

Public square doesn't always get protection

In 1937, Frank Hague, the mayor of Jersey City, banned the Committee for Industrial Organization from gathering in a public place to talk about unions. He called them communists.

The CIO challenged the ban, backed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The case eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court found for the CIO in 1939. The ruling became known as the public forum doctrine. It helped prevent the public from being muzzled by the government under the First Amendment.

The public has no such protection in being muzzled by private companies. If Twitter wants to ban former President Donald Trump for life, it may do so. If Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube want to ban you from their platforms, they can.

Maybe you wouldn't mind. Maybe you would even be better off. But the big social platforms have created unprecedented ways for people to communicate nationally and worldwide. That also gives them unprecedented power when they decide to shut people or groups out. If the government did that, there could be a challenge in court. If Twitter does it, good luck.

Of course, the big social media platforms are not the only games in town. There are lesser-known alternatives. New ones will spring

up. Still, getting gagged by the big ones certainly curtails reach.

You may believe Trump deserved to be shut down. Claims of massive voter fraud in the November election have not been supported by facts in court. It was also odd for him to tell the rioters who assaulted the Capitol to go home and, in nearly the same breath, "we love you, you're very special."

Social media platforms have long blocked postings they found offensive. But if they can just turn off a sitting president, is something out of balance? Who else could they shut down? They have become the de facto editors of ideas on a global scale. Newspapers and other more traditional media have their own struggles with such issues. They just don't play at the same level.

As the ACLU said this year, more than 80 years after the Hague case, "...(I)t should concern everyone when companies like Facebook and Twitter wield the unchecked power to remove people from platforms that have become indispensable for the speech of billions — especially when political realities make those decisions easier."

Health care bill needs explanation of details

No bill this session of the Oregon Legislature may be more powerful in its seeming simplicity and brevity than Senate Joint Resolution 12.

It states: "It is the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident of Oregon has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right. ... (That) must be balanced against the public interest in funding public schools and other essential public services."

There were enough votes to pass this proposed constitutional amendment onto voters in 2020. It died, though, due to the Republican walk-outs. It may indeed move to the ballot this time. In many ways it's a tribute to former state Rep. Mitch Greenlick, who repeatedly tried to pass it.

The logic behind it is also sim-

ple. You can't expect Oregonians to work and care for their families if they are not healthy. The Oregon Health Plan coupled with the Affordable Care Act are nearly comprehensive in ensuring one way or another that people get health care. Why is this step necessary? It's a rock-solid guarantee, advocates for the measure say.

It does come with questions about costs and explanations of how any additional services would be delivered. Those were not discussed during a work session on Monday. They were not discussed earlier in February. The legislative fiscal analysis of the resolution does not even attempt to do so.

Let's be clear. We want everyone to get access to health care. But when does the Legislature discuss the details of potential costs of this resolution or how it will be carried out?

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



My Nickel's Worth

Walton Lake project threatens values

Critical context for the U.S. Forest Service logging plans for the Walton Lake area on the Ochoco National Forest is not reaching the public through the Forest Service or the media. Missing information includes: Naturally occurring root rot is widespread throughout fir forest in the Ochoco, yet the Forest Service is using it as an excuse to clear-cut 35 acres in a popular recreation area. The agency admits in project files that this would look like a clear-cut and change the character of the area but publicly calls it "sanitation." The Forest Service has successfully been using hazard tree felling for decades at Walton Lake to increase public safety.

No one is opposing legitimate hazard tree felling. The campground has been kept open through hazard tree felling and posting warning signs around the affected area. The Forest Service acknowledges that forest visitors assume risk from natural hazards. Many of the trees planned for logging are not infected with root rot. The Forest Service signed what we believe is an illegal logging contract prior to a final decision. They marked and flagged the clear-cut area for logging and slapped a closure on it with fines for violation of \$1,000 for an individual and \$10,000 for an organization. The Forest Service plans to log an estimated 500 old-growth firs and artificially convert the area to ponderosa pine and larch seedlings. The logging would violate Forest Plan standards for recreational and scenic values. Please tell the Forest Service your concerns.

—Karen Coulter is the director of the Blue Mountain Biodiversity Project.

Wyden protects the environment

I applaud Sen. Ron Wyden for working to strike the right balance between safeguarding our natural wonders and protecting communities from wildfire in the River Democracy Act, which he recently introduced with Sen. Jeff Merkley.

As a volunteer wildland firefighter at Crooked River Ranch and steward with the Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area, I work frequently around two Wild and Scenic Rivers, the Deschutes and the Crooked. I am grateful that these two extraordinary rivers are protected for recreation, wildlife and clean water.

I am also appreciative that Sen. Wyden is helping us move forward with thinning juniper trees and other vegetation along these Wild and Scenic Rivers to reduce the risk of wildfire. These fuels-reduction projects, which are the result of Sen. Wyden's Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act, will create a safer environment for firefighters, and reduce the chance of wildfires destroying homes and threatening lives on the ranch. Thanks to safeguards Sen. Wyden included in his bill in response to community concerns, these fuels treatments will also improve the health of native plants and wildlife.

Wild and Scenic River designation has provided the flexibility to protect the remarkable values of the Deschutes and Crooked rivers while also allowing for fire-risk reduction activities. I look forward to seeing more of our vital rivers and creeks here in Central Oregon and across the state receive this protection

thanks to the River Democracy Act.
—Jeff Scheetz, Crooked River Ranch

Pass the carbon dividend

The Bulletin issue on Feb. 26 had a guest column offered by H. Seidler and M. Reynolds that is important to all our lives here and globally. They mentioned a key bipartisan policy called the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, which Rep. Ted Deutch is looking to reinstate in the U.S. House this spring. Currently, in Oregon, the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment is having hearings on the Senate Joint Memorial 5 which, if brought to the floor out of this committee and is passed in both houses, requests the U.S. Congress to support and pass the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

The latter is a well thought out piece of legislation that, simply put, applies fees on carbon emission sources (for example at mining, drilling sites), places those revenues into a trust fund in the U.S. Treasury and using the IRS disburses those funds monthly and equally to you with a half share to each of your children under 19. Check out this article for a fuller summary, <https://out rider.org/climate-change/articles/carbon-fee-dividend>, and if you agree this is good for the future of this nation, help apply pressure by asking your state legislators to pass SJM 5. If inclined, contact Rep. Cliff Bentz and Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley. Let's get attention on this act, help get it instated, passed and made into law in 2021.

—Susan Cobb, Sisters

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
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Focusing on density will erode Bend's charm and character

BY ALLAN BRUCKNER

The Bend Chamber of Commerce sponsored a discussion on Feb. 11 with new city Councilors Rita Schenkelberg and Melanie Kebler and City Manager Eric King on the major issues facing the city. A principle conclusion was that the City Council will place a "huge emphasis on planning for the future" (Kebler) to "create the community we want to see" (King).

But how does council determine what the citizenry wants the city to look like? One difficulty is that nearly all the City Council is from the 30-to-45-year age group. But this age group represents less than one-third of our population. Another third is older: Do they want the same thing? And a quarter are under 18: Do they want to live in compact apartment dwellings or would single-family homes with a yard be more desirable for them?

Without knowing what everyone wants, it is notable that two planning theories are now irrevocably changing the landscape in Bend. First

is the push to develop huge apartments regardless of the impact on the neighborhood. Examples: development of the former Ray's Food Place site and the development on Colorado Avenue overlooking McKay Park. Both are out of perspective with the established neighborhood, and the second will undoubtedly cause major parking problems for park users.

The big push for more large apartments fails to consider other unintended consequences. Traffic impacts will be substantial on central Bend's old inefficient road system. Such developments will overwhelm local parks with no land to build new ones. Historically the city has been about 65% single-family dwellings. Now the push is to develop over 60% apartments. But it is almost universally accepted that a high percentage of owner-occupied dwelling units is very impactful in developing a stable civic population, and it allows citizens to invest in their financial future, as housing is by far the largest asset for most citizens. Promotion of homeowner-



Bruckner

GUEST COLUMN

Perhaps one might consider not just today's in-vogue planning theory, but also what citizens want. Do the outdoor-loving people who live here, and are moving here, want to live in massive multistory apartments or subdivisions with no yards, or might they continue to prefer some private space?

ship needs to be a priority for the city.

A second very concerning trend is how our new subdivisions are being developed. As Cylvia Hayes recently wrote in The Bulletin "The huge trees are gone. The birds are gone. No deer in sight. Instead just bulldozers and giant backhoes leveling and flattening the earth." This may refer to the eyesore on Reed Market at 15th Street, but it is happening all over town. I know this is partly due to high land costs, partly due to land use laws, but also partly due to our planners em-

phasis on compacting the city with knee-jerk opposition to any horizontal growth. This is having the effect of transforming the character of Bend with bland subdivisions having none of the charm of the older areas that makes Bend special. This is rapidly uglifying our town, making parts of Bend look like suburban Las Vegas.

So much planning today is group-think centered around the current in-vogue textbook planning to concentrate everything in the center, despite our traffic problems. Planning

trends come and go. Twenty years ago Bend was trying to build a second city center out in Juniper Ridge. This promotion was dead in 5 years, but cost the city millions. Current planning will drastically and irreversibly change Bend. Plus we are now in a pandemic, with predictions that more might come. Many are deciding that concentrated housing is the wrong approach.

Perhaps one might consider not just today's in-vogue planning theory, but also what citizens want. Do the outdoor-loving people who live here, and are moving here, want to live in massive multistory apartments or subdivisions with no yards, or might they continue to prefer some private space? Bend represents just over 10% of the county area. The heretical question: Would expanding to 15% ruin our Central Oregon playground? Or would it help lower land prices, and thus lower housing costs, and thus give more residents the opportunity to own their own homes? What is best for families and their children?

■ Allan Bruckner is a former mayor of Bend.