

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Automated cars need more tests

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

It's likely that in the 2019 legislative session Oregon lawmakers will debate what to do about driverless cars.

Should Oregon allow their sale to the public? Should Oregon allow testing?

Rep. Susan McLain, D-Hillsboro, is drafting a bill for the 2019 session that would allow limited testing. She's right to take that approach. At this stage, it's too early for sales. More testing is needed.

Some industry groups have been putting pressure on Oregon to accelerate what's allowed, otherwise the state will be left behind. Some states have already given a green light to deploying fully autonomous vehicles on the road.

Joanie Deutsch, executive director of TechNet, a national network of technology CEOs, said in Oregon Business that a testing-only approach might well lead to no testing at all in Oregon. She's right. Manufacturers and developers looking for places to invest in testing might be more likely to test where the laws give them the most freedom.

It's also true that autonomous vehicles — all talking to each other — could someday dramatically improve safety. Nearly 30 people are killed every day in the United States by drunken drivers.

But as much potential as there is for the future of autonomous vehicles, the industry has a lot of convincing and improving to make it safe today.

The incident with the Uber autonomous vehicle in Arizona that killed a pedestrian on the street at night in March didn't help. Driverless cars can behave erratically when encountering people on bikes, pedestrians and animals. There are also many legal issues to sort out, including responsibility for accidents when a driverless vehicle is involved.

Allowing some limited testing seems sensible in Oregon. Allowing sales to the public of fully autonomous vehicles is moving too fast.

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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The limits of gun control laws

We all know the script by now: A mass public shooting occurs. Grief and anger ensue. Calls for stricter gun laws soon follow.

Given how incredibly upsetting these crimes are, and how deeply they shake their communities — and the nation itself — such calls are perfectly understandable. If we're truly serious, however, about reducing gun violence rates and increasing personal safety, we must ensure that policy decisions are made with an eye toward facts and reality, not panic and outrage.

The facts tell us that most commonly proposed gun-control measures are already ineffective at preventing mass public shootings in states where they are currently implemented, and that they will continue to be ineffective at preventing future tragedies.

Although some gun-control advocates claim there have been more than 300 "mass shootings" this year, that number is a product of using deceptive and largely meaningless definitions that include incidents far removed from the context commonly associated with the term. Since Jan. 1, 2018, there have been 11 mass public shootings in which three or more people other than the shooter were killed, parameters derived from Congress's definitions of "mass shooting" and "mass killing."

These 11 mass public shootings occurred across 7 different states, but three occurred in California, the only state with an "A" rating from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Two more occurred in Maryland, with an "A" rating. Another two occurred in Pennsylvania, whose "C" rat-

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ing still accounts for the 13th strictest gun-control framework in the country.

Strict gun control may be the go-to response of many, but it's simply not the answer to the problem of mass public shootings. In fact, since 2000, 17 percent of mass public shootings have occurred in California, even though the state accounts for only 12 percent of the nation's population.

Texas, meanwhile, has an "F" gun control rating, yet has seen only 6.6 percent of total mass public shootings since 2000 — below its expected share, given that it holds 8.6 percent of the national population. On the other hand, Washington state — with a "B" rating — accounts for 2.2 percent of the population but 8 percent of mass public shootings since 2000.

More importantly, the general availability of guns doesn't appear to be the problem. Since 1990, the number of firearms per capita in the United States has increased by 50 percent. At the same time, however, the national homicide rate and national gun-homicide rate have plummeted by 50 percent, and the number of non-fatal firearm crimes committed in 2011 was one-sixth the number committed in 1993. On the whole, the increasing availability of firearms has not been related to increases in violent crime.

Mass public shootings rightly terrify us, but they remain statistically very rare. The same is true of firearm deaths related to the use of semi-automatic

"assault weapons." You are, in fact, three times more likely to be beaten to death with hands and feet than you are to be shot to death with a rifle of any kind.

That does not mean we should not continue to find ways to remove firearms from the hands of individuals who show themselves, by their actions, to be a heightened risk of violence to themselves or others. It does mean, however, that rational gun policies should not demonize particular types of firearms rarely used by criminals but commonly used by millions of law-abiding citizens for a variety of lawful reasons — including self-defense.

We do not effectively combat gun violence by broadly restricting the rights of law-abiding citizens, thereby hindering their ability to defend themselves and others from violence. Rather, we must focus more intently on the major underlying causes of the gun violence: untreated mental health problems that increase the risk of suicide and interpersonal violence, gang and drug activity that drive illegal black market firearm transfers, and the lack of economic and educational opportunities that lead to cycles of poverty and crime.

We must also increase the ability of law-abiding citizens to choose where and how and with what means to best defend themselves and their families from criminals who do not care to follow laws generally, and gun control laws in particular.

Amy Swearer is a Legal Policy Analyst in the Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies at the Heritage Foundation (heritage.org).

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from The San Diego Union Tribune:

The Washington Post tallied 1,218 false or misleading claims by President Donald Trump in his first nine months in office. That's an average of five a day. In just seven weeks before the midterm elections, the Post counted another 1,419 false or misleading claims, an astounding average of 30 a day.

It's not just his increased frequency that's jarring. It's his material. His newest false claims of electoral corruption have the potential to harm America. A week after the president declared "close

to a complete victory" for he and Republicans on election night, he's more than misleading. He's dangerous.

On Twitter, commenting on close Senate and gubernatorial races, Trump has said it was a "disgrace" that Florida was "all of the sudden" finding "votes out of nowhere," made allegations of "electoral corruption" in Arizona involving mail ballots and blasted Georgia officials for not declaring Republican Brian Kemp to be the state's governor-elect.

The president offered no evidence of any kind for his claims about alleged fraud in the three states, which all have

Republican governors and voted for Trump in 2016. Taking weeks to get it right and to finish counting ballots is not nefarious. It's normal.

The president should learn from Republican Rep. Martha McSally, who gracefully conceded Monday to Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, her Democratic opponent in the Arizona Senate race. Top White House and GOP officials reportedly urged McSally to question the vote count. Instead, she did the honorable thing. She promoted a centuries-old electoral process instead of corrosive conspiracies about it.

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

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Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

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; John Clark, fire 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 Durlinger, 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.

