

## EDITORIALS &amp; OPINIONS

The Bulletin  
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright  
Gerry O'Brien  
Richard Coe  
Publisher  
Editor  
Editorial Page EditorLack of housing  
limits success of  
housing vouchers

Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley announced a few days ago that the Central Oregon Regional Housing Authority will receive more than \$1.2 million in housing vouchers to ensure more families have a home they can afford.

It's coming at a great time and will help meet a great need. The vouchers can be used to help people who are homeless, about to be homeless, fleeing domestic violence and more. It should mean 96 vouchers for individuals and families.

You don't need a study to tell you such vouchers can make a real difference in a person's life. A voucher can end homelessness. It can help lift people out of poverty. It can alter the arc of a child's life. Across the country more than 5 million people in 2.3 million low-income families use such vouchers.

The challenge in Central Oregon, though, is finding housing so people can even use the voucher. Some meet the income requirements for a voucher but can't find housing to use it. We don't know how successful Housing Works, the regional housing authority, will be in finding housing for every voucher. David Brandt, the executive director of Housing Works, told us his agency faces the same struggle with finding housing as almost anyone does in Central Oregon. The vacancy rate is so low, even for apartments.

A couple weeks ago, Bulletin reporter Brenna Visser wrote about Dawn Kane. Kane was 49 and had lived in a tent along Emerson Street in Bend for the past nine months. She said she has been unable to work

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after suffering a brain injury. She is nearly blind. Kane said she qualified for a housing voucher. Housing could not be found.

People do have to qualify for housing vouchers. Then the search is on. In some communities, people have 60 days to find housing. Brandt said here it is 120 days. And if they do find suitable housing, the voucher holder does have to pay about 30% of their income toward rent. Once they have that home, they may stay indefinitely. They may lose it if their income goes up too much.

Even more housing vouchers for Central Oregon would be better. But the lack of available housing is the critical problem limiting how successful the voucher program will be.

What should Oregon's  
graduation requirements be?

For the next three school years, the Legislature is aiming to remove some high school graduation requirements. Students won't be required to demonstrate proficiency in math and writing skills at grade level.

Should Oregon have such requirements? What should they be?

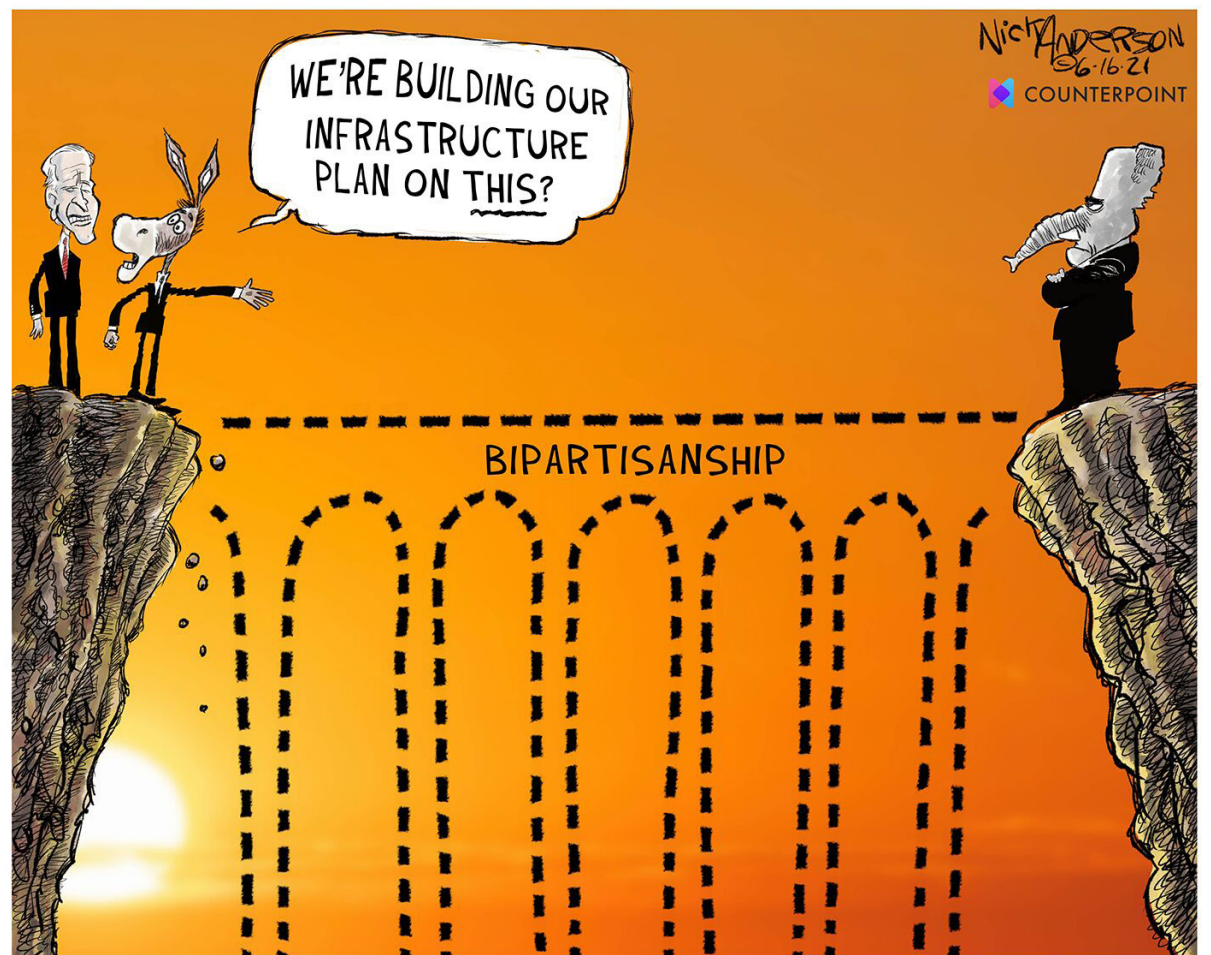
The vote on Senate Bill 744 divided Democrats and Republicans. For instance, two local Republicans, state Sen. Tim Knopp of Bend and state Rep. Jack Zika of Redmond voted against it. State Rep. Jason Kropf of Bend, a Democrat, voted for it.

The bill was apparently born out of a desire to revisit graduation requirements to ensure they are equitable. A study will be under-

taken to look at requirements and "recommend changes in legislation or administrative rules that will reduce disparities and ensure that every student will be on track to earn one of the high school diplomas offered in this state."

If education professionals agree on anything, we hear them say students need more than a high school diploma to succeed. So if there are found to be ways to make high school diplomas more equitable and inclusive, Oregon should do so. It is also worth analyzing how effective Oregon's standards have been.

But we believe when you raise expectations and reach out to ensure students are engaged, you get better outcomes. Lower expectations and we may get worse.



## My Nickel's Worth

## Lift the state restrictions

It is time to let the state-mandated restrictions go! We appreciate health information provided by the state. Put your trust in the people of Oregon, who have walked this pandemic along with you, to make good decisions. It is reported that there needs to be 65,000 more vaccinations before state restrictions are lifted. Count the more than 200,000 people who have had COVID in Oregon and now carry the immunity to assure you we have more than met the mark. Let people get back to work, let students catch up, let businesses thrive, let life move on. LET IT GO, KATE!

—Debbie Baker, Sunriver

Help the fight against  
Alzheimer's

Worldwide, 50 million people are living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. Join the Alzheimer's Association in going purple and raising awareness this June during Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month. The more people know about Alzheimer's, the more action we inspire.

According to the Alzheimer's Association 2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report, more than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, and 11 million-plus family members and friends provide care. In Oregon, there are more than

69,000 people living with Alzheimer's disease and more than 155,000 family members and friends providing care.

Working in health care alongside those living with Alzheimer's and other dementias, I have seen firsthand the intense support and resource needs that are so critical for caring for our community living with dementia. Important research is necessary to find a cure or a way to slow the progression of these difficult diseases. The financial implications for many families caring for those living with Alzheimer's can be devastating. Many caregivers find themselves having their own health crises due to the needs of their loved ones are often a 24/7 endeavor.

In recent years Congress has made funding Alzheimer's research a priority and it must continue. It is my hope that Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and Rep. Cliff Bentz will continue to support an increase in Alzheimer's research funding at the National Institutes of Health.

To learn more about the Alzheimer's Association, available resources and how you can get involved, visit [alz.org/abam](http://alz.org/abam).

—Lisa Hurley, Bend

Bend council makes a decision  
with inadequate input

I must absolutely agree with the guest column by Allan Bruckner,

"Bad decision about hotel for homeless" (June 11). We were appalled to learn that the hotel on N. Division Street had been selected, despite the obvious advantages of both the facility and location of the Rainbow Inn and zero contact with homeowners in the neighborhood.

The reason one member of the City Council gave for the decision was because the developers of the Urban Renewal District objected to the selection of the Rainbow Inn.

It seems, one again, it's the developers over the city's residents. So, in addition to Shepherd's House, nearby Bethlehem Inn (both doing wonderful jobs), and two large marijuana shops, a soon-to-be-opened studio apartment complex with 80 units, and a short-term transient motel, N. Division and its quiet neighborhoods are to be home to another large contingent of homeless in a "low barrier" facility. A decision made without absolutely any discussion with homeowners less than a football field's distance from the Value Inn.

Such a decision, made with no community input is not the mark of good governance. We will decidedly review our support to politicians who have been involved in this decision to make the N. Division area less than what we had hoped it would become, a family-oriented location with appropriate amenities.

—William Carwile, Bend

## 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](mailto:letters@bendbulletin.com)

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column  
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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.

## Think Juneteenth is only a symbolic win? Celebrate anyway.

BY CHRISTINE EMBA  
The Washington Post

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" Frederick Douglass asked in 1852.

Not much, was his conclusion. White Americans celebrated their independence from an oppressive regime. But enslaved Black people remained very much unfree.

Douglass' speech remains emblematic of the racial inequality that persists in the United States. "The blessings in which you . . . rejoice, are not enjoyed in common," he said. "All your religious parade and solemnity are . . . mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy." Our country celebrates its achievements now, as it did then, with outside self-regard — even when those achievements are fully realized only for some.

And so for more than 150 years, Black people have celebrated their own Independence Day: June 19, or Juneteenth, as it is more commonly known. It marks the anniversary of the

day in 1865 when news of the Emancipation Proclamation, and chattel slavery's official end, reached enslaved Blacks in Galveston, Texas. This was months after the Confederate Army had surrendered to the Union, ending the Civil War; six months after Congress passed the 13th Amendment; and more than two full years after Abraham Lincoln had first issued the proclamation. An oppressive regime hoped to delay our liberation — but it could not stop our progress.

Black Americans, starting in Texas and spreading across the United States, have celebrated on that day ever since. But it was only last summer when the holiday gained broader national and cross-racial attention, as part of the belated wave of recognition for Black stories during and after the protests of George Floyd's murder. Major brands — including Twitter, Nike and the NFL — made Juneteenth an official holiday within their corporations. Politicians honored the day in speeches. And this week, a bill passed unanimously in the Senate to make June-

teenth the 11th official federal holiday.

A cynic — or simply a realist — would remind us that symbolic change is not the same as substantive improvement. Anti-racist reading lists haven't stopped Black Americans from being killed by the police. Corporate diversity, equity and inclusion workshops haven't closed the racial wealth gap.

The Senate may have voted in favor of recognizing Juneteenth, but the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is still withering away waiting for the Senate to act. The For the People Act and its voting rights protections are all but dead. And some of the same senators who voted in favor of a new Black holiday are sponsoring legislation that would ban the teaching of our country's racist history.

A new holiday won't fix the material injustices that continue to fall most heavily on Black America: poverty, state violence, incarceration, environmental hazards, poor access to health care, a legacy of financial discrimination and limitations on political power.

In fact, symbolic wins more often serve to let their champions off the hook. "Your national greatness, swelling vanity; . . . your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery," Douglass said.

But symbols accomplish something, too.

The debates over statues, the fury over the New York Times' 1619 Project, the Republican horror at the teaching of "critical race theory" in public schools should be signs that even the symbolic holds some value. If these smaller declarations didn't have power, would they be seen as such a threat?

Elevating Emancipation Day to the stature of the Fourth of July may not change everything. But it does mean something. History is written by its victors, after all. To have our story re-presented means that we are finally victors too. It means that Black memory is respected. It means that as we come to terms with the truth of our past, the more difficult conversations — about reconciliation, about reparation,

about the racism that still very much exists — are given space to begin.

The acknowledgment of race in America has always been less than enough. Progress is a two-step Texas style, moving forward, then back. Juneteenth itself reflects this. It's a holiday of progress mixed with disappointment. Black Americans were told of their freedom, yes — but years delayed. It's a celebration of the end of something that never should have existed to begin with. And yet, it is celebrated anyway.

A new holiday is inadequate. But as Douglass concluded in his contemplation on the Fourth, we can do more than sit in resignation. "Notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation," he said, "I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work."

Juneteenth can be a day of rest and a renewal of the fight. We can take what is owed — and, always, push for more.

Christine Emba is an opinion columnist and editor for The Washington Post.