

## Jefferson County vote will likely determine future of fire, rescue

**D**ial 911, and seconds count. There's not necessarily an optimal way to run fire and ambulance services. But Jefferson County voters face an important choice in the May election: Should their fire service and ambulance service merge?

That vote is not on the ballot. A vote for candidates on the Emergency Medical Services Board is.

One slate of candidates have been on the Emergency Medical Services Board for years and do not want a merger: John Curnutt, Louise Muir and Patricia Neff. Another slate of candidates — Mike Ahern, Janet Brown and Joe Krenowicz — support consolidation.

We can't say authoritatively that a merger would improve service. There are reasons to believe that might be so.

Listen to 911 calls. If you just listen to a couple 911 calls, it can give you a very distorted picture of what happens. Pick out a few recordings in any 911 district in the country and we'd bet you can find some that didn't go smoothly.

That said, we'll tell you about one in Jefferson County. It was a call about a man in the unincorporated community of Gateway who needed medical help. He had no pulse. Gateway is about 11 miles north of Madras. 911 had to get clarification about who would respond. The two agencies — fire and EMS — operate on different frequencies. If these two agencies were consolidated, it's hard

to imagine there would have had to be a phone call to straighten it out.

That same theme — better coordination of response between the two agencies and 911 — was brought up in an analysis completed just a few years ago. The study funded by the public looked at the possibility of a fire/EMS merger. The 2019 consultant report was clear: "The Jefferson County Fire District and the Jefferson County Emergency Medical Services District should move forward with seeking voter approval to form a single emergency service district."

Coordination would improve. Would it save money or even cost less? That's not as likely. Some management and administrative functions could perhaps be consolidated. But it doesn't necessarily mean that a consolidated department would mean a cut in taxes. The 2019 report identified existing funding challenges that the districts already faced.

The key issue is to ensure Jefferson County residents get the emergency medical and fire service they deserve. Vote for the incumbents on the EMS board and there's little hope of change.

## COCC should fight like heck to grow enrollment

**C**entral Oregon Community College's enrollment has been dropping.

It's not at all reflective of the quality and incredible bargain of education at COCC. A student at COCC can get a great education and save a lot of money.

Colleges and community colleges have generally seen declining enrollment over the last few years. That began before the pandemic. The peak for COCC was about in the 2012-13 school year. Since then full-time credit enrollment declined by about 46% from 6,633.

What we found very interesting about the COCC board meeting last week, was how bullish the university administration is about the future. The school's budget is built around an assumption of a 4% growth rate in enrollment for the next few years.

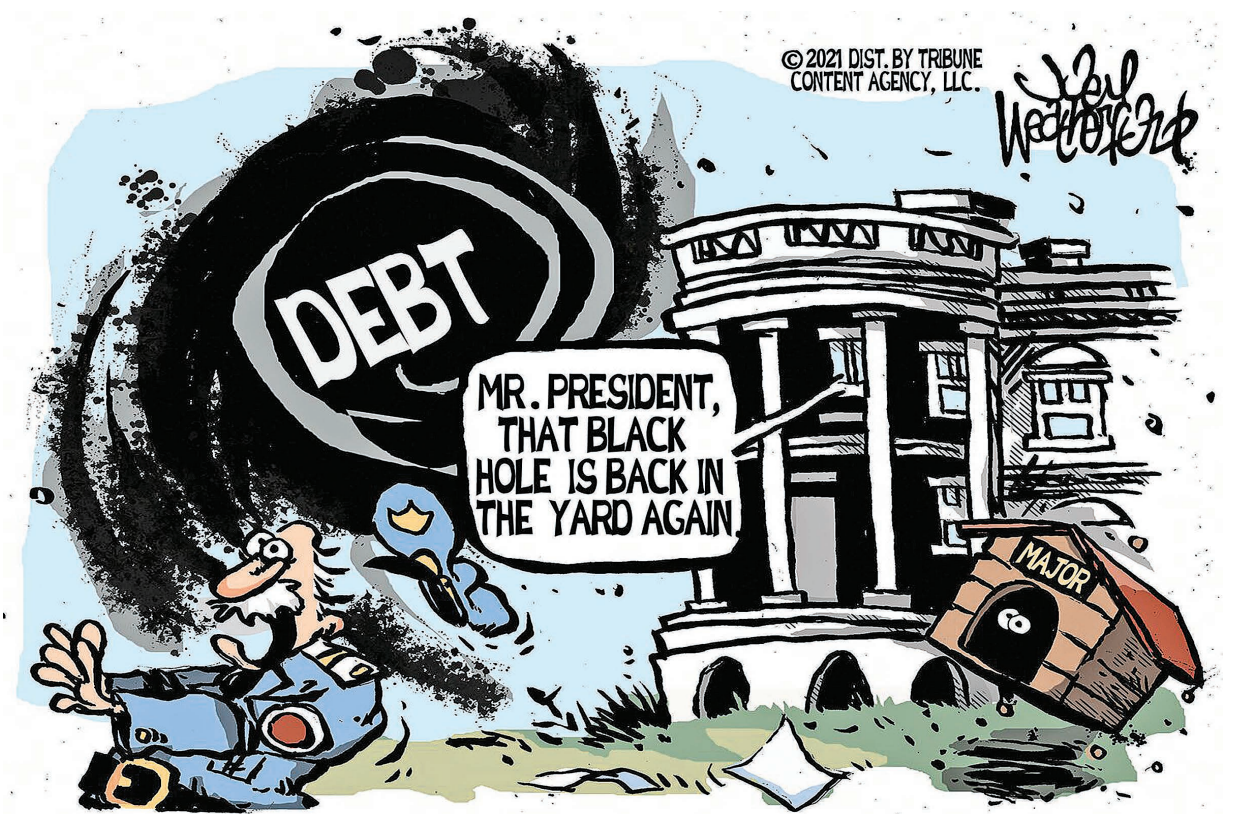
The discussion came up during a budget presentation, so the first thing we wondered about were the

numbers in the red. COCC's budget projection already puts it at a projected ending fund balance of negative \$4.1 million for the 2021-23 budget period. It pretty much grows out of it by 2023-25. So what would happen if the 4% enrollment growth didn't materialize?

It wouldn't mean disaster. The institution would adjust. It has reserves. And as COCC board member Bruce Abernethy pointed out, the numbers can always look worse than any reality the college ever confronts because COCC budgets so conservatively.

The relative financial situation of COCC is not the most important consideration. Its students and potential students are.

Community colleges are where many minority students and low-income students access higher education and more training. For their sake, we certainly hope COCC's growth is 4% or more.



## 'Cancel culture' wars are useless

BY ALYSSA ROSENBERG

The Washington Post

**E**very day brings a new salvo in the battle over "cancel culture." Disney cuts ties with conservative actress Gina Carano. The guardians of Dr. Seuss' legacy disavow some of his books. A low-level USA Today editor gets fired for a tweet declaring all mass shooters are white men. But it's exhausting living in a perpetual state of conflict that does little to advance anyone's actual political goals. If conservatives are serious about protecting a broad range of public expression, and liberals sincerely want new norms to take root, there are grounds for a truce.

Consider five starting points for such a framework:

First, make it harder for skittish employers to fire or blackball people over their political views.

Carano's dismissal from "The Mandalorian" over a series of inflammatory social media posts spurred conservative complaints about Hollywood's liberal orthodoxy. So why not work to narrow the morality clauses used to keep Hollywood and sports stars in ideological line, and strengthen the protections for speech in collective bargaining agreements? There's plenty in this principle for liberals, too, as the Colin Kaepernick controversy demonstrated.

Similarly, both left and right frequently argue that academia has become inhospitable, whether to conservatives who question the rigor of certain disciplines or to professors who criticize the policies of the Israeli government. The solution to both sets of complaints is to do more to defend faculty from firing and to prevent politicians and donors from monkeying

with tenure decisions. People across the political spectrum should stand up to a Kansas effort to make it easier to suspend or terminate professors, including those with tenure. Newspapers and magazines, too, would do well to set expansive standards for what ideas their employees can explore — and make clear they'll defend writers and editors who come under coordinated attack from the right or the left.

Second, liberals should agree it's good for troublesome works to be available, while conservatives should accept context and content labels.

Keeping works in print and available in digital libraries would undercut complaints about censorship. A school might decide not to use certain Dr. Seuss books, but parents could still seek them out. It's no hardship to skip a preface that acknowledges and analyzes Dr. Seuss' use of racist tropes — or to fast-forward past a content warning on a TV show. And in the entertainment world, keeping controversial material available in box sets and streaming services should be a liberal goal. Why let stars and companies launder their reputations by making problematic old works disappear?

Third, put a statute of limitations on cruel, stupid things people say as children and teenagers.

The ninth graders who made headlines in Texas last week for discussing buying and selling their Black classmates deserve whatever discipline their school system doled out. It's entirely appropriate that Alexi McCammond, a former Axios reporter who was named the new top editor of Teen Vogue, apologized in 2019 for ugly, anti-Asian remarks she made in 2011 as a teenager. But as repulsive as this sort of behavior

is, there ought to be a limit on how far such incidents follow young people into adulthood.

Fourth, liberals and conservatives should seek to end corporate welfare in exchange for corporate freedom of speech.

States and cities have long thrown money and tax breaks at corporations to get businesses to relocate factories and headquarters into new jurisdictions. Though some locales have gotten wise to the dubious economic benefits of these deals, Republicans disgruntled by the liberal positions some companies have taken are trying to use these subsidies to bring big business to heel. Here's a better idea: Governments should stop showering companies with cash, and stop caring what bandwagons those companies hop on. Consumers who want to affirm their politics when choosing a particular soft drink or airline can make those decisions for themselves.

Finally, everyone should think seriously about redemption.

Social media pile-ons and professional death sentences become the easy default but accomplish little. Conservatives get nothing of material value out of a libertarian think tank staffer losing his job over a dumb tweet. It's not clear what the staff at Teen Vogue won for themselves in not having McCammond as their boss.

Human urges to judge and condemn are hard to rein in. But there are choices we can make about how we use our outrage. Some of them can make the world better in the long term — instead of just making us feel smug in the moment.

■ *Alyssa Rosenberg writes about the intersection of culture and politics for The Washington Post.*

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## Bernie Madoff left behind only misery and heartache

BY JOE NOCERA

Bloomberg

**B**ernie Madoff is dead, and it is unlikely that even the people who were once closest to him will shed a tear. Not his wife, Ruth, whose life was destroyed when Madoff's Ponzi scheme was revealed in December 2008. Not his brother, Peter, Madoff's former chief compliance officer, who spent nearly a decade in prison after pleading guilty to a variety of charges. Not his niece Shana, Peter Madoff's daughter, who also worked in the compliance department. And certainly not his daughters-in-law or his grandchildren; both his sons died after he went to prison, one from suicide and the other from cancer.

By all appearances, Madoff loved his family deeply. He once held his son Mark's hand for the duration of a dinner because Mark was going through a difficult divorce, according to Town & Country. But that turned out to be just another fraud. He had to know that once his decadeslong Ponzi

scheme came to light, it would be ruinous not just to his firm's clients but to his family. The word "sociopath" is overused these days, but it fits Madoff to a tee. He had neither empathy nor a conscience. That's the mentality required to rip off thousands of people who are depending on you.

Madoff's Ponzi scheme is what's called affinity fraud — "the pleasant-sounding term criminologists use when one member of a close-knit, trusting community exploits that trust to steal from others in the group," as Madoff biographer Diana Henriques put it. Madoff was Jewish, and his community were his fellow Jews.

Some, like Fred Wilpon, the former owner of the New York Mets, were wealthy. But many were not. Middle-class Jews gave him their money in the belief that their growing nest eggs would pay for their children's college tuition or their retirement. Madoff was adept at gaining people's trust. When they discovered that those gains were nothing more than an il-

lusion, they were crushed. I once met a TSA guard at the Las Vegas airport. She was elderly, and after she looked at my driver's license, she told me how much she missed New York.

"What's keeping you from moving back?" I asked her flippantly. "Madoff," she said. "I don't have any money anymore."

In the months after Madoff's arrest, I was pretty unsympathetic to the plight of those who had lost money with Madoff. I thought they should have realized that it's implausible for a money manager to generate the kind of steady returns that Madoff did.

But then someone showed me a statement from Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC. I was astonished. It was extremely detailed, with a long list of securities that the client supposedly owned, along with monthly gains or losses. It must have been arduous for those helping Madoff commit the fraud to compile — and have it add up to a small gain each month. But if you were a rela-

tively unsophisticated investor, could you truly be expected to even suspect that the statement was fraudulent? Unlikely.

In real dollars, the Madoff Ponzi scheme lost around \$19 billion. According to the trustee for the Madoff estate, \$14.4 billion has been recovered so far — an extraordinary accomplishment. But that does not suggest that Madoff's former clients are close to being made whole. You see, when you add in the fictitious gains that the victims thought they had, the amount comes to more than \$64 billion.

Even if the trustee, Irving Picard, were to recover the entire \$19 billion, the victims would still be out \$45 billion. Though that money never truly existed, it was real in the minds of the victims who were counting on it.

Last summer, at the age of 82, Madoff petitioned the court for a compassionate release, something the Federal Bureau of Prisons has begun to grant elderly prisoners who are sick. In

2009, he was sentenced to 150 years in prison. But now, he said, he was terminally ill with kidney failure and was likely to die within 18 months.

Bernie Ebbers, the former chief executive officer of WorldCom, had been granted a compassionate release six months earlier. Madoff's brother, Peter, had spent a portion of his sentence in home confinement. Former Donald Trump aides Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen also finished their sentences at home.

But not Madoff. "When I sentenced Mr. Madoff in 2009, it was fully my intent that he live out the rest of his life in prison," U.S. Circuit Judge Denny Chin said.

"Nothing has happened in the 11 years since to change my thinking." Less than a year later, he died alone — no family, no friends, no former colleagues. Which, given all the harm he caused to so many people, is exactly what he deserved.

■ *Joe Nocera is a Bloomberg columnist covering business.*