

EDITORIAL

Offensive flag marred parade

There are better ways to express disdain for the Biden-Harris administration than flying a flag with the slogan “Jo & The Ho Gotta Go.”

And there are better places to do so than a parade that honors an event which raises money to provide free medical care to children with debilitating conditions.

This has nothing to do with the First Amendment, to be sure.

The purveyors of the float at the end of the Shrine parade on Saturday, Aug. 6 in downtown Baker City had the right to display that flag. About that there is no question. Which is as it should be — indeed, must be.

But along with that sacred right, which is at the heart of what we mean in America when we talk of freedom, the people who flew that flag also had a choice.

They chose badly.

The slogan is offensive. It's a slur against Vice President Kamala Harris, one that suggests the people who brandish it couldn't conceive of a more substantive criticism than a two-letter “word” that rhymes with the president's first name.

But it was the venue that made the flag especially obnoxious.

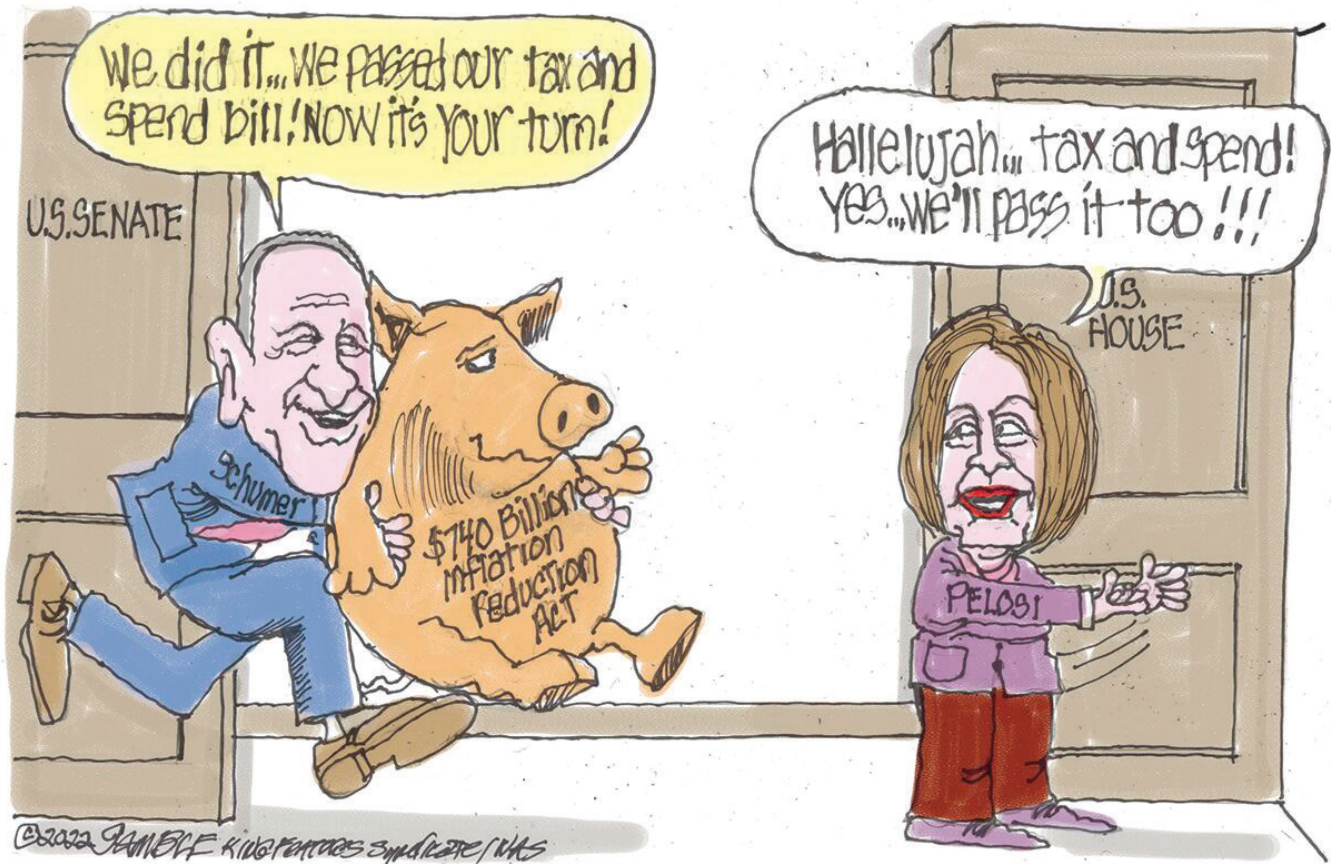
The Shriners, whose efforts on behalf of children and families are beyond reproach, didn't deserve to have their event sullied. Even though the Shriners neither condoned the flag nor had any responsibility for its appearance, it was part of their parade.

It's a pity that those who attached the flag to the float didn't have more respect for the Shriners, their mission and the purpose of the parade.

To reiterate, if you feel compelled to drive around with a flag bearing a moronic slogan, well, you can, thanks to the Bill of Rights, that concise list that continues to ennoble America after nearly two and a half centuries.

But there's nothing noble about marring a parade which celebrates the best of which we are capable, with a message that represents the very opposite.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



YOUR VIEWS

Group still battling to stop the B2H project

July 15th we learned from the Herald that Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett held a meeting with local landowners potentially facing eminent domain by Idaho Power's plans to build the massive 500 kV transmission line — Boardman to Hemingway (B2H). The line would cross five counties in eastern Oregon (approximately 300 miles).

First, I want to commend Commissioner Bennett. Since the beginning of this B2H saga he has fought to preserve the heritage of Baker County and the Oregon Trail, as well as retain the integrity of the tourism destination they have built — the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. Now, he is following through on a promise that he and fellow BC commissioners passed (via a resolution) long ago, that is, if any residents of their county were facing eminent domain that the county would do what they could to help, including filing an amicus (friends of the court) brief in support of the landowners. This latter has not occurred yet but Commissioner Bennett is demonstrating his concern and leadership. Where are the other counties' commissioners? Apparently, not helping their constituents.

Second, I want to clarify a misstatement made at this meeting. The attorney that was quoted in the article was incorrect in his statements about the B2H and the status of the Stop B2H Coalition.

Be assured that the STOP B2H Coalition is alive, well, and still fighting for the public: protecting our lands and habitats, preserving our heritage. The B2H is not a done deal! At the end of August, Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) will be in La Grande to hear 30 appeals in the case. The procedural errors over the past two years,

made by an administrative law judge, have demonstrated a bias against the public and towards the utility and their high-powered attorneys.

EFSC's final decision is expected this fall. If we do not prevail, Stop B2H intends to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court (a judicial court).

For updates and news, go to: www.stopb2h.org. Once we know the times and format of the meetings on Aug 29-31 we will post to our website and our Facebook page.

Fuji Kreider

Secretary/treasurer, Stop B2H Coalition
La Grande

Libertarian candidate excluded from recent debate

I am writing to thank the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association for hosting the first gubernatorial debate of 2022.

I was watching the debate you hosted, and noticed someone was missing. Of the multiple candidates running for governor of Oregon, only three of them were invited to attend. A duly elected Libertarian candidate, R. Leon Noble, had been excluded, and I would like to know why.

Noble earned the nomination of the Libertarian Party of Oregon during the primary election held in June. Unlike other “minor” parties, Libertarians do not need to spend millions of dollars on a primary campaign in order to ensure ballot access.

Could it be that Noble was excluded because, in this day of “pay-to-play” politics, he has yet to raise the millions of dollars? Betsy Johnson is still collecting signatures to appear on the November ballot. Noble has no such hurdle to overcome, yet he was excluded from the debate.

Are you trying to silence candidates who haven't “paid their way” into the

governor's race? Or are you concerned that the people of Oregon might hear a message that disturbs the status quo? Most Oregonians can agree that neither Tina Kotek, Christine Drazan, nor Johnson represent them. Why can't those disenfranchised voters hear from a candidate who will?

For more information on the Libertarian candidate for governor, please visit his website, SetOregonFree.com.

Sharlyn Cox

Legacy media director, Set Oregon Free
Roseburg

Shriners didn't approve offensive flag in parade

It appears that a “Demolition Derby” float was at the rear of the Baker City Parade on August 6. Although the Shrine took up a good portion of the parade units on that day, this was a civic parade. This particular float was not attached to any of the Shrine units or its overview process.

In addition, the Demolition Derby float was previously reviewed by the Baker City Parade Committee prior to its inclusion. The crew on the float apparently changed their external flags and political comments once they were out of the staging area. This changed display apparently caused a number of those attending the parade to be quite offended.

I would just like to state that the Shrine does not support this kind of offensive public statement in any parade. In fact, this type of display is against all Shrine policy.

So, although we had nothing to do with this particular float, we would like to register our strong disapproval of this display.

Carl Robinson

Potentate, Al Kader Shriners
Beaverton

COLUMN

What are Washington and Beijing doing?

BY MICHAEL D. SWAINE

Let's be clear: Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan was not a great opportunity to show America's support for the island; it did not chasten Beijing to exert greater restraint toward Taipei. To the contrary — countless China and foreign policy specialists predicted it would produce a major, likely sustained, coercive Chinese reaction that will deepen our current slide toward conflict in the Sino-U.S. relationship.

And guess what? That is exactly what is now happening.

Pelosi's trip to Taiwan was a stunt, likely intended as a last hurrah before leaving office as speaker of the House, designed to cement her legacy as a tough opponent of China and upholder of human rights.

Well, good for her. The only problem is that by traveling to Taiwan she has given Beijing an ideal opportunity to exercise a combined force simulation of an attack on each of Taiwan's ports and put virtually the last nail in the coffin of the U.S. policy

that has helped sustain peace in Asia for decades: the One China policy.

As a direct result of Pelosi's trip, Beijing has created six maritime and air closure zones circling the island, each in a strategic location near Taiwan ports, etc.; started firing missiles into those zones, some directly over Taiwan; deployed two carrier battle groups from the north and south toward the island; shut down numerous government and commercial web sites in Taiwan and suspended critical exports and imports to and from Taiwan.

This makes the last major crisis of this nature, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis, look pretty tame in comparison — and more is no doubt to come. China has vastly more capabilities, and hence options, to create pain and tension on Taiwan and concern in Washington. And the U.S. will not be able to successfully halt this process, as it did last time, by deploying two carrier battle groups of its own to the area and deploying harsh rhetoric.

Today, the stakes are appreciably much higher than they were in 1995-96. The Sino-U.S. relationship is far more strained. China is now viewed in Washington as a power-hungry state, seeking to seize Taiwan in order to dominate Asia; from Beijing, the U.S. is seen as needing to defend its eroding primacy in the region by keeping Taiwan from China. Both sides view Taiwan in ominous strategic terms, suggesting that neither is inclined to make concessions or strive for mutual accommodation or a clear off-ramp. To the contrary, both seem to think that only never-ending levels of military deterrence and threats will avert a conflict, with little if anything in the way of assurances regarding the One China policy or Beijing's commitment to peaceful unification.

These are not the ingredients for a stable peace. Rising tensions could cause Beijing to steadily increase its pressure on Taiwan, establishing a new status quo of constant confrontation and demands for concessions;

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in response, the U.S. could accept the demands now emanating from Congress and elsewhere to declare Taiwan a non-NATO ally and deploy U.S. forces near and perhaps on Taiwan on a more or less permanent basis.

This is a recipe for conflict and disaster. What is the ostensible purpose of walking further down this dangerous path? Sure, Washington and Beijing both regard Taiwan to varying degrees as a vital national security interest — linked to Chinese nation-

alism and regime legitimacy in Beijing and the credibility of America's word in Washington. But neither nation faces an imperative to “resolve” the issue of Taiwan's status at the risk of a major conflagration that could escalate to nuclear war. But they do have an imperative to neutralize the issue as much as possible as a source of conflict.

So, rather than sleepwalk toward conflict, Beijing and Washington need to wake up, get a grip, find two senior interlocutors who have some credibility on both sides (such as Hank Paulsen and Henry Kissinger or Dai Bingguo or Cui Tiankai) and start discussing off-ramps, in which both show some willingness to make concessions. The alternatives — a never-ending, increasingly precarious arms race and brinkmanship, or a supposedly limited conflict intended to instill caution on both sides — pose far greater risks.

■ Michael D. Swaine is director of the East Asia Program for Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

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 Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

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

State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

in Council Chambers. Councilors Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Kenyon Damschen, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Jonathan Cannon, city manager; Ty Duby, police chief; Sean Lee, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefania Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Chris Hawkins, Andrew Bryan, Travis Cook, Jessica Dougherty, Julie Huntington.