

EDITORIAL

Animal
'cruelty'
initiative
frightening

It sounds farfetched, and quite likely it is.

Oregonians ought to hope so, anyway.

At least those Oregonians who like to eat the occasional burger or slice of bacon. Or hunt deer and elk. Or watch or compete in rodeos.

But the economic destruction that Initiative Petition 13 could cause in this state is so severe, and so widespread, that the campaign supporting it, however quixotic it might be, simply can't be ignored.

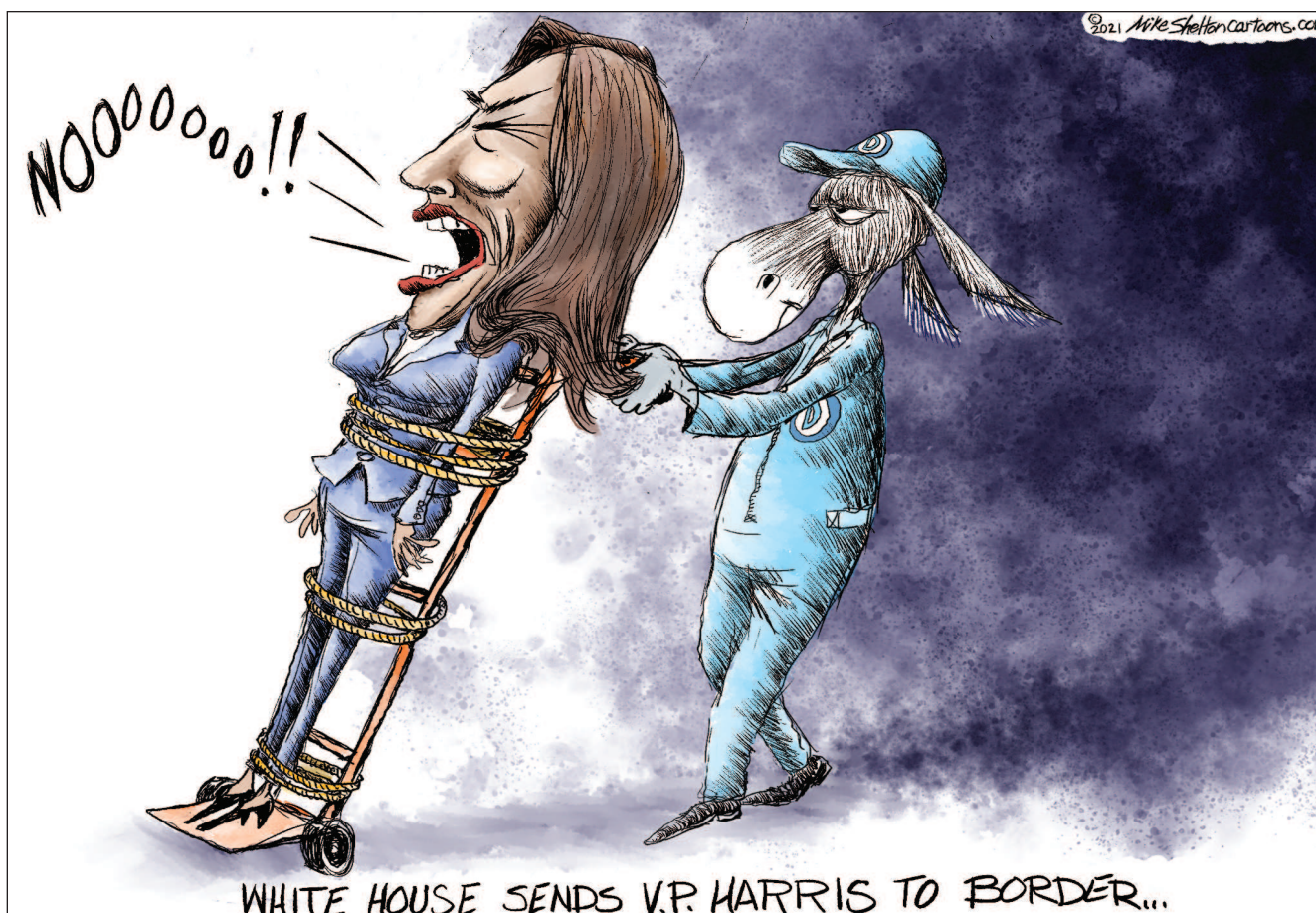
David Michelson of Portland is the chief petitioner. His goal is to put on the statewide ballot in November 2022 a petition that would criminalize, under animal abuse laws, essential parts of the ranching business, including branding and dehorning cattle, and castrating bulls. Even artificial insemination could be classified as sexual assault of an animal, which is a Class C felony.

Backers of the initiative emphasize that it would not actually prohibit ranchers from selling their animals to slaughter — but they could do so only after the animal dies naturally. You needn't be in the livestock business to know this wouldn't — couldn't — work.

The petition would also eliminate exceptions to animal cruelty laws for hunting, fishing, rodeos and wildlife management.

It might seem unbelievable that a majority of Oregonians would vote for a measure that would wreak such havoc on an industry that's a big part of Oregon's economy. But little wonder that the Oregon Farm Bureau and other groups are preparing to counter the petition with compelling stories about how much damage this effort could have.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



OTHER VIEWS

It's time to pay college athletes

Editorial from The Chicago Tribune

It's not just mania about college hoops that puts the "madness" in March Madness. Think about the money behind NCAA basketball. John Calipari, coach of perennial powerhouse University of Kentucky, makes \$8 million a year. Duke's famed Mike Krzyzewski makes \$7 million. Closer to home, University of Illinois men's basketball coach Brad Underwood got \$3.8 million this year.

Before the pandemic, March Madness raked in \$1.18 billion in television ad revenue for the NCAA, which also gets \$1.1 billion for TV rights to the tournament. How about the man at the top — NCAA President Mark Emmert? Nearly \$4 million annually.

What about the athletes who hit the buzzer beaters, who dunk the dunks and leap into end zones to win games and championships? Consider the story of Shabazz Napier, who in 2014 helped the University of Connecticut Huskies win the NCAA men's basketball title. Napier told the media at the time, "Sometimes, there are hungry nights where I'm not able to eat, but I still got to play up to my capabilities."

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that could finally open the door for college athletes to be fairly compensated for their work and talent, which makes millions for the people at the top. The case involved a former University of West Virginia football player who claimed the NCAA rules governing education-related compensation violated federal antitrust law intended to foster competition. In a unanimous decision, the court ruled that the NCAA cannot prohibit education-related payments to college athletes.

The decision has the potential to go much deeper, however: The court appeared open to a much broader challenge to the NCAA's ban on paying athletes. In his concurring opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote, "Nowhere else in America can businesses get away with agreeing not to pay their workers a fair market rate on the theory that their product is defined by not paying their workers a fair market rate."

"And under ordinary principles of antitrust law," Kavanaugh continued, "it is not evident why college sports should be any different. The NCAA is not above the law." Kavanaugh summed it up perfectly. It's

true, student-athletes often get scholarships, room and board, books and other perks in exchange for what they do on the court, field or gridiron. But what they do amounts to a full-time job. And the daily grind they endure — the practices, the strength training, the games and tournaments — is work product that morphs into massive profits for the NCAA and the people at the top rungs of universities.

We fully expect the NCAA to dig in its heels and fight to the last. The organization should brace itself, however, for the possibility that the nation's high court decides sometime in the future to address, in a much broader way, the NCAA's exploitation of student-athletes. Justice Neil Gorsuch offered a window into the court's mindset, writing that the NCAA is a "massive business" and adding that those "who run this enterprise profit in a different way than the student-athletes whose activities they oversee."

The NCAA doesn't have to wait for the Supreme Court to act, however. It can see the writing on the wall, pay athletes, and finally remedy the unfairness it has perpetuated for far too long.

Carelessly wielding statistics as a weapon

I remember, and more clearly than most childhood episodes, the day my dad explained to me the concept of guilt by association.

I think my memory remains unusually vivid, among so many dozens of conversations, because the idea seemed to me then so unfair.

It still does.

I surely was no older than 10 that day, and probably nearer to eight. But even more than four decades later I bristle at the notion that anybody might malign my character not because I had done something wrong, but because I was linked to someone who had.

I was particularly irked that I might be branded as guilty even if the "association" were contrived rather than real.

I had occasion recently to ponder that distant discussion with my dad.

The impetus for my reminiscing was a story in the Salem Statesman Journal newspaper about a survey conducted this January in Oregon.

DHM Research and the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center, which the newspaper described as "independent nonpartisan organizations," surveyed 603 Oregon residents in a 15-minute online questionnaire Jan. 8-13. There were quotas for each area of the state, as well as for gender, age and education, to ensure the respondents represented the state's diversity.

The lead paragraph in the story — as lead paragraphs are supposed to do — does an admirable job of



JAYSON JACOBY

introducing the topics to come.

"Nearly four in 10 Oregonians strongly or somewhat agree with statements that reflect core arguments of white nationalist and other far-right groups, according to a new statewide survey."

Any reader, even those who are barely sentient, couldn't help but be intrigued by that sentence.

Although I suspect most people would react with something other than basic curiosity.

Disgust, for instance.

As a native Oregonian with a great affinity for the state, I certainly find abhorrent the notion that in any group of 10 people within our borders, four are apt to be bigots.

I'd be especially incensed if I believed that statistic to be accurate.

But I don't.

What I find obnoxious is how the organization that paid for the survey has used the results to impugn about 1.7 million of my fellow Oregonians.

Lindsay Schubiner, a program director at that organization, Western States Center, described the survey findings as "disturbing."

"These numbers show that they're certainly not the majority, but I think this data does give insight into the size of the population that white nationalists may be able to appeal to or potentially recruit

from," Schubiner told the Statesman Journal.

Here are some of the numbers on which Schubiner bases this scurrilous contention.

The survey found that 86% of respondents agreed that America should "protect and preserve" its multicultural heritage, down from 92% in a similar survey in 2018.

Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who believe America "must protect and preserve its white European heritage" has risen from 31% in 2018 to 40% — hence the claim that four in 10 Oregonians are merely waiting for the skinheads and neo-Nazis to show up with their propaganda (larded, most likely, with enough misspellings and questionable grammar to disappoint a second-grader).

I find it passing strange that anyone, upon learning that more than twice as many people in a survey think it's important to preserve multicultural heritage, as compared with preserving white European heritage, would deduce that the population represented in the survey is fertile recruiting territory for white supremacists.

Another finding in the survey is that more Oregonians actually admit supporting what the news story describes as "white nationalism and paramilitary groups" now as in 2018. That support has risen from 6% of respondents then to 11% in the 2021 survey.

But the difference between that 11%, and the 40% who think white European heritage is worth protecting and preserving, is hardly trivial.

In straight numbers, extrapolating from the 40% survey result, this amounts to about 1.2 million Oregonians. And the Western States Center implies that this group is susceptible to the outlandish and hateful messages spewed by malcontents who think the swastika is cool.

I find far more compelling than a survey the actual events that transpired in Grant County in 2010.

The national director of the Aryan Nations, Paul R. Mullet, showed up that year in John Day, claiming he was looking to buy property and establish a "national compound" for his goose-stepping cretins.

Mullet told the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper that he believes his group "is a good fit with the values here."

Perhaps he meant the sort of people who, if asked in an anonymous survey, might agree that white European heritage, along with a bunch of other heritages, is a part of American history worth preserving.

But it turns out that Grant County residents didn't cotton to a bunch of bigots moving into their bucolic section of Oregon.

They put on a public protest against the Aryan Nations.

John Day's mayor, Bob Quinton, told the Blue Mountain Eagle that being associated with the Aryan Nations was "the last kind of thing our reputation needs. We need to be inclusive and emphasize positive things here."

What bothers me almost as much as surveys being used to

draw ridiculously broad assumptions about people's feelings is that such exaggerations also suggest that nasty people have far more influence than actual evidence — Grant County, for instance — suggests they possess.

In effect, groups such as the Western States Center contribute to white supremacists' ability to coopt people's pride in their heritage.

There is of course nothing inherently offensive about such pride.

Indeed, the survey itself strongly suggests that Oregonians respect all cultures, and not only their own.

Considering how marginalized white supremacists are, I find it fanciful for the Western States Center to contend that the survey results in any way reflect the number of Oregonians who have anything in common with racist cretins.

I don't think it's coincidental that Schubiner was conspicuously hedging in her comments to the Statesman Journal — speaking of white nationalists who "may be able to appeal to" or "potentially recruit from" Oregonians based on the survey results.

Still and all, I think the group is engaging in guilt by association.

I'm confident that the vast majority of people who are proud of their heritage — whatever that might be — are all but impervious to the poison propaganda of those few among us who pervert pride into hatred.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.