

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Paying to keep up our roads

It will cost you more to register or renew registration on your car or truck beginning Jan. 1, 2020. How much more fees go up will depend upon how fuel efficient your vehicle is, and, for high-mileage ones, the registration option you choose.

Those with electric or hybrid vehicles that get more than 40 miles per gallon of fuel will see the biggest increases. That's by design. Oregon's fuel taxes are dedicated to use on roads and highways in the state, and high mileage cars mean less tax dollars for that purpose.

The fees are, in other words, like a usage tax, paid by Oregon drivers for the privilege of using the state's road system. Those with high-mileage vehicles avoid a chunk of that tax, and thus avoid paying their share of the money it takes to keep roads up to date and in good shape. From that perspective, the higher vehicle registration fees make sense.

At the same time, however, Oregon works to encourage vehicle owners to switch to high-mileage vehicles, which are easier on the environment. It gives rebates to purchasers of electric and some hybrid vehicles, and its goal is to have 50,000 zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2020. As of Oct. 1 there were 27,729.

At first glance, then, it doesn't make much sense to charge higher fees to those who own the vehicles the state wants us to drive, and the state recognizes that. It created the OReGO program, which charges vehicle owners for the miles they drive and rebates gas taxes paid by those drivers.

When OReGO was getting underway there were privacy concerns about using GPS technology to track mileage. Today, a person signing up may opt for a device that tracks mileage, but not location, or one that does include GPS technology.

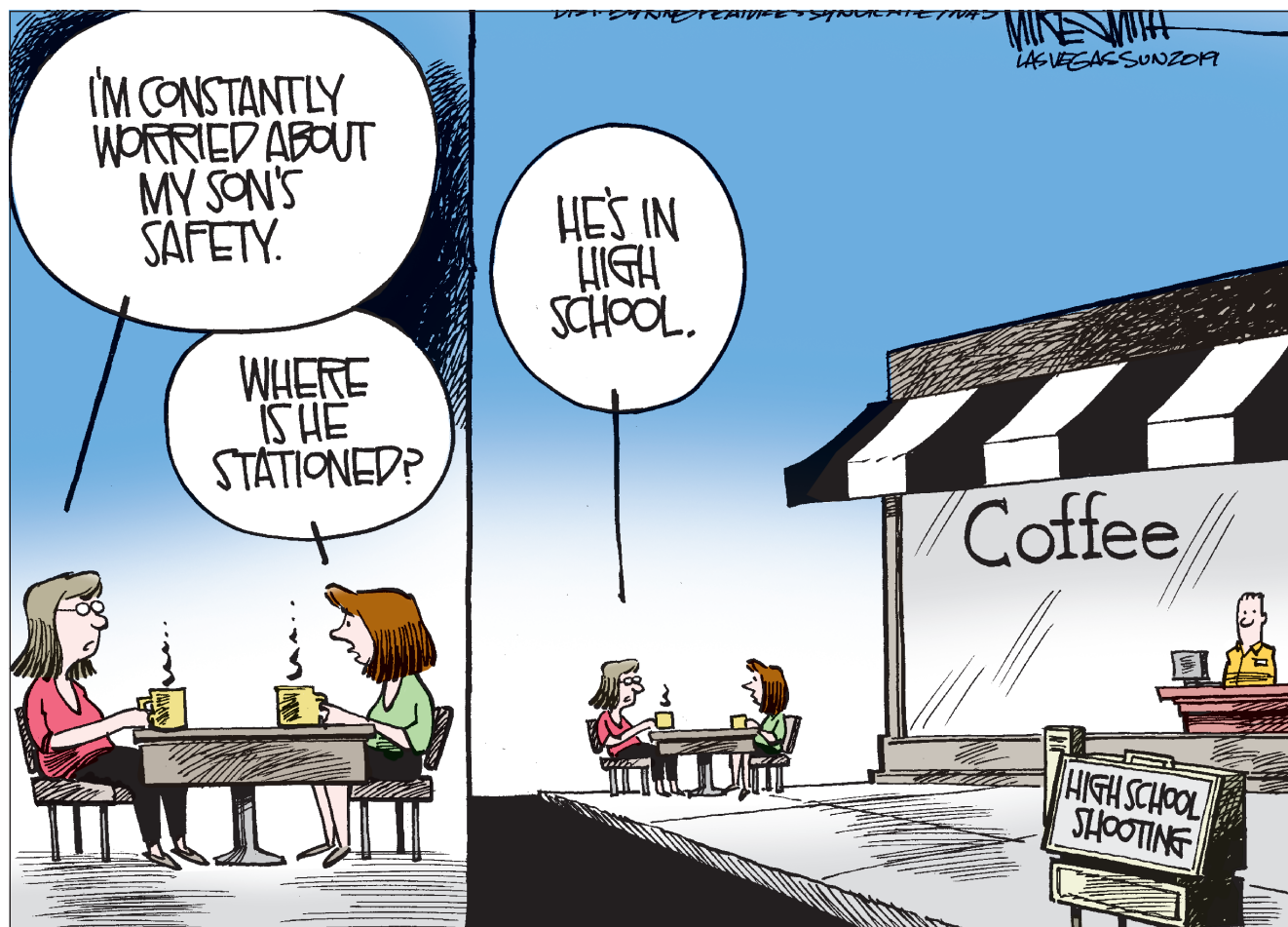
Either way, the state is working to make certain that all those who use, and whose vehicles cause wear and tear, on Oregon highways, pay their fair share toward keeping highways in good shape.

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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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Disney classics don't warrant warnings to sensitive viewers

I adored the story of Cinderella as a child. The prospect of having a man so in love with me that he'd criss-cross the kingdom searching for my size 6½ foot was heady stuff. It never occurred to me that Cindy was oppressed by the patriarchy or that she should just buy her own darn pair of shoes.

Similarly, I was untroubled by the fact that Snow White was victimized by her stepmother, or lived with a variety of short men to whom she was not married. While the scenario seemed to present a negative view of both blended families and female sexuality, my 8-year-old psyche survived unscathed.

I emerged from that Disney-centric childhood with happy memories and a deep appreciation for the power of imagination.

Sadly, the current employees of Disney must think of me as some aberration, because they have decided to provide disclaimers with their new streaming service, Disney+, which hit the market last week. Whenever someone clicks on classic content, they will find this language:

"This program is presented as originally created. It may contain outdated cultural depictions."

The disclaimer is aimed primarily at works that contain racial and ethnic stereotypes, like the Siamese cats in "Lady and the Tramp" and "Dumbo," which includes a version of black face.

CHRISTINE M. FLOWERS

(It's also worth noting that Disney+ is not streaming "Song of the South," a film that has been widely criticized for racist portrayals of black people.) Given the focus on cultural sensitivity in today's society, it's not difficult to understand why Disney would want to neutralize the negative impact of its masterpieces without actually tinkering with the works themselves.

In fact, Disney deserves credit for not censoring the films and cartoons, and tailoring them to meet 21st century sensibilities. John Legend and Kelly Clarkson recently recorded an updated version of the Christmas song "Baby It's Cold Outside" in recognition of the #MeToo movement and out of a desire not to offend those who said it conjured images of rape. But instead of improving the flirtatious holiday standard, they sexualized it even more by adding the line "It's your body and your choice," making what was a clever back-and-forth between two adults into a primer on consent.

At least Disney isn't making Cinderella open her own shoe manufacturing company or celebrating Snow White's sexual liberation with a scene where she distributes condoms to the dwarves.

Perhaps that cautionary language could be helpful to parents who think that some of the imagery might confuse their children, particularly in this day and age where gender is a matter of opinion, race is still a controversial subject, and sexual stereotypes are forbidden.

But I can't get my head around the idea that the stories that gave me such joy as a child are, to some people, harmful enough to warrant a cautionary warning. It's one thing to acknowledge that we made mistakes in the past, and to seek a reckoning with our history. It is quite another to caution people at the outset that the magnificent piece of art that they are about to see is actually riddled with racist, sexist and "phobic" tropes. This sets the viewer up to actually watch out for those troublesome details, and threatens to ruin the viewing experience.

Isn't it at all possible that the little girl who sees the handsome prince on bended knee with the crystal slipper will both sigh with delight, and one day grow up to be president? Must every childhood memory be tweaked so that it fits the evolved narrative?

Can't we just enjoy the movie?

Christine M. Flowers is a lawyer and columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News. Readers may send her email at cflowers1961@gmail.com.

Your views

Urging planners to reject proposed cell tower

Editor's note: The author submitted this to the Baker City Planning Commission.

I am writing to plead with you. Do not let an unsightly 70-foot tower of any sort be erected in the middle of an established residential neighborhood, no matter that a small square of land has been mistakenly left as industrial? I make an assumption that not one of you would wish this in your neighborhood. I realize what a tough, and oftentimes thankless, job you have. So thank you for your service.

I discovered how challenging your decisions can be at the meeting of Nov. 13th. I'm sure I was not the only attendee who felt Verizon's heavyweight

legal mouthpiece came across as arrogant and threatening, even though he was nice enough to offer us a "choice" of two proposed designs.

Upon reading new information provided by Verizon — "1. Verizon is proposing a new monopine (not even a word) stealth design that will significantly reduce the visual impact of the facility." The second part of this sentence, beginning with "that will" is completely unsubstantiated and, in my opinion, an absurd statement. I am also confused by Verizon's proposed height request? Are they now asking for a change from a 70-foot to a 75-foot tower? That is how it appears to me when reading the new information they have submitted "the monotone branches will extend five (5) feet above the tower"— you see

my confusion?

The permit request from Verizon makes great bedtime reading because it will quickly put you to sleep. I did glean enough to know that a lot of smoke is being blown — you know where. Things like need, capacity, spectrums, this is the "only" place to build it, apocalyptic failures ... I saw no mention of money? Our population varies little. We didn't need it yesterday and we don't need it today.

It is the best interest of Baker City that you deny this application based on the established and tested 50-foot limit. Work quickly — revise all ordinances, re-zone and close all loopholes so we are not faced with this again. Peace.

Michael J. Meyer
Baker City

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

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97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

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.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

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, Lynette Perry,

Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Ray Duman, 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; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, 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. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.