

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Students make us all proud

What a winter it was for Baker High School students. State records were broken. Trophies were claimed. Wherever they competed, Bulldogs made their mark. The run of success concluded on Saturday night at Forest Grove High School, where the Baker girls basketball team won their first-ever Class 4A state championship, beating Marist 51-48. The win culminated a historic season for the Bulldogs, who finished with a 25-1 record. Their only loss, curiously enough, was to Burns, which competes at the lower, Class 3A level. Back in February, Brianna Stadler, a BHS freshman swimmer, broke the state record in the girls 100 backstroke at the state meet in Beaverton. The Baker girls and boys swim teams both finished 10th at the meet. A week later the BHS wrestling team was the first in school history to earn a trophy at the state tournament, finishing fourth. Baker High students excelled in areas other than athletics, as well. In the district solo and ensemble music competition, Hannah Johnson and Jordan Remien won their vocal events to advance to the state finals April 27 at Pacific University in Forest Grove. Grace Taylor and Morgan Delaney Stone were first alternates and might also compete at the state event. Stone also was awarded for her talent as an artist, as she was named the outstanding young artist at BHS by Tom Dimond, an art professor emeritus at Eastern Oregon University.

Two other Baker students, Koedi Birmingham and Sophie Daffer, were also honored for their artwork. And there's reason to be optimistic that Baker students will continue to represent their community well in winters (and other seasons) to come. Stadler, as mentioned, is a freshman, and many of the athletes on other teams are either juniors or underclassmen. And looking even a few more years ahead, a Baker basketball team of sixth- and seventh-graders won the state championship last weekend, and several Baker Middle School wrestlers also competed at state.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

Claims about volcanic pollution are nonsensical

Here we go again. I find myself again shooting down (with my pen) the same ridiculous misinformation contained in a letter to the editor from about five years ago.

Ken Anderson in his March 8 letter to the editor, without citing any scientific evidence, tells us, "A few years back (a volcano) in the Philippines called Mount Pinatubo spewed out more pollution than all the human race has in all its years on earth."

On the internet it took me just a few seconds to find the following scientific article comparing annual volcano CO₂ emissions to annual human-caused contributions to global warming:

"According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the world's volcanoes, both on land and undersea, generate about 200 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) annually, while our automotive and industrial activities cause some 24 billion tons of CO₂ emissions every year worldwide." <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/earthtalks-volcanoes-or-humans/>

My handy computer calculator tells me that by dividing 24 billion by 200

million the result is 120 times more CO₂ emissions are caused by human activity than all the volcanoes on land and under the oceans.

I agree with one statement Anderson wrote: "Let's stop this nonsense."

Gary Dielman
Baker City

Let's make Baker County a gun owners' 'sanctuary'

It seems there are those who decry what our country's laws are in regards to marijuana and illegal aliens.

We appear to be a nation with deep divides over these issues. So our state leaders simply choose to ignore the law. They merely claim "sanctuary status" and impede federal agencies from doing their job to protect us from drugs and illegals. Not too many years ago, 2001 to be exact, we were angry and up in arms about our federal government not doing enough to protect us from terrorist attacks. Remember that? Somehow, we allowed undocumented men into our country who had not been vetted and, well, 9-11 occurred and over 2,996 died initially with more every year from aftereffects.

Now the government is doing its best

to screen those who enter and prevent even more illegals and drugs from entering our country and some cry foul! Really? Can you have it both ways?

Now it would seem some are trying to force me to surrender or limit my weapons, or at least put unrealistic conditions on my right to bare arms. The 2nd Amendment has a provision to keep a "well armed & regulated militia" to protect us from government dictatorship or invasion. (The Japanese in WWII stop short of invading us for this reason.) Thank God our forefathers kept a musket handy, right?

What guns I possess is my business, not anyone else's, thank you. Unless convicted of a felony or deemed mentally unfit it's my right to possess said arms.

So I think we need to make Baker County a gun "sanctuary" much like New Mexico and some Washington counties and a growing amount of others. Because neither I nor you ever knows for sure what laws some people will simply choose to ignore.

In my very humble opinion.
Thomas Wilcoxson
Baker City

GUEST EDITORIALS

Legislators don't deserve pay raise

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Ranked by state, Oregon lawmakers fall squarely into the middle of the pack when it comes to pay. That will change if state legislators pass Senate Bill 959. They should resist the temptation.

It's true that no member of the Legislature expects to get rich from his or her legislator pay. Oregon's part-time lawmakers are currently paid just over \$24,200 in salary, plus \$144 per day while the Legislature is in session, and money for expenses.

In addition, they may receive the same health care benefits state employees are entitled to and are eligible to participate in the Public Employees

Retirement System.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, a second Democrat and two Republican senators sponsored the bill. It would tie legislative salaries to the estimated average income of individual Oregonians. Had the bill been law last year, legislators would have earned a salary of \$49,710, according to figures from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Figures for what lawmakers would earn this year are not yet available.

It's not at all clear what all that new money would buy.

This we do know: Oregon faces severe and ongoing financial problems. Schools are underfunded, the state Department of Human Services has had

too little money to provide an adequate number of caseworkers for its foster care system. The state's retirement system has an unfunded liability of more than \$26 billion, and so on. Worst, none of these financial problems is new.

Even tripling lawmakers' salaries won't make the state's problems any better. More money does not necessarily raise the quality of the men and women serving in the Legislature.

Employers generally give raises based, at least in part, on the quality of the work individual employees have done. Until the Legislature can tackle its most severe problems, its members haven't earned a pay raise.

Facebook finally discovers privacy

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

The headline of Mark Zuckerberg's 3,200-word blog post Wednesday — "A Privacy-Focused Vision for Social Networking" — might lead you to believe that the Facebook chief executive had decided to stop making bank off the reams of personal information extracted from the social media network's users.

You would be wrong. Facebook, which earned \$16.6 billion from targeted ad sales in the fourth quarter of 2018, is not changing a thing about its flagship social network.

Instead, Zuckerberg mainly reiterated something we already knew, with one significant twist. The old news: Facebook plans to more tightly integrate Instagram, the photo-sharing site it bought in 2012, and WhatsApp, the chat app it acquired in 2014, with its Messenger instant-messaging service so that groups of users will be able to communicate privately and

seamlessly across all those products. The new news: Facebook will encrypt all communications on that set of networks from end to end — that is, from the sender to the receiver.

Facebook users already can create private groups of friends on the site and on Messenger. They just can't keep their activity private from Facebook and the advertisers it empowered. By extending the encryption that's already part of WhatsApp to Instagram and Messenger, Facebook is essentially blinding itself to its users' activities there and giving them true privacy.

That's a good thing as far as it goes, but again, the main Facebook social network will continue as is, hoovering up personal information and monetizing it. How many of Facebook's 2.3 billion monthly users will shift to the new "privacy-focused" approach, which is not expected to roll out for some time, remains to be seen.

Granted, Facebook has less-than-

altruistic reasons for its new initiative. Privacy regulators have been scrutinizing the company for years, applying increasingly tough limits on collecting and sharing user data. Governments are pressuring the company to find and remove false, harmful or (in some countries) dissident content; by encrypting some of its users' communications, Facebook will be able to fend off such requests. Meanwhile, younger generations of users have bypassed Facebook in favor of services with more privacy protections, such as Snapchat.

Regardless of Facebook's motives, though, creating a fully encrypted offshoot is a pretty bold step for a business that capitalizes on its users' personal information. Perhaps Facebook, which has been a model for how not to respect users' privacy, can now show other major internet companies that it's possible to survive without data-mining one's customers.

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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