

EDITORIAL

Electricity
vs. natural
gas in state

In the movie “The Graduate” there’s a scene where Mr. McGuire pulls Dustin Hoffman’s character aside at a party to talk about his future.

“I just want to say one word to you. Just one word,” McGuire says. “Are you listening?”

“Plastics,” McGuire later says.

“Electricity,” he might well say, if it were rewritten for today. At least that is what occurred to us after reading about the actions of Oregon utility regulators.

Climate action is driving change in state policy. One place to see it is in the meetings of the state’s Public Utility Commission, or the PUC.

Fossil fuels may supply the bulk of the energy many Oregonians use today. It’s no secret that it will likely shift more and more to electricity. It can be very green.

Portland General Electric went before the PUC recently to push to increase what are called “line extension allowances” for electricity, according to the Portland Business Journal. PGE requested that the allowance be increased. The allowances are basically the portion of the extension of service that the utility may provide without cost to the applicant. A bigger allowance for electricity makes use of electricity more attractive. “Portland General Electric proposed boosting the rebate for extending service to all-electric homes to \$2,260, compared to about \$1,600 for other homes,” as the Portland Business Journal reported. The PUC approved it.

With that in mind, if consumers had to choose, more might hook up with electricity to heat their homes rather than natural gas. It’s a win for the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Renew Oregon, Oregon Environmental Council, Sierra Club and others that joined to back PGE’s effort.

NW Natural, the natural gas company, didn’t explicitly oppose PGE’s change. It did, though, challenge the assertion that PGE made that it would help support state policy to decarbonize.

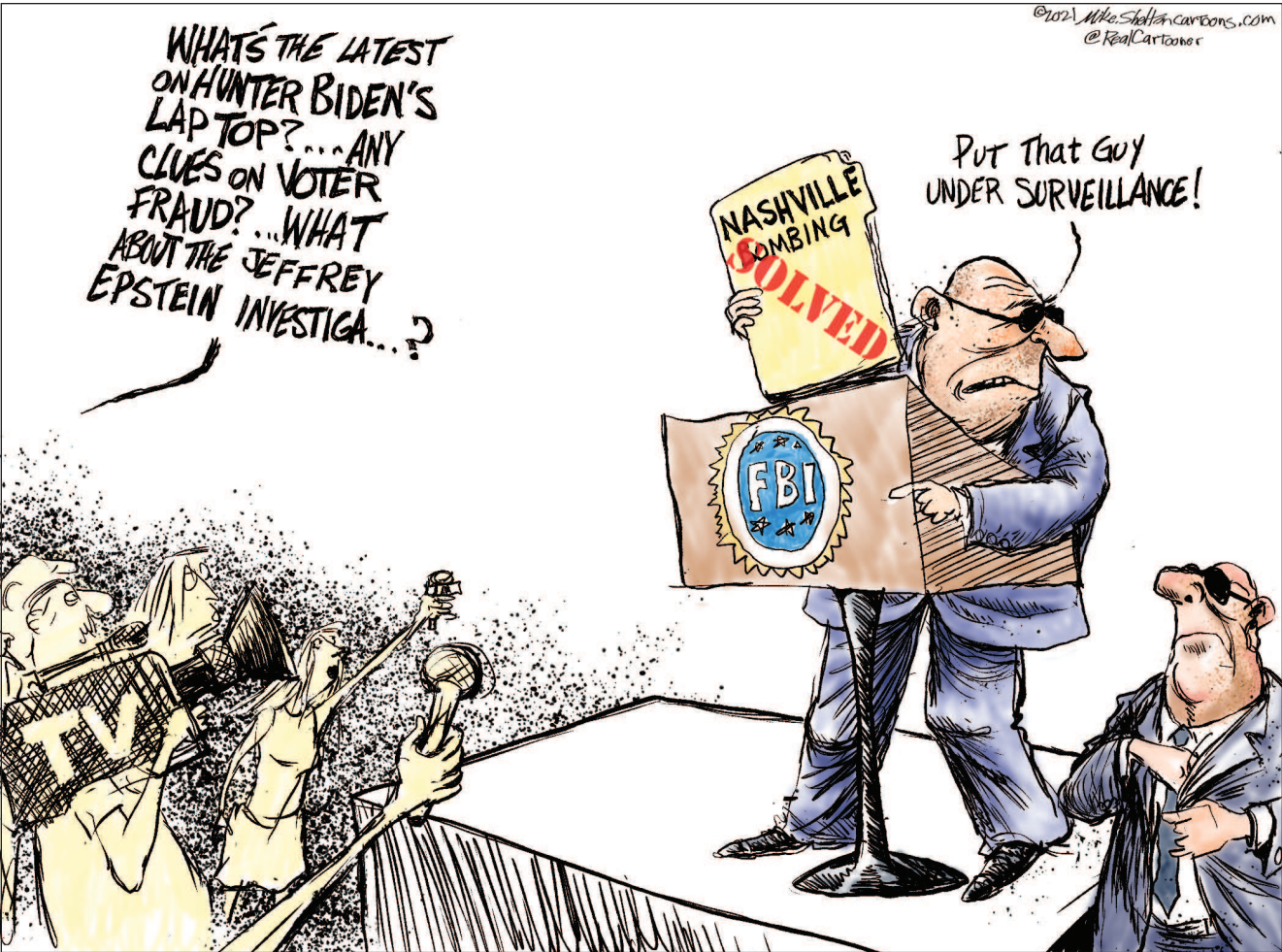
This was just one tiny battle in a grander narrative of climate action and energy transition. If you look back at the history of such transitions — such as away from coal-fired stoves, they can offer a payoff. But it also raises a question. If the government creates a policy to incentivize the transition away from a technology, does it have any responsibility to ease the impact on the businesses and workers who will lose?

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Your views

Americans at least deserve to have a fair election

I’m frustrated and discouraged. As a conservative Republican in a, sadly, liberal Democrat state I’m typically disappointed on Election Day. However, this presidential election is significantly different and way beyond disappointing. I’m among the 77% of Trump voters who see a fraudulent process. Yes, I’m aware that the Trump legal team has been dismissed in 59 of 60 lawsuits but I don’t understand how these suits can be so blithely dismissed without a fair hearing.

Aside from the compelling arguments made by the Trump legal team, there have been witness after witness describing what they saw as fraud, or at least very questionable acts. Also, people reported that they were victims of fraud when they showed up to vote but were told they had already voted. A man stated that he had hauled a trailer loaded with ballots from New York to Pennsylvania. Republican poll watchers were forced to leave polling locations. One state mailed out 1.8 million absentee ballots but received and counted 2.5 million. Dead people voted. Experts have provided amazing information about the questionable accuracy of Dominion voting machines. All of these issues needed to be thoroughly and honestly investigated and given their day in court. And the arguments that recounts have been completed are superfluous: recounting fraudulent ballots doesn’t prove anything.

I understand that some people don’t like President Trump. I understand that the media want him out of office and that there have been constant efforts over the last four years to remove him. I understand that Democrats never accepted his presidency and also attacked him like the liberal press. Somehow an American means of fairness needs to overcome the prejudice against President Trump and convince me and others that the election wrongs will be investigated and right will prevail. I may not like, but can certainly accept, a Democrat president if fairly elected. It would take great effort to convince me Biden’s election was fair and that he

is fit for the office given his, and his family’s, reported business ties to communist China.

I don’t agree with all of President Trump’s style, opinions and actions but, overall, he has achieved very good results for America. At the very least, he deserves fairness.

Jim Carnahan
Baker City

We support the Oregon Trail Restaurant owners

To Dave and Sandy McGuire and the staff of the Oregon Trail Restaurant, thank you. We appreciate what you are doing for your staff as well as the community. You are not just paying wages, but also providing an outlet for social interaction, and contributing to the local economy. Every dollar spent in a business goes around seven times, so you are helping to keep other businesses and staff stay afloat. It is a sad statement about Baker City that there are people that won’t mind their own business and run to tattle-tell on local establishments that are trying to do their best. It was not always that way. Once upon a time, the community took care of its own. Hold the line — we have your back.

Doni and Craig Bruland
Baker City

What would letter writer have done about COVID-19?

In the Tuesday, Dec. 22 edition of the Herald, Gary Dielman’s letter to the editor begins with the statement “The Trump administration’s ineptitude in dealing with the COVID-19 virus has led to the avoidable deaths of over 300,000 U.S. citizens, soon to

Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.

surpass 400,000.”

That’s a pretty bold statement and leads to the question: “Tell us Mr. Dielman, how would you have dealt with that situation, armed with the scant knowledge about this virus available when it first raised its ugly head?”

Sig Siefkes
Baker City

Protecting our rivers crucial for our future

I have experienced gratitude, peace, and moments of joy over this most difficult year by spending time on the Eagle, Powder, and Grande Ronde rivers. These rivers are not only beautiful, but essential to our way of life.

I was born and raised in Prineville and am grateful to now be raising my own family in Baker City. I’ve spent many years of my life working in the woods as a wildland firefighter and educator, and am privileged to have explored some of the most remote stretches of our public lands. I now recognize the importance of those experiences, and see the value of these wild places, through the eyes of my daughter.

Our wild rivers and natural places around them are the lifeblood of our community. Some think of Eastern Oregon as an empty sea of sagebrush, but it’s so much more. Not only do wild rivers offer a necessary respite from an increasingly wired-in world, but they are home to wildlife and the source of our clean drinking water. Millions of Oregonians including those of us in places like Baker, La Grande, and Pendleton depend on our public lands for their drinking water.

Currently, less than 2% of our state’s rivers are protected. These rivers, upon which our communities depend, deserve greater protection. I encourage Senator Wyden to introduce legislation to protect our state’s Wild and Scenic Rivers, and hope the rivers of eastern Oregon are well represented. As the world changes, it’s critical we act quickly and boldly to protect what we cherish about rural Oregon — solitude, sustenance, and joy.

Sarah Cuddy
Baker City

From the publisher: 2020 restored my pride in local news

I’d been asking for 2020.

Don’t take that statement to mean I’m taking responsibility for the awful pandemic that has ravaged our community, our nation and the world. Nor is it intended to imply I deserve to be punished for something. I hadn’t realized until I was in the thick of it, but subconsciously, I’ve been desperate for a personal and professional reset or affirmation, and 2020 certainly did that.

And I’m grateful for it.

I love what I do and know what working for a community newspaper means to me personally. But after nearly 25 years with The



KARRINE BROGOITTI

Observer and Baker City Herald, I’d temporarily lost sight of how crucial our news reporting is to the communities we live in and serve. The universe intervened.

For many of us, 2020 was of the likes of which none of us has ever experienced before and, hopefully, will never see again. Communities and entire states on lockdown. Hospitals and intensive care units overflowing with the afflicted. Record-high unemployment. Schools

and classrooms sit dark. Small retail businesses and restaurants — the heart and soul of our local economy — shuttered. Political and civil uncertainty and unrest.

The devastating list goes on.

Since the onset of the pandemic, I’ve been reminded daily about the importance of vetted media sources and our own local reporting through emails, phone calls and social media, our loyal readers coming to us for the answers to the questions that were keeping them up at night. New readers joined our “family” so they could stay up to date on the impact of the pandemic on our communities through our accurate and

timely reporting. As 2020 marched on, though, something familiar stirred inside of me — pride.

The year has restored my pride in the work of The Observer and Baker City Herald, our company’s other publications across the state and other community newspapers from coast to coast. What we do matters. It’s crucial. You validate that with each edition you collect from your mailbox, each time you visit our website, each interaction on our social media pages and with each story you share with friends, family and neighbors.

It’s with the deepest gratitude that I thank you, readers new and

old and our local business community. You have reminded me how important the work my staff and I do every day is to the communities we serve.

It’s a big responsibility and one that we take seriously. After all, there’s no stronger community than one that is well informed.

There’s no question 2020 required strength in spades.

And we delivered.

Together.

For that, I am grateful.

Karrine Brogoitti is publisher of the Baker City Herald and The Observer in La Grande.