

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Ballot measure battle

The war may not be over yet, but Oregon Secretary of State Bev Clarno has won the first battle. Last week a Marion County Circuit Court judge ruled Clarno was right to reject a trio of proposed ballot measures because, she said, they improperly dealt with more than one subject each.

Clarno rejected Ballot Measures 35, 36 and 37 on Sept. 24, saying at the time that each covered more than a single subject, in violation of the state constitution. Oregon Wild, one of the groups sponsoring the trio, sued. Wednesday, Nov. 27, Judge Daniel Wren upheld Clarno's decision. Oregon Wild has said it will appeal.

The measures each would have, among other things, banned clearcutting and limited aerial spraying of pesticides. The aerial spray ban, for example, would have limited spraying near streams and lakes. At the same time, it would have banned the procedure near occupied homes and schools. In addition, the trio would bar state forestry board members from voting on measures dealing with forest waters if they receive a substantial portion of their income from a person or organization regulated by state forestry law.

The state constitution says twice that initiative petitions must be limited to a single subject.

In Article XVII, Sect. 1, constitutional amendments are confined to a single subject, a limitation that's been upheld in court at least twice in the last 25 years. In Article IV, Sect. 1(d), the same limit is applied to the people's right to both propose new laws and amend old ones by initiative petition.

It's unclear how appeals courts will rule on the Marion County decision, though both sides believe they're reading the law correctly. One thing is clear, however. Clarno was absolutely right when she said "Voters should not need a law degree to interpret ballot measures."

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.



Your views

Translator district thankful for community support

The Board of the Blue Mountain Translator District is grateful for community support after a year of historic change. BMTD has spent the last two years listening to community concerns and taking action, resulting in the Legislature's adoption of SB 393 and 394.

SB 394 allows BMTD to seek new revenue opportunities by creating a TV channel with local news and information and upgrading to next-generation TV technology that will enable us to utilize your airwaves for additional data delivery initiatives. SB 394 also

permits BMTD to work with stations to transmit local emergency alerts on our signals, and a grant from Wildhorse Foundation allowed us to purchase new equipment to upgrade our network with this capability.

We are grateful for the legislative support of Sen. Bill Hansell, Sen. Cliff Bentz, Rep. Greg Barreto and Rep. Lynn Findley. Our success in Salem was possible only with the assistance of Union County; the cities of Elgin, Imbler, Island City and North Powder; the RFPD's serving Imbler, La Grande, Medical Springs, North Powder and Union; Union County Chamber of Com-

merce; and Union County Farm Bureau.

Government agencies like BMTD are responsible to the people, and we look forward to continued dialogue with the community to improve the telecommunications infrastructure of Northeast Oregon.

Alex McHaddad
Executive Director
Blue Mountain Translator District
Tim Wallender
Board president
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Directors

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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When the gas station no longer dispenses gas

When I was a boy I considered it a grand treat to go with my dad to the gas station.

I found every aspect of the transaction fascinating — the hollow clunk as the jockey shoved the nozzle into the filler tube (this was in Oregon in the 1970s; no self-serve), the gurgle as the fuel flowed into the unseen nether regions of the rig, the plastic clack of the credit card machine and the solemnity, or so it seemed to me, of my dad scrawling his signature on the slip and tucking the card back into his battered wallet.

I even relished the smell of the fumes.

Fueling up has long since lost its luster for me, becoming just another regular routine among many, devoid of the thrills of youth.

But I still find the astringent scent of gasoline pleasant.

And at least these days the aroma isn't quite so nasty as it used to be.

When I think about accompanying my dad, the vehicle he's driving is always the mid-1960s Ford pickup truck he owned for several years. It was a two-wheel drive, painted a light blue that was called, in the grandiose way that automakers prefer, Caribbean turquoise — presuming certain online sources, and my own imperfect memory of the particular shade, can be trusted.

(Why Ford executives thought



JAYSON JACOBY

buyers of pickup trucks would be enticed by a reference to the Caribbean is to me unclear.)

In any case the Ford wasn't saddled with a catalytic converter and so my dad, when he rolled down the window (by way of a chrome-plated handle powered by muscle, not electricity), he told the attendant he wanted "ethyl."

At the time the word was something of a mystery to me even though I heard it pretty often. I knew only that ethyl was one type of gas, unleaded being the other.

(There were no diesel rigs among those in which I regularly rode so I knew nothing of that fuel. Also I didn't live on a farm.)

I learned much later that "ethyl" was advertising shorthand for tetraethyl lead, the substance that had been added to gasoline since the 1920s to prevent engines, which lacked the sophisticated computer controls of today, from "knocking" — which is to say, premature ignition of the gas-fuel mixture.

(Knocking not only reduces fuel economy but it can severely damage engines.)

Unfortunately tetraethyl lead — in common with many things

that contain element 82 on the periodic table — is a pretty potent poison. And a persistent one, once it gets into our bodies, something it accomplishes quite easily when it's contained in automobile exhaust.

Little wonder that the marketing wizards left the word "lead" out of the name for their miraculous product, which caused backfires in Americans' brains even as it was helping our engines purr along.

The federal government eventually phased out leaded gasoline, and if you didn't start visiting gas stations until after the mid-1980s or so, you might not associate the word "ethyl" with fuel. (Leaded gas was officially banned for road vehicles in 1996, but with catalytic converters required on new cars starting in 1975, it was pretty rare within a decade or so.)

I had occasion to ponder gasoline recently when I was filling my Toyota's tank (alas, the advent of self-service siphons a bit of the potential magic from the event; had my son been with me he would have been deprived of seeing his old man sign a receipt or gab with the attendant).

While I was standing next to the pump, watching the digital numbers tally my tab, I noticed a Tesla parked nearby.

It was, of course, distant from the pumps. Aloo, even. The Tesla takes on electrons, not gallons.

This happened not long after

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative announced that it plans to install a charging station for electric vehicles on the east side of Resort Street, between Thatcher's Ace Hardware and the Dollar Tree.

As I drove away I got to thinking about refueling our vehicles — in the most general sense — and in particular how many years will pass before the experience I remember so vividly, with its gurgling and aromatic liquids, has become as archaic as tying up your horse outside the saloon.

I suspect this transition will be one better measured in decades rather than years.

In 2018, electric vehicles accounted for just 2.1% of passenger car sales in the U.S. That was a record high, but it's still a paltry percentage.

So long as gasoline remains relatively cheap by historical standards — a reflection of its continuing abundance — I think it's unlikely that electric vehicles will make anything but gradual and modest gains in market share.

But it also seems certain that electric cars will make such gains — that they are, as the saying goes, here to stay.

OTEC's planned charging station — and the one that Tesla installed several years ago at the Sunridge Inn parking lot, usable only by that company's models — represent the early stages of a revolution, albeit a

key part.

Based on what I've read about electric vehicles, the engineers have either solved, or are well along toward solving, the challenges required to make cars powered by electric motors about as broadly useful as those propelled by internal combustion engines.

The obvious obstacles are range — how many miles can an electric vehicle go before it has to be plugged in — and how long it takes to replenish that range.

Electric cars fall short of conventional vehicles in both categories. But the gap is narrowing. One Tesla model can travel up to 375 miles on a charge. Charging times are getting shorter.

I have little doubt that for my children and, perhaps, grandchildren, the memory that remains so vivid to me — of pulling into a station and dispensing an aromatic liquid fuel whenever the needle on the gauge starts to point toward the "E" — will be part of theirs.

But I can also envision some descendant tagging along with his dad, neither of them knowing much more of me than perhaps an old digital photo, going through a ritual that involves cables rather than hoses, and the silent transfer of electrons, powerful but not pungent.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.