

Don't hit the brakes on the camping code

When Bend City Councilors were talking about the camping code last week, some councilors wondered if they should hit the brakes.

Please don't. We understand the frustrations and the concerns. We are not saying they are not valid. They don't mean stop.

When Bend has a camping code for where, when and how people can camp on city property and city rights of way, some things will mirror Bend without a camping code. The city will have to prioritize. The city does not have enough police or other staff to enforce a camping code.

That's no reason to stop working on the camping code.

Setting priorities is not anything different from what police and city code enforcement do now with any crimes or violations.

Another concern raised: When Bend has a camping code, it will be aimed squarely at many people who are struggling. Why isn't the city talking about ways to help people instead of hatching code that may penalize them?

We know some people believe the city takes a hands-off approach to enforcement when it comes to people going through homelessness. And there are others who believe the city does too much.

All we can say is from what we have seen the city is trying to balance and juggle as best it can. Not perfect. Certainly not without

trying.

City Attorney Mary Winters also made an excellent point. She urged councilors questioning the focus now on the camping code to remember what the city did before it began the discussion.

It led an effort to look for places to site homeless shelters. It has helped establish a navigation center and support the efforts of providers to provide services. The city spearheaded the work to join with the county and other towns in the county to collaborate on homeless issues. It helped get legislation passed to provide money to help coordinate county efforts. And although the Bend City Council faced some withering criticism, councilors revised zoning rules to allow homeless shelters in more neighborhoods.

Did the city do enough? Too much? You decide. But it is not like the city is only creating a code to regulate people going through homelessness. It has also worked to create more housing, better conditions and avenues for people to exit homelessness. There's no reason to think that would stop.

If you would like to tell councilors about what you think about the camping code, you can email them at council@bendoregon.gov.

What politicians should release tax returns?

What political candidates should make their tax returns public? People running for president? Congress? Governor? County commissioners? City Councilors? School board members? The library board?

We do know that it's generally been the practice that people running for president do. One recent, notable exception: President Trump.

And we do know candidates for Oregon governor have generally done so in recent years. This year Christine Drazan, the Republican nominee, released her federal returns for the last three years. Tina Kotek, the Democratic nominee released her state and federal returns for the last three years. Betsy Johnson, a likely independent candidate for governor, declined.

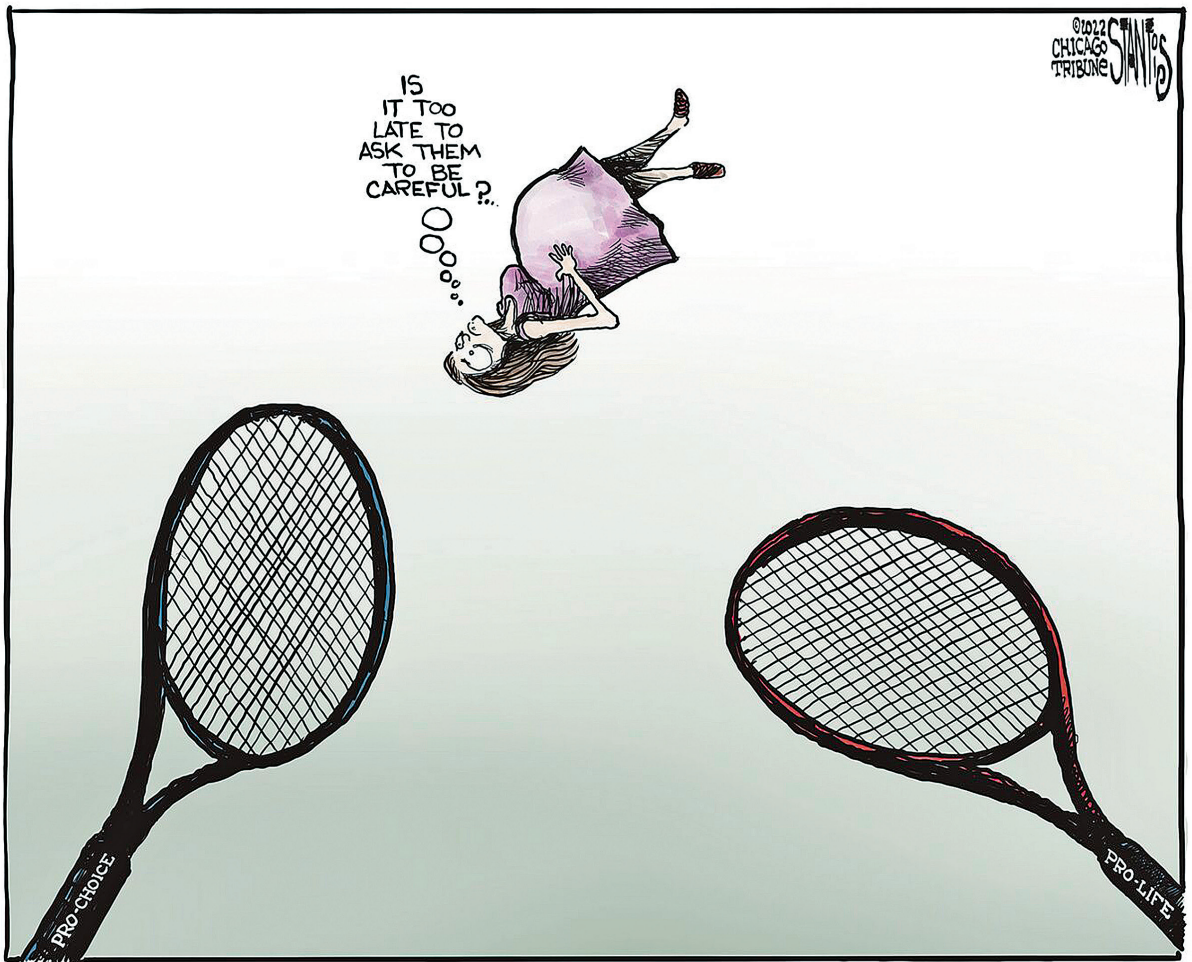
"Betsy has always filled out the

required financial disclosure forms to the Legislature and will continue to do so as governor," Johnson campaign spokeswoman Jennifer Sitton told Willamette Week. "That is the sum total of the public's interest. Betsy believes that whether you are voting for governor or running for governor, you continue to have a constitutional right to privacy, which most people value."

Is it a reason not to vote for Johnson? Is it a reason to vote for her? We'll let you make up your own mind.

We are more interested in what they say they will do on policy matters. But it does make us wonder if Johnson is elected, how she would fall on other questions about transparency. There may be reasons to wonder about Kotek and Drazan, too. Johnson just handed Oregonians one.

■ 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

Part of the machine

Many years ago, my brother-in-law Jim worked as a page for Oregon Congressman Wendell Wyatt. After Jim graduated from the American University in Washington, Wyatt, a moderate Republican, held a party for him. Among the guests was a Congressman from Pennsylvania, a certain Johnson as I recall, with whom Wyatt shared an office. In the course of the party, Wyatt said to me, "Johnson is an old fool machine politician. He just does what the party tells him to do."

By voting against the Inflation Reduction Act, which actually helps people, Rep. Cliff Bentz shows us that he, too, is "an old fool machine politician."

— Gary Leiser, Sisters

River Democracy = clean water sources

I appreciate the Bulletin's continued coverage of Sen.s Wyden and Merkley's River Democracy Act. This bill is the first of its kind legislation, truly written by and for Oregonians given the extensive public input process.

As noted in your recent editorial, who doesn't love maps? But maps will only further prove what many

of us have known for a while — that this bill will be good news for Oregon. It contains protections for some of our state's most important salmon and steelhead nurseries, drinking water sources, and places families have floated, swam, and fished for generations.

While it's important to note the position of Rep. Cliff Bentz, it's also worth pointing out his arguments don't carry much water. Bentz came out swinging against the River Democracy Act as soon as he started his term, right around the same time that he was questioning the validity of the last presidential election. Despite his comments to the contrary, the best thing we can do for clean water is to protect healthy natural forests around them.

I've heard Sen. Wyden remark that if everyone gets some things they need, but not everything they wanted, he probably got it right. I believe that this is the case with the River Democracy Act. It will protect key drinking watersheds like Tumalo Creek here in Central Oregon while also accounting for things like wildfire, private property rights and other uses of our public lands. I encourage Sen. Wyden to pass the bill as soon as possible!

— Erik Fernandez is the wilderness program manager for Oregon Wild.

Renters do pay property taxes

A letter from Kathy Sanchez in the Aug. 17 Bulletin perpetuates the myth that only property owners pay property taxes so only property owners should be able to vote in elections affecting property taxes. She writes, "This [a potential levy to increase school funding] always means voters will eventually be asked to approve another tax hike on property owners, while many of these voters are not property owners and have nothing to lose by affirming such a hike."

As a former owner of rental properties in Seattle, Olympia and Portland, I can confidently say that it is simply wrong to claim that renters don't pay property taxes. Every time we faced an increase in property taxes during the more than thirty years that we owned rental properties, we raised the rents to cover the additional cost to us as owners. When the costs of operating a rental rise rents also rise and renters end up paying any increases in property taxes.

So renters do indeed have something to lose when property taxes go up and most know it. Because renters also end up paying for increases in property taxes, they are every bit as entitled as property owners to vote on property tax increases.

— John Cushing, 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

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

Women will die because of the absence of care

BY RICH BELZER

Recent events have led me to study the history of abortion in Ireland, a country that is 78% Catholic as of their 2016 census.

Abortion had been prohibited since 1861 yet, as of January 1, 2019, Ireland has one of the most liberal abortion laws in Europe; abortion is permitted in Ireland during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy and later in cases where the pregnant woman's life or health is at risk, or in cases of a fatal fetal abnormality.

How did a majority Catholic country change its position so dramatically? It goes back to the 2012 death of Savita Halappanavar who was denied an abortion while suffering a septic miscarriage.

This case received worldwide attention and caused a political reevaluation of abortion in this country of roughly five-million people. In 2018, there was a nationwide referendum on the 36th Amendment to the Irish



Belzer

constitution which defined the abortion rights that exist today. The result was a landslide — 66.4% for abortion rights and 33.6% against.

Justice Alito, who wrote the decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (along with the assent of his associates Thomas, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and Barrett), would have us believe that he came into his review of Dobbs with an open mind and studied the law before arriving at his decision, not just on Dobbs but on Roe v. Wade.

In no way did he make an ideological decision and then find a way to justify it, a justification that asserted his brilliance and superiority to the earlier justices who decided Roe (1973) and Casey (1992). It should be noted that the Casey opinion

GUEST COLUMN

was written by Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy and David Souter, all Republican appointees to the court.

The Dobbs decision was, in effect, a collection of five religious zealots on the Supreme Court asserting their power over an American public which disapproved of the decision by a 57% to 43% margin (according to the Pew Research Center). How fitting that conservative Kansas came in even higher at 59% in favor of abortion rights and 41% against in their recent vote, affirming the Kansas constitution under which abortion is legal.

Justice Alito may tell us that his decision in Dobbs did not in any way ban abortions, it merely left the decision to the states.

Does he really believe that Americans are naïve enough to believe

that he had no idea that as many as half of American states would move ahead to ban abortions?

Many have already done so, much to the disadvantage of millions of young women. Pregnancies do not always terminate in a normal birth of a healthy baby; many end by other means which often require treatment by an OB/GYN.

I know a woman who had a miscarriage a year prior to the birth of her first child.

When the bleeding would not stop, she saw an OB/GYN who treated her with a D&C. Today, in a state with abortion laws like those in Texas, she would be unlikely to receive treatment as her OB/GYN would be concerned that he might be investigated for murder. Of course, there are many other problems that women can face in pregnancy (see Savita Halappanavar in Ireland) and treatment is likely to be problematic in abortion-ban states.

The Republican Party must answer for this. They fought against abortion for 50 years and it is Republican-controlled states that have passed radical bills banning abortions.

Will OB/GYN's remain in states in which providing treatment for a variety of problems could result in a criminal investigation or will they move?

Will young women wish to remain in such states? Kansas handed a landslide 14.5% victory to Donald Trump in 2020 and just supported abortion by a whopping 18%. Inevitably, women will die due to an absence of care. Will abortion suddenly become the major issue in the November mid-terms?

■ Rich Belzer served as director of federal marketing for an NYSE-listed computer company and was subsequently a senior executive with two NASDAQ-listed high-tech companies. He moved to Bend to join Columbia Aircraft, where he became VP of worldwide sales.