

Revive the water bank to help the Deschutes Basin

Bringing back the Central Oregon Water Bank. In July 2006, two local irrigation districts and the Deschutes River Conservancy formed the water bank.

It helped with one of the major water issues in the Deschutes Basin, moving water from where it isn't needed to where it is.

The water bank made its first deal in December 2006. The city of Bend made a deal to take water that was no longer needed for farming. That water was put back instream — back into the river. In return, the city got mitigation credits so it could pump more groundwater. The city paid \$161,796. It was better use of the water in the basin. Dozens of deals followed.

The problem with the Central Oregon Water Bank is it effectively died.

Anything new and different in water in Oregon can worry water rights holders and irrigation districts. A water bank can be perceived as a threat, a subtle step toward unraveling water rights and dismantling the control of irrigation districts. Permanently shifting water away from an irrigation district, if taken to an extreme, could threaten its existence.

But a Central Oregon water bank does not have to be that. Water banks can mean different things to different people. This is what we are talking about:

1. Irrigation districts would have control.
2. Deals could be only temporary.
3. Deals would be voluntary.

The exchanges would be between willing local buyers and willing local

sellers. Out-of-state corporations or other entities would not be allowed to scoop up Deschutes Basin water. Local people would be working to create better arrangements to meet local water needs.

Nobody would be forced to do anything. It wouldn't change any state law. It could be structured to do only temporary transactions. Nothing permanent. Water rights would be retained. The Deschutes River Conservancy could manage it, as it did before.

As the basin urbanizes, it's a fact that less water is needed for farming. There have got to be ways to properly reallocate water in a basin system that is for the most part inflexible.

A water bank isn't the only solution. A water bank doesn't solve a drought. But unless changes are made the Deschutes Basin is going to face continued gaps between the supply of water and demand. The most comprehensive basin study put that number at 135,000 acre feet to 350,000 acre feet in dry years. (An acre-foot equals about 326,000 gallons, or enough water to cover an acre of land one foot deep.)

Yes, we need to make changes to increase the efficiency of how water is used, such as canal piping and improvements in irrigation. But it's cheaper to make changes, such as the water bank, that make it easier to shift water where it is needed. Bring back the water bank.

Think about making commissioners nonpartisan

Consider signing the petitions circulating to put an initiative on the ballot to allow Deschutes County voters to decide if they want county commissioners to be nonpartisan.

There's no need for the politics of the County Commission to be explicitly partisan. Parties could still back candidates if the positions were nonpartisan. Of course, there would still be partisan debates. But perhaps partisanship would be less of a focus.

Nonaffiliated voters — voters who are not a member of any party — outnumber Democrats and Republicans in Deschutes County. As of May 2021, the numbers are 47,486 nonaffiliated, 47,140 Democrats and 44,517 Republicans. Other parties are represented too, with the 9,003 members of the Independent Party being the largest.

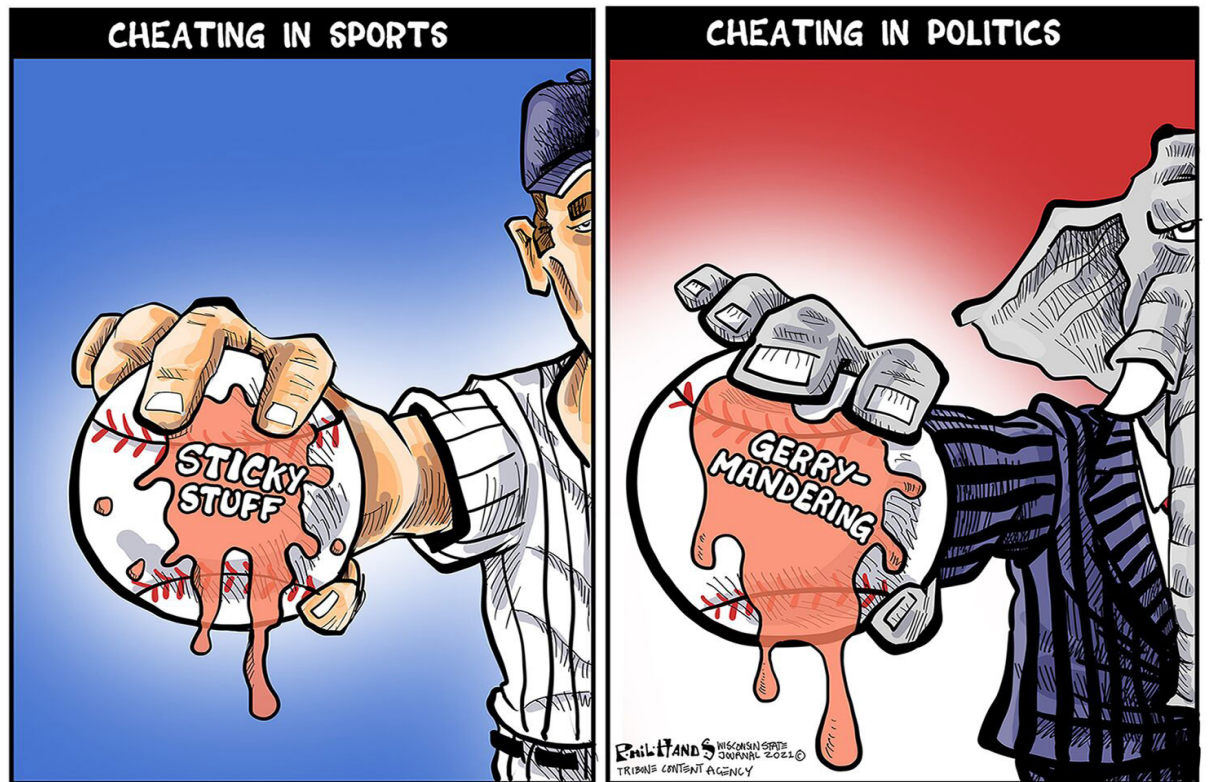
Those nonaffiliated voters can be

shut out of the party primaries that determine which candidates end up on the final ballot. It's not fair to carve out the plurality of voters from that process. Let's try to tone down the partisanship.

The effort to make the positions nonpartisan is a grassroots effort led by Mimi Alkire of Sisters. It doesn't even have a website. But she and others are gathering signatures. They need more than 9,000 to get on the ballot. There have been signature gatherers outside the Downtown Bend Public Library on every other Wednesday and in Sisters on some Sundays.

If you want more information, you can email Alkire at mimi.alkire@gmail.com. The goal had been to get the initiative on the November 2021 ballot, though Alkire said they may need to shoot for May 2022.

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

Please get vaccinated

On May 27, a close family friend had a non-COVID-19 medical emergency and was taken to St. Charles. With COVID-19 at a recent peak in Central Oregon, the hospital's ICU was full! As a result, our friend and another patient had to be flown to St. Luke Hospital in Boise, Idaho, for care. We were told that there were no ICU beds available in Oregon! Everyone is thankful to the dedicated staff at St. Charles and St. Lukes for their care and compassion to help every patient.

The disappointing and frustrating aspect about this situation was the number of unvaccinated COVID-19 patients. An article published in The Oregonian on May 30 noted that since March 98% of the hospitalized COVID-19 patients were unvaccinated! Vaccinations keep people out of the hospital or lessens the severity of the illness. In turn, freeing up hospital space for others in need of immediate critical care. Getting vaccinated is not political; it's about public safety; get vaccinated and free up a hospital bed for someone who needs it. It may be your parents, child or, like us, a close friend who can't get care when needed.

— Jim Hendryx, Redmond

Reconsider library location

It is time for the Deschutes Public Library Board to reconsider its decision to construct a new "central" library off of U.S. Highway 20 on the north side of Bend. This plan is wrong on a number of counts:

1. Libraries need to be located where they are readily accessible by

public transit, pedestrians, bike riders, and the elderly.

2. The central library needs to be located near higher population density areas in order to function as the community center that the board envisions.

3. Sprawling onto undeveloped land on the periphery of the city is a very irresponsible land use policy. The city of Bend has done an admirable job of containing urban sprawl. This plan "flies in the face" of other community land use planning efforts.

4. Placing the "central" library in a location that promotes driving does not reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability. This is the last thing we need.

5. Building a new "central" library uses resources that could be better spent upgrading and improving existing facilities and expanding online and digital resources.

I probably could go on with more objections — but, I assume you understand the concerns. I have always voted for library bonds, based on faith that the library board and staff would make responsible decisions and spend our resources wisely. Apparently my faith has been misplaced.

I hope the board will take the opinions of the many community leaders who have opposed the library's current plan and will reconsider its decision in an open and timely manner.

— John Stockham, Bend

Leave library plan in place

I just finished reading the article in The Bulletin regarding the controversy surrounding the location for the new regional library.

I am surprised that the objections are mainly east location vs. north. I feel that the downtown core and east locations are served by the satellite branch in existence on Greenwood and the original library downtown.

If this library is to serve all of Deschutes County, then the north location should be the only one considered! Redmond and Sisters would have much easier access to the location proposed. The board had it right all along. Leave the plan in place and let the new library build begin!

— Joan Alltucker, Bend

Library location will help

Regarding the recent article about opposition to the proposed new library location at Robal Lane and U.S. Highway 20: I live in Tumalo, and I am underserved by the current library locations. A library in this new location would be practical and convenient for the thousands who live out that way and also alleviate some of the bottleneck at the downtown and east side locations. I am in my late 60s, one of those who guest columnist Louis Capozzi allegedly represents, but those in opposition do not speak for me. I would like to remind new library board member Anne Ness that there is no need to "relook" at anything regarding the bond measure and funding.

I believe it is the board's obligation to give the voters what they asked for in the approved bond measure, and I applaud Todd Dunkelberg for staying the course. In fairness to the library's underserved constituents, please build the new library in its proposed location.

— Susan Rolá, Tumalo

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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.

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What Biden and a lot of other people get wrong about journalists

BY MARGARET SULLIVAN

The Washington Post

Journalism has never been the most admired of professions, and in recent years, the rap on its practitioners has only gotten worse.

Gallup puts trust in the news media at about 40% nationally, a steep drop from its high point of more than 70% in the 1970s — the days of The Washington Post's Watergate reporting, the publication of the Pentagon Papers revealing the secret history of the Vietnam War, and the nation's nightly ritual of watching CBS' Walter Cronkite, known as the most trusted man in America.

Even President Joe Biden, in Geneva for a summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, took a swipe at journalists' approach to their jobs.

"To be a good reporter, you got to be negative. ... You got to have a negative view of life, it seems to me," he charged, addressing his angry reac-

tion to CNN reporter Kaitlan Collins, who earlier had challenged him about whether there was any reason to characterize the meetings positively, considering Putin's relentlessly authoritarian record. (Biden apologized for being a "wise guy.")

Biden's predecessor, of course, spent his entire presidency trashing what he called "fake news," calling reporters scum or enemies of the people and gleefully insulting specific journalists and news organizations. As president, Donald Trump had particular scorn for CNN, the New York Times and The Washington Post.

Do journalists really deserve these low grades and smackdowns? The celebrated long-form journalist Janet Malcolm certainly thought so.

When she died last week, obituaries reprised the famously devastating critique that opened her 1989 New Yorker magazine piece, later to become a book, "The Journalist and the Murderer."

"Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what

is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible," she wrote. "He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity, ignorance or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse."

Ron Ostrow, the longtime Washington reporter for the Los Angeles Times who broke one of the most important Watergate stories, was respected on both sides of the aisle. "He was tough as a journalist, kind as a person," Attorney General Merrick Garland recalled for an obituary of Ostrow in the Times. It also quoted former attorney general William Barr's praise and this from William Webster, a former FBI and CIA director: "You could trust him. ... If somebody got hit by Ron, it was because they deserved it."

This doesn't sound like a con artist or a relentlessly negative nabob. It sounds like a lot of reporters I know who are still working today or just making their way into the craft.

Then there was Dick Stolley, whose several claims to fame included getting

his hands on a copy of the Zapruder film footage of President John F. Kennedy's 1963 assassination for Life magazine. It was a scoop for the ages, made possible only through Stolley's sheer persistence, mixed with his sixth sense of when to stop pushing.

A stringer for Life told him about the existence of amateur film footage showing the moment when the president was shot, according to Stolley's Washington Post obituary: "She could not spell the photographer's surname but told Mr. Stolley that it was pronounced Za-proo-der. Thumbing through the Z pages of the phone book, Mr. Stolley came upon the entry 'Zapruder, Abraham.' He called, again and again, every 15 minutes, until sometime around 11 p.m., Zapruder answered."

Zapruder said he was exhausted, and Stolley was wise enough not to press. They agreed to meet at 9 a.m. the next day. Stolley showed up early, before other reporters, and viewed the astonishing 26 seconds of film.

Stolley later recalled Zapruder's assis-

tant asking him whether he knew why he got to see it ahead of all the other clamoring journalists.

"I have no idea," Stolley said he replied.

"Because you were a gentleman," the assistant explained.

Twenty-first century American media has some terrible flaws, no doubt. It too often chases clicks and gossip over substance, turns minutiae into mountains and shamefully gives a platform to proven liars.

But are journalists too negative? That's not the problem. Our role is not to cheerlead for the people we cover.

Does mainstream journalism deserve only a 10% approval rating among Republicans? Absolutely not. There are valid complaints about bias, but many of these respondents, I'd wager, are simply averse to the intrusion of reality.

But could we — must we — be much better? I can't argue with that.

■ Margaret Sullivan is The Washington Post's media columnist.