

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

State not serving students

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

The State Board of Education voted Sept. 20 to let some kids, arguably some of the best and brightest high schoolers the state has to offer, go to school for fewer hours per year than the state generally requires. It gave a similar pass to students attending alternative schools, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting. It was a bad decision, not only for the students, but for schools in general.

Oregon has both a high school graduation problem and an academic achievement problem. Only about 77 percent of students graduate on time each year, giving us the fourth-lowest rate in the U.S. Its test scores aren't great, and they're improving only by inches. And its students already spend less time in class than those in most other states.

All that should have been enough to persuade the board that almost no child in Oregon will truly benefit by less time in class. That's true of students who struggle; it should be true of those who excel, as well.

Schools are, by definition, set up to teach students. Meeting graduation requirements or taking tough courses does not mean students learn all a school has to offer, even if they attend full time every year. It shouldn't mean they'll be allowed to quit once they've got the requirements met. Instead, it should mean districts both expect and encourage those students to explore new, perhaps untried, areas of learning.

The reduced-time rules will also apply to students attending alternative schools, many of whom are at the other end of the education spectrum. In other words, the young men and women who most need help to achieve a solid education will be allowed to take a pass on some part of that education. Officials say the rule will become a carrot to lure those students back into the classroom. But, like their peers at the top of the education ladder, these students would be better served by making classes meaningful.

The message in all this is clear: Oregon's high schools are something to be escaped as quickly as possible, no matter who you are, and the state will help you do it.



Your views

Passing school bond will improve security for students

I am writing in support of the Baker 5J School Bond Measure 1-88 to improve all aspects of Baker students' educational experience. Specifically, I would like to comment on one of the most important improvements that would come with the passing of Measure 1-88: safety and security for our students.

I have been in law enforcement for more than 20 years, and, when the Long Range Facility Planning Committee pointed out some of the shortfalls our schools have with safety/security, I could not have agreed more. Simply put, when our schools were built, they were not designed with safety and security as a top priority. They lack some of the very basics like controlled entry/exits or visibility of entry/exits for office staff.

In law enforcement we conduct extensive training in respect to critical incidents in schools. We review the information obtained from other school incidents in its raw form and conduct scenarios based off the information obtained. The information and training we receive shows that outcomes of these incidents would have been better if the facilities had been designed with safety and security as a priority. Law enforcement recognizes the shortfalls our schools currently have, and it is a sad truth that training revolves around

minimizing loss. It is something I think about every time I pick my kids up from school. I am sure it is something my law enforcement and first responder partners think about when they do the same. However, we should be able to do better than just "minimizing loss." Measure 1-88 allows our schools the opportunity to provide prevention.

We are at a point where we can no longer brush the condition of our schools aside. Especially when it comes to the safety and security of our students. Too many times "that will never happen" happens, and now is the time to make the changes we can all be proud of.

Chris Hawkins
Baker School Board chairman
Haines

Bill Harvey has been effective advocate for Baker County

I have known Bill Harvey for years. He gave me my first job when I moved to Baker. He trained me so well I became a competitive contractor. We have remained close friends since our first meeting. I have followed Bill's efforts and accomplishments over the last four years as our lead county commissioner. He is well-liked by his department managers and employees. He is judicious in his handling of the county's funds, has scrutinized departmental budgets, and saved the taxpayers money at every op-

portunity. Ash Grove's contributions to the county of \$310,000 for a demo project, how's that for savings? Thank you, Ash Grove, for your charity, and thank you, Bill, for being such an ambassador to the business community.

Many see Bill as an enemy of the Forest Service. He is not. He simply demands that Baker County be given a place of acknowledged input at the planning table, as decisions made without local input have, and will, greatly impact the environmental and economic health of this community. For several years Bill is the only candidate that has advocated for sportsmen, recreationalists, miners, ranchers, timber workers and others to have access to our public lands. He has effectively presented a plan for the beneficial use of cattle to reduce dangerous levels of forest floor grasses and ladder fuels which would not only help local ranchers, but increase revenues to the Forest Service. The present Forest Service plan ignores this effective management idea, and our forests continue to burn at unprecedented rates. When is the last time you've breathed clean air in the summer?

Let's keep advocating for this place we love, called Baker County. Please join me in re-electing Bill Harvey.

James Sanders
Baker City

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from the Hartford Courant:

If you watched the testimony of Christine Blasey Ford, you probably understand a little better why women stay silent about sexual assault. Look at what happens when they do speak. The victim goes on trial — not the person she says assaulted her. The victim is disbelieved. She is disrespected.

We're not talking about reasonable challenges to Ms. Ford's allegation that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her at a party when they were both teenagers. We're talking about the shaming, blaming and threats she's endured. She's had to move because she's afraid for her family's safety. "I

have been called the most vile and hateful names imaginable," she said.

The Republican senators who had her testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday may have made a mistake. This appears to be backfiring. She looks like a nice woman getting interrogated for a crime she didn't commit. What woman watching the questioning didn't cringe with sympathy for her? Didn't feel a tinge of respect for the strength she had to summon to get on that stand to tell a story that some of the most powerful people in the nation are trying to discredit?

Watching her undergo that trial, it becomes clear why a 15-year-old might be afraid to

tell anyone about an assault — because of what she, not her assailant, would face. She would be quite aware of the questions she'd be asked — Did she do anything to provoke the attack? What was she wearing? Did she lead him on? Was she in the wrong place? Was she alone? — and the implicit finger-pointing in those questions. This moment is a painful reminder of how backward our society is when it comes to rape.

So that the all-male roster of Republicans on the Judiciary Committee wouldn't look like bullies themselves, they took the unprecedented step of hiring a female prosecutor to question Ms. Ford. They've refused to reopen Mr.

Kavanaugh's FBI background investigation to look into her allegations and others that have surfaced since (*Editor's note: The FBI will be doing a limited investigation related to allegations regarding Kavanaugh*). They prefer the public grilling method.

Thank you, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, for supporting Ms. Ford during the ordeal with words that brought tears to her eyes and many others'. The senator quoted from Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham's book, "My Story," that it takes "courage from a deep and hidden place for a rape victim or sexually abused child to testify against their assailant."

On Thursday, the nation could see why.

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Rosemary

Abell, Arvid Andersen and Adam Nilsson.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlfing, county treasurer; Cindy Carpenter, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m., Baker School District 5J office boardroom; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.