

OUR VIEW

Oregon has a jury dilemma

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Ramos v. Louisiana*, it clearly allowed the verdict to be tossed out in many nonunanimous jury cases. Did it apply retroactively? That was not clear.

Oregon and Louisiana were the only two states for decades that had allowed people to be convicted of many felonies with less than a unanimous jury verdict. The *Ramos* decision allowed people who were in the middle of appeals to have their convictions overturned and retried. The decision did settle the issue of retroactivity — in other words, could cases that were completed be overturned and retried?

Some are calling on Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum to allow that to happen. She has decided to wait until that issue is clarified in a court decision.

What's right?

If nonunanimous jury verdicts are unconstitutional, it certainly seems unjust that because a case is concluded the unconstitutionality of the verdict does not matter. Retrying cases would put a burden on Oregon's justice system. It would be significant. It could be hundreds of cases or more, as *The Oregonian* reported. Should that burden make a difference? Ideally, no.

But it's hard to argue that if Rosenblum does not have a clear court ruling, yet, she is right to wait. Even if she did not choose to wait, that decision could face court challenges.

It could be years before such a ruling on retroactivity is clear in the Oregon Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court may rule on the matter in July.

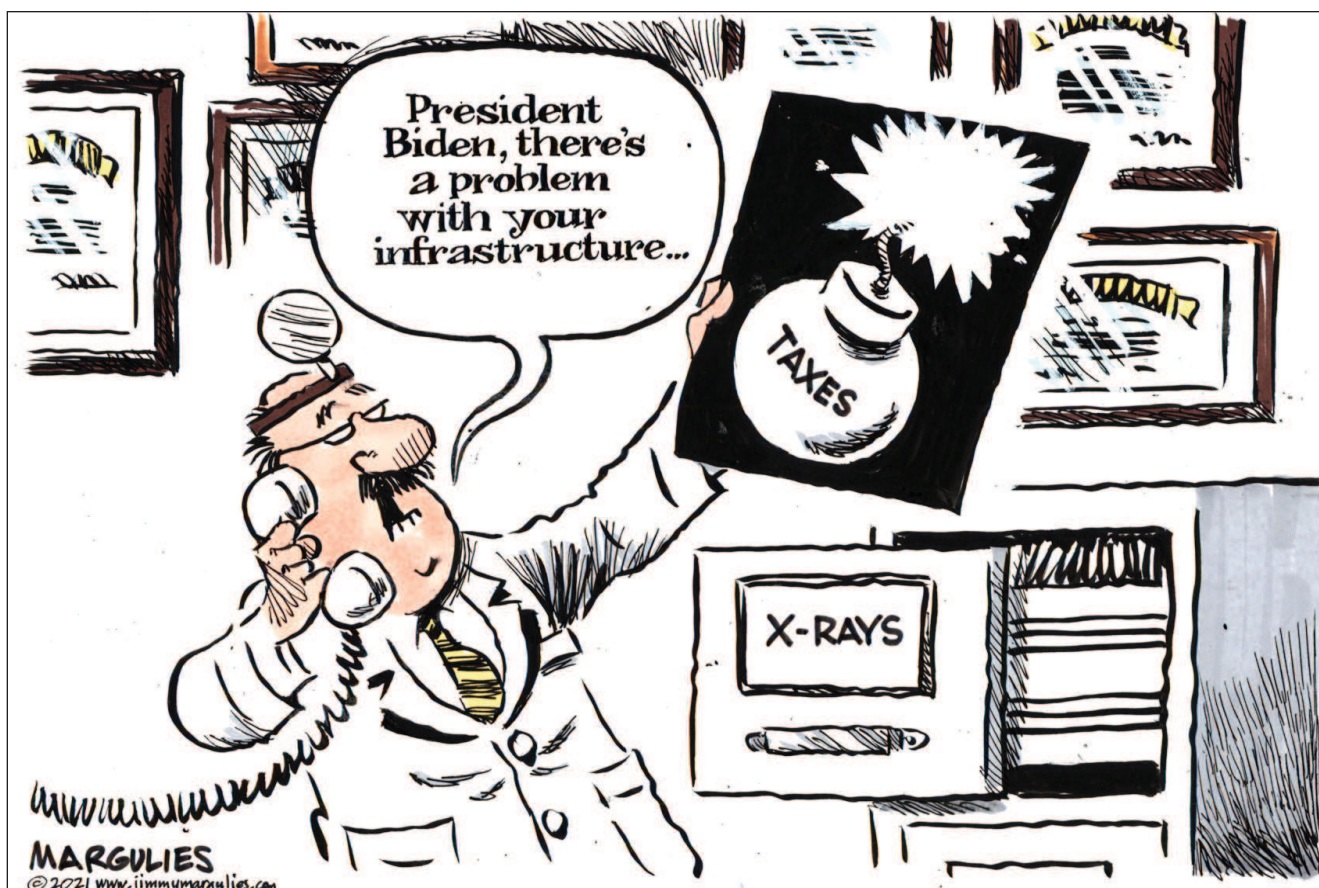
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BMCC committed to community

In 1962, our community took on the courageous challenge of opening one of the first community colleges in Oregon. In the nearly 60 years since Blue Mountain Community College first opened its doors and began serving students, much has changed.

The college has celebrated triumphs and weathered challenges. The past year has brought about a particularly challenging time for our faculty and staff, students, and the communities we serve.

BMCC is working to address the issues that most rural community colleges in 2021 face — enrollment decline, budget challenges, poverty and COVID-limited contact that has resulted in decreased connections to high schools, universities, and businesses. Despite these challenges, and what you may have read elsewhere, BMCC is committed to being your college and meeting the needs of the communities we serve in Umatilla, Morrow and Baker counties.

Failing you is not an option.

As the interim president at BMCC, my agreement with the Board of Education is to address these issues openly, and with the campus team and our community partners working together to create a stable two-year budget that will provide predictable and stable learning opportunities. This step will ensure BMCC's programs and services to our students and partners are strong and vibrant. In doing so, we will also become flexible and nimble to ensure the connections and the results increase as we all work together to support communities and individuals that thrive in Eastern Oregon.

So, yes, BMCC is experiencing significant transition and change to meet the current reality. The college will begin a search for a new president. The intent is to not pass on current budget challenges for a new president to handle. The college and its Board of Education recognize that for BMCC to continue to meet the evolving needs of



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its students and communities, it, too, must adapt. That means BMCC will change how we are organized, how we operate and how we partner. This can be a scary endeavor.

It can also be an opportunity.

BMCC has an opportunity to renew its commitment to students and the community while reviewing its internal organization and structure, and right-sizing. It has an opportunity to serve students in new ways in a post-pandemic era that will see our economy in recovery and our local industries adapting to the challenges of the past year.

So how did BMCC end up in its current financial challenge? The answer is multi-pronged.

Like most community colleges across the country, BMCC has experienced enrollment decline for the past several years. This was exacerbated by the pandemic over the past year, which forced us into virtual learning, and became a major challenge for the hands-on Career Technical Education programs. Since community colleges rely on enrollment for tuition revenue and state funding, fewer students mean less revenue.

The primary sources of funding for Oregon's 17 community colleges come from three revenue sources. In 2019-20, the College received 31.03% from state funding, 32.38% from student tuition and fees, and 36.59% from local property tax revenue.

Many community colleges, including BMCC, have had to raise tuition to help cover costs. BMCC has also taken steps to reduce its expenses over the past year, reducing nearly \$2 million for the 2020-21 budget. These reductions were in materials and services and staff development, as well as a reduction of 24 positions.

Last year had difficult decisions. The intent of the Board is for the college to make any additional reductions for the 2021-22 budget so that the expenditures and revenues balance and the College is "right-sized" for the future.

How does BMCC do this? Through inclusive conversations with faculty, staff, students and the community. BMCC has already begun intensive work internally, reviewing department budgets, organizational structures, and potential revenue options. Nothing is off the table for discussion as we review budgets and options.

Now, a discussion does not necessarily mean all things change. A discussion means we learn, listen, and consider implications so that we can make informed decisions moving forward. We need a structural organization, plan and budget that is sustainable and provides students and the community with college programs and services that are stable and predictable, as well as flexible and nimble.

While this process will be challenging — and even heart-breaking — for many, BMCC's faculty and staff are resilient. They have weathered past storms, and each time the college comes out stronger.

With these impending changes, there remains one constant — BMCC is committed to the students and communities it serves. Our administration, faculty, staff and Board of Education are committed to strengthening BMCC so that it can thrive and be the affordable, high-quality educational option for Eastern Oregon. We are committed to working with local industries to put Eastern Oregonians back to work and reinvigorate our local economy. We are committed to being "Students First."

And, just like when we first opened our doors in 1962, we are committed at BMCC to you — our community.

Dr. Connie Green is the interim president of Blue Mountain Community College.

Your views

America needs immigration control, not immigration reform

In light of the recent border surge caused by President Joe Biden's executive order essentially sending word south that the border is open, we are going to hear a lot about immigration reform.

We have been hearing that for years and nothing happens. Illegal aliens/undocumented workers just keep coming.

We hear much about a pathway to citizenship. There already is one. It starts in Guatemala, heads north through Mexico and ends when an illegal alien contacts the border patrol and says, "Here I am."

They are then transported to a facility, names taken, bus fare paid to a new destination with a warning to come back for a court hearing, which is ignored, while they wait for amnesty and citizenship. It's good politics: eventually they and their families will vote Democratic.

It is time to replace the immigration reform policies with immigration control. The first part of that is to define who an American is. The criteria should be having an American parent. As it is now, you can

hop the border pregnant, deliver a brand-new anchor baby and start the chain migration of a family.

America's birthright citizenship comes about by abuse of the 14th Amendment Civil War reconstruction that was intended to make citizens of those who had previously been slaves. It didn't even cover Native Americans. It was 1924 before they thought to extend it to those who had been here for centuries.

At one time I heard of a case heading to the Supreme Court that would settle the matter, but I have heard no more. The court needs to weigh in.

The next thing that should happen is a national mandatory E-VERIFY where Social Security numbers are checked against names before you can get a job. If the name matches — fine. But if it doesn't, you are here illegally and can't work.

Those who employ illegals should get big fines. Desperate illegals will work a lot cheaper than native born who compete with them.

It should also be used when applying to any federal housing program. Also, the

Social Security Administration should check to see how many are using the same number and those who have stolen one need to be reported to ICE. It's no secret why there hasn't been any enforcement. Illegal workers pay in but don't draw Social Security. That brings in a lot of money.

The Supreme Court needs to make it clear that the federal government is responsible for immigration. Sanctuary cities and states need to be abolished and illegals turned over to ICE.

The wall needs to be completed. The construction can be financed by a tax on wire transfers to Latin America, which total about \$40 billion a year. Walls work. Scare a Democrat and you get a wall around Congress.

So those who think with that organ in their chest that pumps blood are probably feeling pretty angry at this letter, but I think that in an overpopulated country with housing shortages, homeless by the thousands, cities that swallow farmland, microwaving power lines and ever-widening freeways, it is time call a halt.

Native-born Americans have a negative

birthrate. Liberal legal immigration quotas are ridiculous and by adding illegals we are exploding in numbers. When I was born in 1947 we had 137 million, we are at least 337 million now.

Too much immigration, too fast, stops assimilation and we end up with tribes instead of Americans.

So, do I lack compassion for those desperate people I see on the border?

No. I would like to see massive help in their home countries, and we should.

China is filling the void caused by our inaction. We have good people who would help, such as Doctors Without Borders, a revived Peace Corps and a lot of young Marines and soldiers who would be willing to eliminate a dictator, gangs and cartels.

Not everyone who thinks there is a limit to numbers is a racist, xenophobic, white supremacist, but if people don't think their government will protect our borders there will be a surge in their numbers.

Steve Culley
Baker City