

Have your say regarding Pacific Power’s proposed 14% increase

Thirteen dollars a month. That’s how much more an average Pacific Power residential customer in Oregon may have to pay as of Jan. 1.

With the increases for business and industrial customers, it would bring in about \$106 million for Pacific Power, says the Citizens Utility Board, which looks after the interests of utility consumers in Oregon. Should Pacific Power get it? Or is the utility asking for too much? You can tell the Oregon Public Utility Commission what you think.

The increase for average residential customers will be about 14%. That’s where the \$13 a month comes from.

Pacific Power does face a reality of increasing costs. It must close coal-fired plants and transition more to renewable energy. That’s the direction given by Oregon law. It is spending millions to reduce the danger of wildfire from power lines. Oregonians do want Pacific Power to do that, right? Natural gas prices are going up. The utility has some gas-fired plants. Buying electricity on the market can cost more.

Beyond costs, Pacific Power proposes some policy changes. It proposes to move to seasonal rates. Electricity would be cheaper in winter and more expensive in summer. That may make sense to encourage people to use power wisely when demand will spike in the summer for air conditioning. Price should signal cost and costs for Pacific Power are higher in times of high demand. But the downside is, of course, that people

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ple with less money in warmer parts of the state will be hit hard because of such a change.

Pacific Power is also seeking other changes in how it gets compensated. Bob Jenks, executive director of the Citizens Utility Board, told us Friday Pacific Power is asking for a change that would have customers assume more of the risk than they do now if Pacific Power is off in its projections. Matt McVee, vice president of regulatory policy and operations for Pacific Power, told us the change is important because it can be a long time between when the utility must make projections and actual costs are known.

The PUC meets Tuesday at 6 p.m. to discuss the proposals. There is more general information about the PUC and rate increases here: tinyurl.com/ORpucrates. You can comment on the proposed increases by emailing the PUC at PublicComments@puc.oregon.gov. You can also call 503-378-6600.

Historical editorial: The right price of ditch lands

Editor’s note: The following historical editorial originally appeared in the May 31, 1907 edition of what was then called *The Bend Bulletin*.

The action taken by the state land board in granting an increase of lien on its ditch lands to the Deschutes Irrigation & Power Company will receive the approval of most people in this section. The general comment is that it will prove a benefit to the country. The mere fact that the price of land has been raised will not be of particular benefit, but the conditions imposed by the board in return for the increased lien are of value to the future welfare of this section.

It is now generally conceded that the only satisfactory condition is where the settlers own their own irrigation system. This is to be the stipulations of the new contract, the settlers owning the system at the end of 10 years. Thus the perpetual

petual maintenance charge of \$1.00 per acre per year will be removed, and after 10 years the settlers can maintain their own system on a much cheaper basis. Furthermore the present maintenance charge is reduced from \$1.00 to 80 cents per acre per year, a small saving in itself not to be despised.

Some may complain that the increase is too high, but it is no higher than the average price of land under the government projects, all of which have been settled as rapidly as they were reclaimed. In fact, the new contract to be entered into the state and the D.I. & P. Co. contains many of the good points of the contract used by the national reclamation service. The increase will please the man who has already bought ditch land. It is believed the new contract will prove a benefit to all in the long run.

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.



Do not ignore sleep for teens

BY HEATHER TURGEON
AND JULIE WRIGHT

Special to The Washington Post

Teen mental health is a major concern for today’s parents, and for good reason: More than 1 in 3 high-schoolers say they’ve felt persistent sadness or hopelessness, and roughly 1 in 5 reports having seriously considered suicide. Many of us are searching for answers. But a major culprit is hiding in plain sight: This generation of teens is the most sleep-deprived population in human history.

No group has ever slept as little as the modern adolescent.

Seventy percent of young kids and 65% of adults get healthy sleep, but by their senior year, only about 15% of high-schoolers do. The average high-schooler sleeps six-and-a-half hours a night, when they optimally need nine; and 1 in 5 teens sleeps five or fewer hours a night. By all accounts, adolescents are living in a state of severe and chronic sleep debt.

Studies connecting sleep loss and poor mental health fill stacks of scientific journals. Adolescents who sleep fewer than eight hours a night are more likely to report symptoms of depression. One analysis found that underslept teens getting six to seven hours a night were 17% more likely to think about hurting themselves than those sleeping eight; and sleeping five hours a night made them 81% more likely to consider self-harm.

In fact, sleep loss is implicated in almost every psychiatric diagnosis. Brain imaging studies have shown that sleep deprivation amps up the reactive, negative emotional centers of the brain, while the prefrontal cortex — which soothes and gives us

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perspective, judgment and emotional regulation — is less active.

The real question is: How could we expect this level of sleep deprivation not to deepen the cracks in adolescents’ mental health?

No one questions the benefits of sleep for babies and young children. But teenagers’ brains and bodies are growing just as much as they did in their earliest years. The restructuring of the adolescent brain is pivotal to healthy development — and to a large extent, it occurs during sleep.

So how did we get here? For one, teen sleep has been declining for decades because of too-early school start times and the snowballing of homework and activities. High schools have been extremely slow to follow the science and adopt healthy schedules.

Imagine an experiment in which researchers forced subjects to wake up three hours before their natural rise time, then asked them to perform complex cognitive tasks, for five days straight. That’s a description of the average teen’s school week.

Add to this that students can easily have four hours of homework each night, even though research suggests that more than one hour adds only anxiety and no intellectual benefit.

Meanwhile, the proliferation of smartphones has been a wrecking ball for teen sleep. Some of the worst sleep stealers are Meta, YouTube, TikTok, Apple and other companies that specialize in creating addictive technologies that have infiltrated teen life.

The problem may sound intractable, but it’s not. Unlike many of the complicated factors making teens anxious or sad, sleep is fixable.

Schools should start their days later and reduce homework. Tech companies should be regulated and held accountable for responsible design. Yes, these systemic shifts will take time. But families can also protect sleep at home. Right away. Starting tonight.

Research ties family rules and healthy sleep routines to a host of positive outcomes. In a study of more than 15,000 middle- and high-schoolers, those with bedtimes of 10 p.m. or earlier were 24% less likely to suffer from depression and 20% less likely to have suicidal ideation than those with bedtimes of midnight or later.

Parents often underestimate their influence, but what they say and do matters. Start by modeling good habits. As a family, set clear devices-off hours and reasonable bedtimes.

Yes, teens are struggling for a host of valid reasons. But science shows that for many, their outlooks will brighten and their stress will subside if they win back precious hours of slumber. Sleep should be a priority as we seek to turn the tide of the teen mental health crisis. From there, we can more clearly identify what else is troubling kids — and truly help them.

Heather Turgeon and Julie Wright are the authors of “Generation Sleepless: Why Tweens and Teens Aren’t Sleeping Enough and How We Can Help Them.”

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
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Should getting the most votes be enough when it’s not a majority?

BY EDWARD B. FOLEY

Special to The Washington Post
Self-government is supposed to make sense. That, after all, is the premise of Thomas Paine’s celebrated tract, “Common Sense.” Yet the way we are practicing self-government now, as demonstrated by this year’s primaries, is utterly irrational. It may cause the demise of democracy unless we figure out a way to fix it fast.

In state after state, winners have one-third of the votes or less. J.D. Vance won Ohio’s Republican Senate primary with 32.2% of the vote. Nebraska’s GOP gubernatorial primary was won with 33.8%. In Pennsylvania, the virtual tie between Mehmet Oz and David McCormick for the GOP Senate nomination means that about 31% will be enough for victory.

There is no way to say these winners are the collective choice of each primary’s voters. The fundamental idea of an election is that the will of the majority should prevail. To be

sure, in our constitutional system, we guard against a tyranny of the majority through a set of checks and balances. Still, when we put questions of public policy and the representation of citizens to a vote, we want that vote to be decided by the larger share prevailing over the smaller — not the other way around.

Yet we undermine that objective when we let a candidate win an election with a mere plurality of votes. If the winner has only one-third of the votes, that means two-thirds — twice as many voters — were on the losing side. That’s backward.

And it doesn’t have to be this way. Seven states require candidates to win a majority of primary votes and hold runoffs if they don’t. But holding an other election isn’t even necessary if states would follow the lead of Maine, which holds an “instant runoff” by requiring ranked-choice voting in primaries.

I have argued before that Con-

gress should require its members to be elected by majority vote, and this would be an improvement over the current process. But as a practical matter, in a two-party system, a plurality-winner rule generally isn’t a grave problem: When there are only two candidates, the one with more has a majority. In fact, using a plurality-winner rule in a general election tends to generate a two-party system. Known as Duverger’s law, the strategic incentive created by the need to win more votes than any other candidate prompts political factions to coalesce into two competing parties, each vying to capture the electorate’s median voter.

But Duverger’s law doesn’t work in party primaries. It is evident that using the plurality-winner rule for party primaries does not yield two-candidate competitions. Instead, it delivers the kind of irrational outcomes we are witnessing this year, where a political party’s nomination goes to the candi-

date who lost two-thirds, or more, of the party’s votes.

The harm this irrationality causes is not confined to the party; it affects the public as a whole. Pennsylvania offers an illustration: If Oz ekes out a primary win with 31% of the vote, he might go on to win the general election. But doing so wouldn’t vindicate him as the most preferred candidate.

One might argue that McCormick should run in November as an independent. But Duverger’s law, operative in the general election, effectively nullifies that option. Only the two major-party candidates have any realistic chance of success.

The consequence is that the double use of the plurality-winner rule is a double whammy. First, in the primary, where Duverger’s law has no force, the plurality-winner rule fragments the field, preventing a majority of voters from choosing the candidate who truly is most preferred overall. Then, in the general election, when

Duverger’s law takes hold, the plurality-winner rule prevents a candidate who lost a primary — even an irrational primary — from mounting a meaningful independent campaign.

The danger of this double whammy would not be so great were it not for the MAGA movement’s hostility toward democracy itself. When a political faction threatens to repudiate future elections upon attaining power, it is essential that the existing electoral system not award victories to this faction’s candidates who aren’t genuinely the majority’s choice.

Thus, add this to the list of electoral reforms having utmost urgency: eliminate plurality-winner primaries — which either state legislatures or Congress can do. Otherwise, we may lose our democracy not because we made that choice, but because an irrational and anti-majoritarian system produced that result.

Edward B. Foley writes on matters relating to election law and administration.