

## EDITORIAL

# Honoring a local hero

It's hard to imagine an event that combines plain old fun with an impeccable cause better than the one coming up Friday evening, July 22 at the Haines Rodeo Arena.

The Spc. Mabry James Anders Truck and Tractor Pull returns after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. for the 7 p.m. spectacle, which will feature tractors boasting as many as five engines, as well as one with two jet engines.

Behind the boisterous nature of a truck and tractor pull, though, is the solemn remembrance of Mabry Anders, the 21-year-old Baker City soldier who was killed in action in Afghanistan on Aug. 27, 2021.

But Friday's event doesn't just honor Mabry. It's also a major fundraiser for the Spc. Mabry James Anders Memorial Foundation, which has awarded more than \$60,000 in scholarships to Baker County students. This year the Foundation gave out six scholarships.

Nothing, of course, can erase the tragedy that happened in Afghanistan almost a decade ago. Anders, who had joined the U.S. Army in January 2010, was fatally shot while looking for roadside bombs after a vehicle in his convoy struck one of the improvised devices.

But it's heartwarming to realize that his legacy, through the Foundation that his mother, Genevieve Woydziak, oversees, will continue to enrich so many lives.

Every dollar that changes hands at the Haines Rodeo Arena Friday will be money well spent.

And how often do you get to see a jet-powered tractor in action?

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

## OTHER VIEWS

# Pro-choice activists' tactics against judges hinder the cause

### Editorial from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

In a distressing new trend that all serious abortion-rights activists should condemn immediately, a pro-choice group is offering online payments to restaurant staff who spot conservative Supreme Court justices at Washington-area restaurants and tip off protesters so they can harass the justices. It's difficult to overstate how counterproductive such tactics are to the legitimate cause of restoring women's biological rights — a cause that can only lose mainstream support with radical and provocative stunts like this.

Fury at the Supreme Court majority that overturned Roe v. Wade last month is real, and justified. The new majority zealously eviscerated Roe at the first opportunity, putting their own ideological agenda above a woman's equal right to control her body, above respect for settled law and above the opinion of a clear majority of Americans. They have undermined the right of self-determination and endangered the health and lives of countless women and girls in much of America. The high court richly deserves its deep and likely lasting loss of legitimacy across the nation.

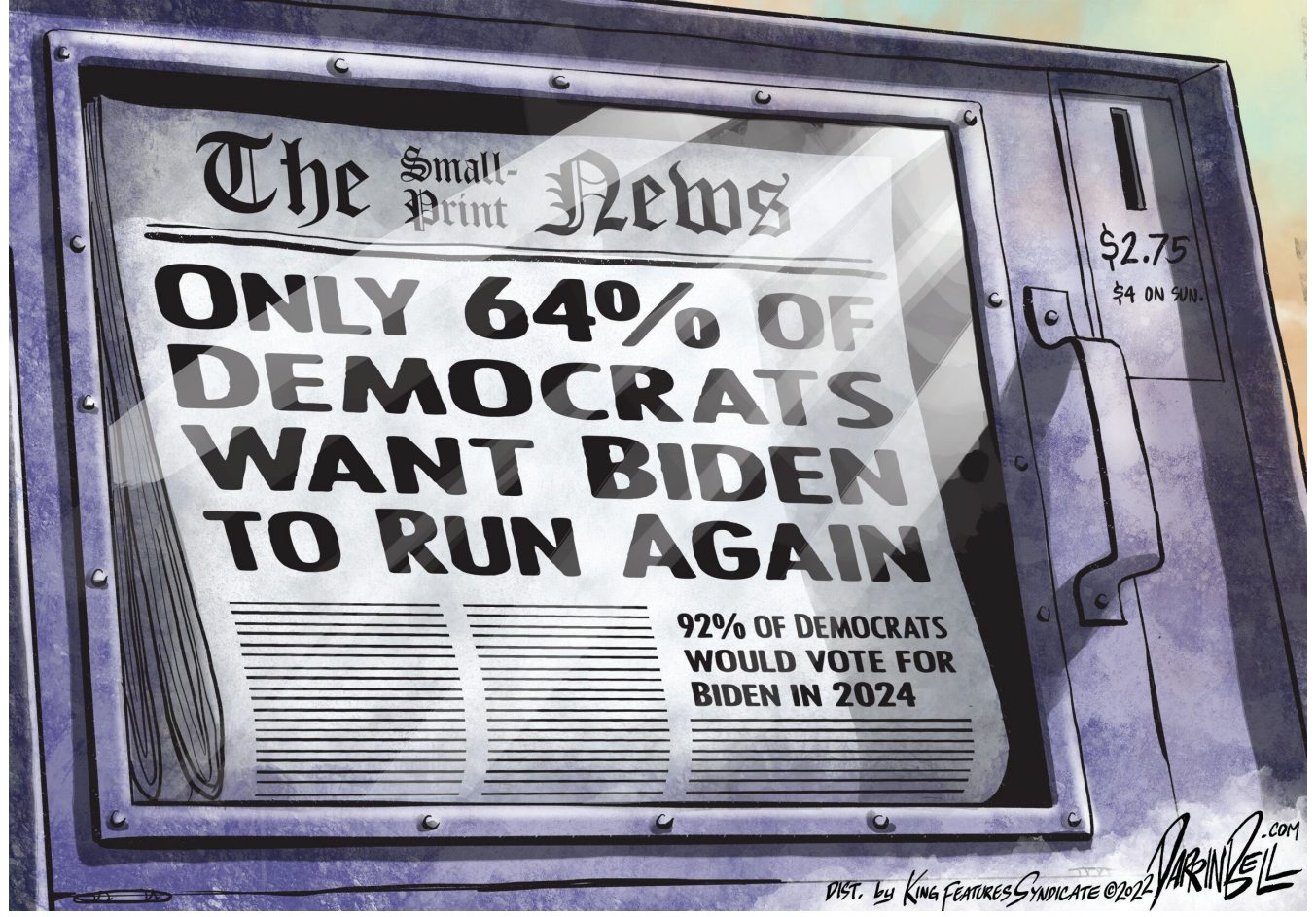
But no one deserves to be hounded out of a restaurant by a mob, no matter how justified the cause might be. That's what happened to Justice Brett Kavanaugh recently at Morton's the Steakhouse, a toney District of Columbia restaurant. When the restaurant later issued a statement defending Kavanaugh's right to eat there

unharassed, protesters harassed the restaurant chain itself, with online trolling and a flood of fake reservations made under prank names.

These are cheap theatrics that despoil a valid and important protest movement. More ominous is the organized effort by pro-choice activists to offer what amount to bounty rewards for restaurant workers who tip off the group about conservative justice sighting at their tables, so protesters can be sent there. As The Washington Post reports, the group (we refrain from naming it here, to avoid helping spread their dangerous campaign) is offering \$50 to restaurant staff who tip them off to a justice's sighting, and \$200 if the justice is still there when protesters arrive. If violence ensues, do they get a bonus?

The response from the Biden administration should be a clear and unequivocal rejection of such tactics. Instead, it has offered mixed messaging. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told an interviewer: "Any public figure should always, always be free from violence, intimidation and harassment, but should never be free from criticism or people exercising their First Amendment rights."

But these tactics are intimidation and harassment, and could lead to violence. The proper place to protest this and other Supreme Court outrages is at the ballot box. The continuing fight for abortion rights is too crucial to let it be commandeered by those who will damage its legitimacy and drive off allies.



## YOUR VIEWS

### City voters should get to decide on train quiet zone

On July 12 the Baker City Council decided to ask city voters, by way of a ballot measure, to ban the production and therapeutic use of psilocybin, "magic mushrooms." City staffers are to prepare an ordinance and a title for the ballot measure.

This is the exact process the city council was following for the Quiet Zone issue, send the issue to the citizens for a vote. But on April 12 the city council reversed that decision, to involve the public, following a motion from appointed city council member Dean Guyer.

If "magic mushrooms" can make the Nov. 8 ballot, then the city voters should

also get to make their voices heard about the train horn. Both of these issues have already been decided in the past. A majority of Baker County voters, almost 64%, opposed Measure 109 (psilocybin production and use) in November 2020.

Sure the train horn was voted on by Baker City voters back in 2002. That was a long time ago. Things have changed in Baker City since then, or maybe not. Why are certain city council members afraid to involve the voters again?

The city council needs to reverse their decision to involve voters about the ban on psilocybin this Nov. 8, or re-reverse the decision to block city voters from voting on the train horn.

Roger LeMaster  
Baker City

### I joined abortion rights rally because I support freedom

On the July 12th issue of the Herald an article on the front page was titled "Residents protest Roe v. Wade reversal." I was photographed and the caption below the photo stated "a group supporting abortion." I don't agree with the way this was worded because I don't believe this was just for pro-abortion. I was there for women's rights and the freedom of choice. We should not be categorized for the reasons we march and to put it simply "supporting abortion" makes us seem like that is the only reason we showed up. I stand for having the freedom to do what I choose to do with my body, not to be told what that is or is not.

Fern Bruck  
Baker City

## COLUMN

# Webb telescope photos a welcome antidote

### BY CHRISTOPHER COKINOS

Facts these days seem so grim. They feel like storm clouds: all too real and ready to bring more lightning than much-needed rain.

A congressional committee is establishing the pattern of facts around the attempted coup on Jan. 6, 2021, and the "Big Lie" that the presidential election was stolen. The death tolls from endless mass shootings. Reports of hunger, war and democracies threatened.

Why wouldn't we all be scared, spooked and exhausted?

But earlier this month we got a reminder of other kinds of facts, the kind that bring us awe and comfort and context — even joy. The kinds of facts that prompt scientists to break down in tears: facts — made sublime through imagery — of the cosmos itself. Last week we saw the first images from a new space telescope.

Those images and the facts they embody also matter; they are the antidote to the others.

Even a few minutes spent gazing at the mountain range

of gas and dust now dubbed the Cosmic Cliff or the crazy-bright heart of a distant galaxy lit by hot gases devoured by a black hole isn't trivial.

And the longer we look, the better things get.

The James Webb Space Telescope (ah, grim fact: It's named for a homophobic former NASA administrator) offered us infrared views of ancient galaxies swirling like sea creatures around the whirlpool of a gravitational lens. It focused on a foreground galaxy so massive and perfectly placed in our line of sight that it distorts and magnifies distant light. Look at that "deep field" and you can stare back 13 billion years. It showed us a planetary nebula — around a pair of dying stars in the Southern Ring Nebula — surrounded by its puffed-off dust and gases in such crenulated detail that its brown cloud looks almost like the grain of wood.

It's all the stuff of wonder. And wonder, like democracy, like the climate, like our safety, is in a pretty precarious place

right now.

If we need political and social facts to undergird our approach to a better future — and we do — we also need science to keep gifting us with facts that allow us to experience wonder. Without the wonder that comes from discovery, we become enmeshed in the very machinery that produces what ails us. Wonder reminds us of our better selves and that we live in the neighborhood of things that abide, like star clusters and a nebula. We belong to the infinite universe.

Astronomy largely asks little of us (though some Indigenous communities fighting to keep sacred mountains free of observatories necessarily disagree). Yes, the latest space telescope cost \$10 billion (less than an aircraft carrier). But if we spend some of our tax dollars to unlock secrets and vistas, that cost also keeps us rooted in the astonishment of the more-than-human. We learn for the sake of learning — which is, in fact, noble — and we gain more than knowledge

published in peer-reviewed journals.

Facts establish. They can also deepen. The Webb will probe deeper into the origins of the big bang than ever before. It will help us understand the placement and motions of galaxies so we can grasp the evolution of the universe. If that's too abstract, it also will scan alien worlds for signs that the conditions for life as we know it exist elsewhere. It might even find that life. What more profound discovery could there be?

The wonder that we feel looking at these new images can be more than a moment of eye-candy. It provides, if we let it, the peace of cosmic things, a way to connect through beauty and understanding. When our eyes meet the universe we are lifted out of ourselves like a breath, and, then breathing back in, we can be renewed for what comes next.

■ Christopher Cokinos is a poet and writer living in Salt Lake City. He writes frequently for Astronomy.com and is working on a book about the moon.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Getting mad alone won't help Democrats

### Editorial from The New York Daily News:

We can't disagree with the anger aimed at Joe Manchin for dragging the Senate along for months before finally admitting there's no pared-down version of a Build Back Better bill he will support after all. Manchin uses inflation as an excuse but simultaneously says he can't countenance raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans and businesses, which might actually help curb inflation.

It genuinely hurts to see a single member of the majority party stick a shiv in legislation that would've helped middle- and working-class Americans with child-care costs, accelerated rollout of clean energy technology, expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, built gobs of affordable housing and scored a big win

for a Democratic president — all because it would've meant having the richest among us pay the Treasury a bit more. The 2017 Trump tax cuts ballooned deficits and debt, did far less than advertised to stoke economic growth and were enduringly unpopular with the public. They must be targeted, not protected.

What's left of the package — lowering prescription drug prices while expanding Affordable Care Act subsidies — is surely worth sending to Biden's desk. But Democrats should've delivered much more.

Even as we say this, we acknowledge that Manchin, a conservative Democrat from a state Donald Trump won by nearly 40 points in 2020, is critical to the party's Senate majority. Replace

him with a Republican and Democrats lose committee control; they can't confirm judges, which they've so far done at a rapid clip; and they lose all ability, however weak it is, to set the legislative agenda.

Such calculations explain why Democrats were right to decouple the bipartisan infrastructure legislation from Build Back Better last year. In this Washington, you take the victories you can get, when you can get them, or you likely go home empty-handed.

So emotionally, Democrats can and should get as mad as hell at Manchin. Practically, their only constructive response is to regroup and figure out how to notch a win or two before November. Politics remains the art of the possible.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Joe Biden:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

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**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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