parks

We've seen it happen. A young boy is playing with his friends at a city park. He falls off the slide, and limps back to his mother who puts an makeshift ice pack on his knee, which is scraped and swollen.

He doesn't need the doctor — mom doesn't think he's broken anything this time, thank goodness — but he's out of commission for the rest of the day, resting with the adults under the shade of the gazebo.

It wasn't the slide's fault the boy fell off. It's not as though it had gaping rusty holes. It wasn't even wobbly. But children sometimes fall.

When they do, often it's because they are exploring the world around them.

Adults aren't immune to injury, either. With the miles and miles of walking trails throughout Polk County and its cities, adults could fall victim to a twisted ankle.

The question is: Whose fault is it? When someone is recreating outdoors and gets injured, is his or her accident something the city or county or private landowner should have to pay for in court?

A recent ruling by the Oregon Supreme Court says it might be.

The court struck down recreational immunity in a 2016 decision after a sight-impaired Portland jogger was injured when she stepped in a hole dug by a parks department employee. The court ruled that the employee was liable — which makes the city, which pays for the employee's insurance, liable.

It's a tricky situation. If a city or other government agency is negligent in maintaining its public spaces, it makes sense that a lawsuit should be filed — and maybe won.

But we need to err on the side of caution when it comes to suing cities for injuries obtained at public spaces, or we could see the public spaces disappear.

Two identical bills have been introduced in the Oregon House and Senate to address the issue, clarifying that employees or agents of landowners are covered by recreational immunity when acting in the scope of their duties. But one Senate Bill (504) would allow people to sue for negligence if the property is not properly maintained.

While that seems like a good compromise between landowner and land user, it is a slippery slope. It requires agencies to create and follow a "safety plan," something that probably already exists under a different name. This bill would create more red tape for public landowners — and may make for more rules for land users, too.

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-ObsERVER* via email (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1

- **Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

MONDAY, MARCH 6

- **Central School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence.
- **Independence Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.
- **Dallas City Council** — 7 p.m., Dallas City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.

TUESDAY, MARCH 7

- **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Polk County Board of Commission work session** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, BOC office, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

- **Independence Heritage Museum Commission** — 4 p.m., Independence Heritage Museum, 112 S. Third St., Independence. 503-838-1212.
- **Monmouth Library Advisory Board** — 7 a.m., Monmouth Public Library, 168 Ecols St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Monmouth Parks and Recreation Board** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Light is better, cheaper solution

Lynne Bowen's comment about the plan to construct a roundabout at Clow Corner and Highway 99 at quadruple the cost of installing a traffic light was right on given that a traffic light would serve the need (however, teaching pedestrians in Oregon how to cross a street safely is still an issue). It is truly amazing how little control taxpayers have over elected official's careless decisions to waste money.

It's equally amazing that the issues that come to vote are so carefully henpecked by the powers that be.

Jessie Rice
Dallas

House set to roll back tax limits

The elderly on a fixed income will be harmed if the Oregon Legislature passes HJR 3 and then acquires voter approval to remove current property tax limitations.

According to Bankrate.com, Oregon is the third worst of all 50 states for retirees. One reason is high taxes. HJR 3 removes the property tax limitations of Measure 5 and Measure 50.

It increases the tax cap by 20 percent and also bases taxes on market value rather than assessed value. If passed, your property tax bills will skyrocket by thousands of dollars. Many elderly on a fixed income are unable to afford such a dramatic tax increase on their homes.

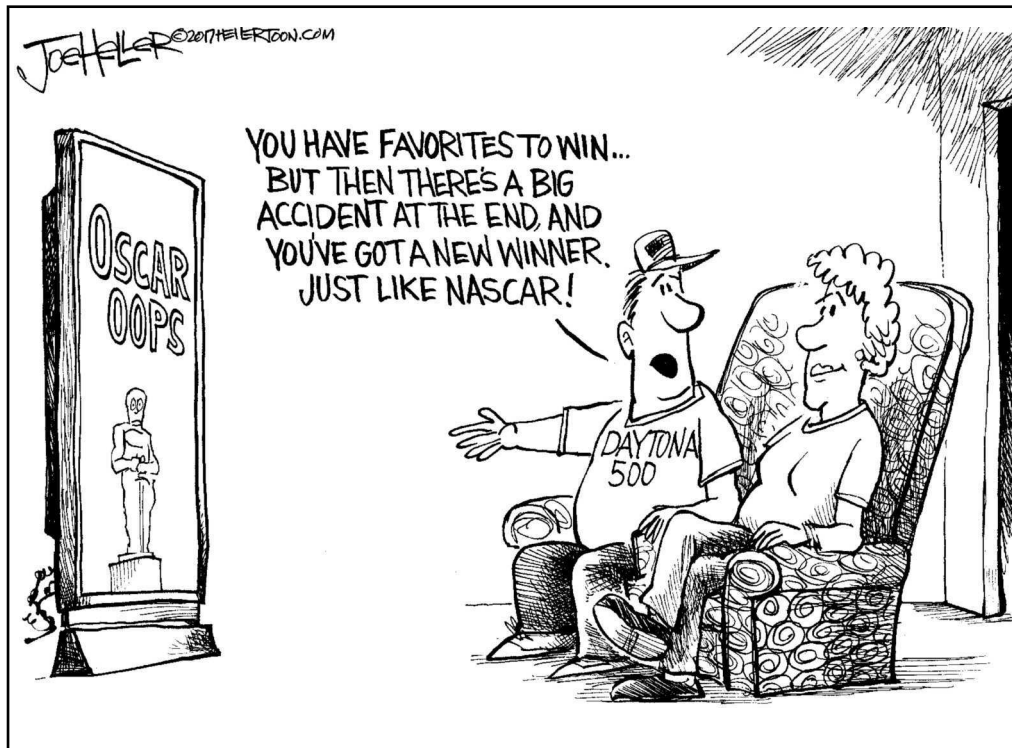
As a result, they may lose their homes.

Your local legislators need to be made aware of the devastating draconian impact on fixed income elderly people. Please contact your legislators and Gov. Kate Brown to voice your opposition.

Steve Mannenbach
Dallas

Yeager weaves fabric of Dallas

Woven into the fabric of any community, there are many strands of thread that quietly comprise the garment. But as you look closer, you begin to notice one strand that stretches throughout the entire piece of fabric and holds together or touches so many other



strands. I believe that is the analogy here with Jinett Yeager and the clothing closet. Many lives in the Polk County area have been impacted by this program. Children pulled from drug homes now have clean clothes to wear.

Foster children, and the families who care for them, now have clothes, and even toys, or a Merry Christmas they may not otherwise have, and the story continues.

Jinett, your sincerity and warmth to others has been an inspiration. You saw a need, and literally on faith, reached out to those in need.

It has been a joy over the years to work with you and partner in this important community program with Operation T Shirt and Toys. Keep it going. Continue to be that inspiration to others.

Operation T Shirt will be there with you as you reach out to more children, teens, and families in need, in the coming months.

Congratulations Jinett. Well done.

Paul Pfinster
Operation T Shirt
Dallas

Border wall would be useless, waste

No money for schools, so the state has to sell public land.

No money for roads and highways, so we are stuck with inadequate and potentially unsafe bridges on major interstates.

No money for infrastructure repair and improvement over the past eight

years, but, wow, we do have enough money to spend on a useless wall.

A wall that will cost double the \$12 billion that is stated, and require ongoing maintenance that will run in the hundreds of millions, if not billions of dollars every year.

"The wall" will not prevent those who are willing to work harder from getting jobs. This wall will not make us safer. Far more people die on the roadways of America every single year than have died in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, ever.

Just ask the Chinese how well their wall protected them.

That wall took well over 200 years to construct, most of it is now returning to dust, and the little bit that is celebrated is nothing more than a pretty tourist attraction.

The only people who will do well on this "wall" are those who are awarded over-priced government contracts to build it and maintain it.

Do not fool yourself into thinking someone else will pay for this wall.

We will pay for it in taxes, added costs to goods and services, a slump in our agricultural economy, in environmental degradation, and in personal hardship.

It is my belief that politicians of all parties and stripes should cowboy up, and actually tackle comprehensive immigration reform sooner than later, rather than demonizing "the other" for the sake of votes.

That would cost a lot less than building "the wall," and will not saddle our chil-

dren's, children's, children with the damaging costs in dollars and animus.

Danny Jaffer
Independence

Roundabout bad idea on rural road

I would like to comment on, and agree with, the letter to the editor in last week's newspaper by Elizabeth Smithson.

She was writing about the proposed roundabout at Clow Corner and Highway 99W. In that letter, she mentioned the roundabout on Springhill Road in West Albany.

I had an experience with that one that I would like to share.

One day as I was approaching that particular intersection, an 18-wheeler was towing an empty Low Boy trailer and was coming from the west, turning north onto Springhill Road. As he was making that left turn, the bottom of the trailer scraped the reflectors right off the top of the roundabout.

That roundabout has since been removed and put back to its original layout.

I wonder what that cost the taxpayer, first to put it in, then again to take it out.

Going back now to the Clow Corner proposal, just think how many 18-wheelers, combines, swathers, and other large agriculture equipment use that intersection each year.

Will a roundabout make it safer for those equipment operators or the motoring public that encounters them?

Will they actually be able to get around on it?

Think of how slow they will have to go just to get through it and how much that is going to backup traffic.

Think back to when we would see a convoy of four or five swathers going down 99W and how traffic would be so backed up.

Now imagine them trying to get through that roundabout and how much worse the backup is going to be. Remember this is a very active agricultural area.

I must admit that I do not want a traffic light there, but I really don't want to see a roundabout put in.

Don Hein
Monmouth

WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period. Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will not be printed.

The *Itemizer-ObsERVER* does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to respond. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the *I-O's* website. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verification

purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organizations, and must be original submissions to the *I-O*, not copies of letters sent to other media.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names.

The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Letters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline.

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