

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
Gerry O'Brien Editor
Richard Coe Editorial Page Editor

Give Oregon a shot of more normalcy

We want wearing masks to be over. We want more normalcy in restaurants, in stores, in backyard parties and in schools.

And Oregon is so wonderfully close. We just need several more thousand people to get vaccinated to get us to the 70% adult, state-wide vaccination rate that Gov. Kate Brown set as the trigger for dropping most restrictions.

We can debate if 70% is the right number. We can debate as some argued Tuesday night before the Bend-La Pine School Board that the restrictions should already be gone.

But vaccines are the most potent weapon we have against this virus. They work. Cases in Central Oregon have dropped fairly steadily since May.

And even if someone does contract COVID who has been vaccinated, the severity of the illness is usually reduced.

If you happen to be someone still on the fence about the vaccine, well, here's one more thing to think about. Your employer can require all workers entering a workplace to be vac-

inated against COVID-19. There do have to be reasonable accommodations for those who have medical reasons or a religious belief, but basically employers can require it. That's a decision by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Perhaps that will be challenged and overturned. Those are the rules now.

The worrying thing about the 70% number is there are pockets of Oregon and of the country where vaccination rates are low. In Malheur County for instance, less than 30% of the people are vaccinated. Some areas of Jefferson County are that low as well. At this point, that's more about a choice than lack of available vaccine.

Masks are going to come off. We are going to get more back to normal. But people are still going to end up in the hospital. Gasping for air. Removed from those they love. And some will die.

Please get vaccinated.



Submitted photo

This is the building under construction at Bend High School that is named after Robert Maxwell, Medal of Honor recipient and former teacher.

A pleasing tribute to Robert Maxwell

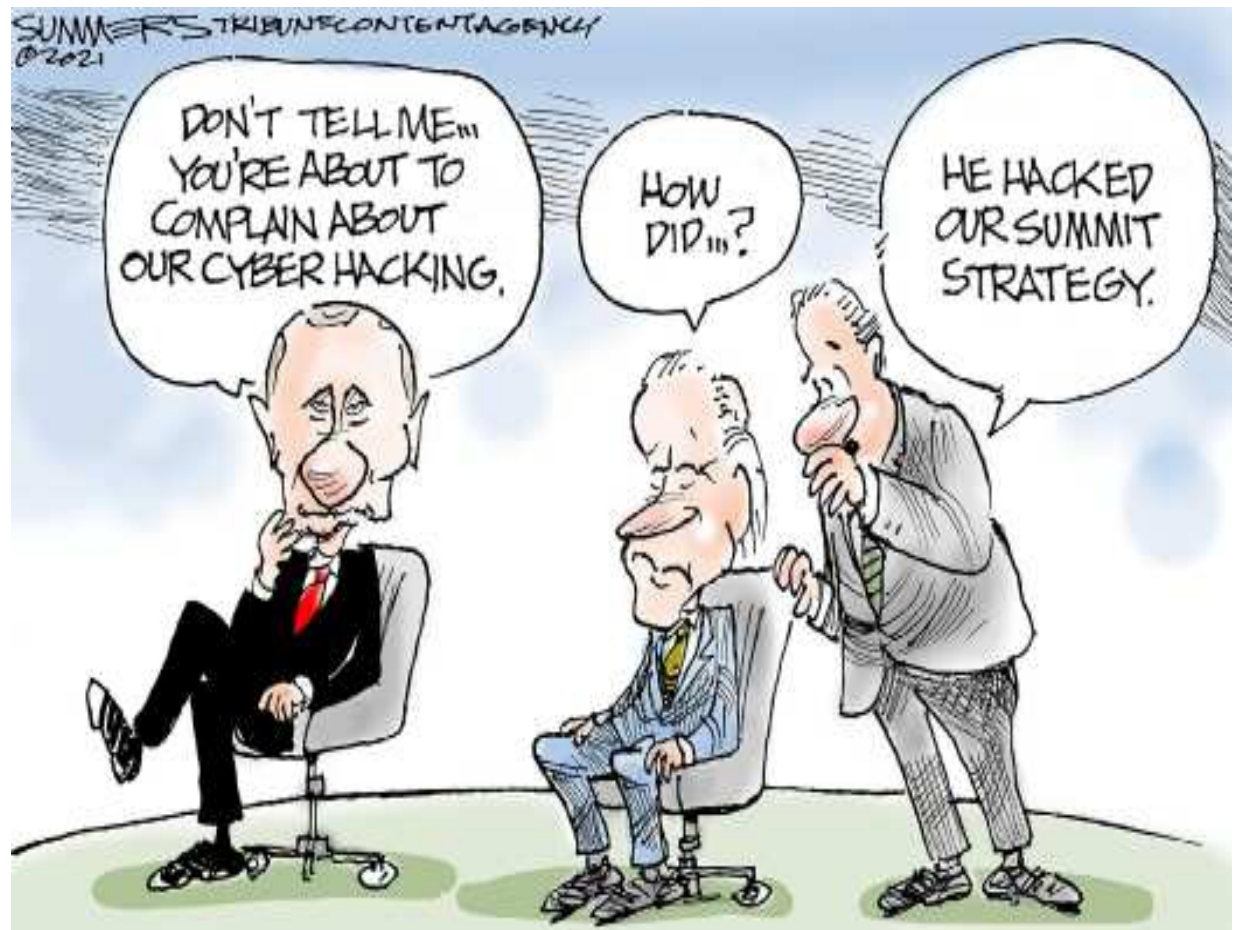
The Bend-La Pine School Board voted Tuesday night to name a new building at Bend High School after Robert Maxwell, recipient of the Medal of Honor and a longstanding teacher.

It's a deserved tribute for a World War II hero and a man to admire.

The school board had to waive a rule to do it. Board policy is that a school or a building cannot be named after a person unless they have been dead five years. That policy is in place in part to protect the district from having to go through

what could be an embarrassing process of a name change if a person was later discovered to have some dark secrets.

We thought the district should have named what is now called Caldera High School after Maxwell in 2020. After all, if it's OK to waive the rules for a building now, why wasn't it OK to waive the rules when naming that school? We suppose you could argue a school name is more significant, so this is less of a risk. It's also less of a tribute to Maxwell, though still a pleasing one.



Residents should get involved in Bend's neighborhood associations

BY STEPHEN KATZ

In the city of Bend there are 13 neighborhood associations (NA) officially recognized by the Bend City Council and each provided an annual budget to spend on such things as a website and an annual general meeting. Each NA is assigned a city councilor as a liaison between the council and the NA.

Each NA sends a representative to something known as the Neighborhood Leadership Alliance (NLA), which meets once a month. The current chair of the NLA is Hans Jorgensen from the Awbrey Butte NA. The NLA periodically reports its considered positions on various issue to the City Council. This is an officially recognized group.

Each NA also has a land use chair who represents the NA at the Land Use Committee meetings whose current chair is Deb DeWeese. This group is also officially recognized by the council and issues reports as necessary.

Finally, there is the Neighborhood Association Roundtable (NART), which is an informal grouping of representatives from each NA.

It is not officially sanctioned and does not issue reports. The leader of this group is Joette Storm, who is from the Boyd Acres NA. In this

NEIGHBORHOOD FORUM

group the NAs can sort of "let their collective hair down" and speak very candidly about pending local issues and their frustrations with having those issues addressed appropriately by city government.

Out of discussions at NART came the idea of approaching The Bulletin for an occasional column for NA leaders to directly discuss issues publicly without any filter. I can assure you that we do not speak with a single voice; there are definitely a range of views on different problems of which there are many (and most overlap with each other):

Water; wildfire; illegal fireworks; Mirror Pond; transportation; parking; legacy trees; HB 2001 and middle housing; affordable housing; rapid growth; homeless/houseless; policing; effective bilateral communication between the bureaucracy and concerned residents; public notice of proposed projects; racism; density; city revenues; building codes; pandemic; schools; septic tanks; land use planning; urban growth boundary; tourism; recreation; transient rentals, the dump; the railroad; preserving a small town ambience; library expansion, parkway improve-

ments, downtown street closure(s), the railroad and many more.

As Bend morphs from a lumber mill town into a real city, our part-time City Council will find it difficult to grapple with all of these many issues; thus it imperative that you, the residents of this community, speak out — not only about identifying problems but helping find solutions.

Civic responsibility does not end with Election Day voting and simply leaving all decisions to the City Council. If you are concerned about the future of Bend, attend your local NA board meetings — and even better, become a member — some NAs lack a full board. The squeaking wheel gets the oil.

In order to provide a more effective outreach to the Bend community and a greater discussion of topical issues, on June 2 we met with the editorial staff of The Bulletin; the paper has agreed to periodically publish essays written by NA leaders. Each essay represents the opinion of the writer and not necessarily of anyone else. Disagree with an essay? Write a letter to the editor!

I suspect The Bulletin will welcome your additional input; after all, its staff resides here too.

■ Stephen Katz is acting chair of the Southeast Bend Neighborhood Association. He first visited Central Oregon in 1978 and took up full time residence in 2012.



Katz

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's 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 and 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
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

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.

Both parties are needed to strengthen Oregon elections

BY STATE REPS. JACK ZIKA AND JULIE FAHEY

In 2016, Oregon made history by creating Automatic Voter Registration at DMV offices, automatically forwarding eligible citizen information from the DMV to elections officials for voter registration. Our first-of-its-kind "motor voter" law increased access to the ballot by registering thousands of Oregonians to vote. It set a new standard in list maintenance, ensuring that voter rolls were kept as up-to-date as possible, so that each mail ballot reached the voter it was intended for, and elections officials could focus more time on administering elections rather than manually entering data from thousands of hand-written forms.



Zika



Fahey

Since then, Oregon has administered some of the most secure, cost-efficient, and accessible elections in the nation. But now, with five years of experience with the new AVR system, we believe that bipartisan action is needed to make some common-sense upgrades to our voter registration system.

While our current system works well, we should not be complacent about something as important as our elections. There are two key barriers that prevent our voter registration system from working as well as it should: (1) right now, automatic registration and updates are only available to Oregonians who have contact with the DMV; and (2) Oregonians who register online must

GUEST COLUMN

have a state issued ID, even though state IDs are not required for registration by paper forms. That means that the 10% of Oregonians who are eligible to vote but only have a U.S. passport, out-of-state ID, or have not yet gotten a driver's license must print off a paper form, fill it out by hand, and either mail it in or drop it off in-person at their local elections office.

House Bill 2499 is a chance for Republicans, Democrats, and independents to come together and make common-sense improvements to our voter registration system that will save election workers time and money and further secure our elections. The bill will do two things: first, it will allow the address data from our annual state income tax returns to be shared with election officials to identify changes of

address for updating registration records, just as DMV records and Postal Service records are. Second, it will allow Oregonians without a DMV-issued ID to upload an image of their signature and register online with the last four digits of their Social Security number, the same information they provide on the paper form in order to be registered. These are small changes that will ultimately level the playing field for eligible voters, and help our elections function more smoothly.

Both parties can agree that there is nothing about the act of handwriting information onto a form that makes our systems more secure — that's why you can get a mortgage online, buy a car online, and even file court documents online. Voter registration should be no different. Voters should be able to utilize the same proof of identity that is verified on a paper form through our online systems, and

we should continue to strive to expand AVR to additional agencies. Oregonians of all political affiliations deserve to have accurate and up-to-date information on the voter rolls.

This is a tense time in our democracy, and many feel that there is no room to cooperate in securing our elections while preserving access. But we do not need to compromise on our goals in order to find common ground. Legislators from both parties have worked together across the aisle this session in states like Delaware, Louisiana, Maine and Kentucky to take commonsense steps to improve election administration, and Oregon should join the list. Let's pass HB 2499, and show the country that Oregon continues to run the most secure, safe and accessible elections in America.

■ State Rep. Jack Zika is a Republican representing Redmond. State Rep. Julie Fahey is a Democrat representing Eugene.