

Local dispatch should be maintained

The 911 dispatch center for Grant County is in danger of being outsourced, but residents have the power to save it.

The center covers all of Grant County, dispatching law enforcement and emergency medical services from Kimberly to Seneca. Although the center is managed by the city of John Day, the city itself and its residents receive the same benefits from it as the rest of the county.

The state 911 tax, paid with phone bills, covers some of the operating expenses, but the current payments leave a roughly \$200,000 deficit, with John Day currently covering a disproportionate amount. John Day City Manager Nick Green has said the city cannot afford to subsidize the service for other tax jurisdictions.

Green is right. John Day residents should not pay more than others to provide this countywide service. The cost should be equitably divided among the users.

Green has proposed a cost-sharing agreement between all the cities and the county, where each would cover its share of the deficit, or a local option tax, where the deficit would be divided among property owners.

While the easiest and best solution would be for the Legislature to reform the 911 tax that has not been increased since 1995, that likely won't happen this session. In the

interim, we believe residents should support a plan to maintain the local dispatch center, at least until a possible legislative fix in 2019.

If dispatch services are outsourced, that local service and those local jobs will probably never return to Grant County, even if the 911 tax is later modified to provide enough funding to cover operating expenses.

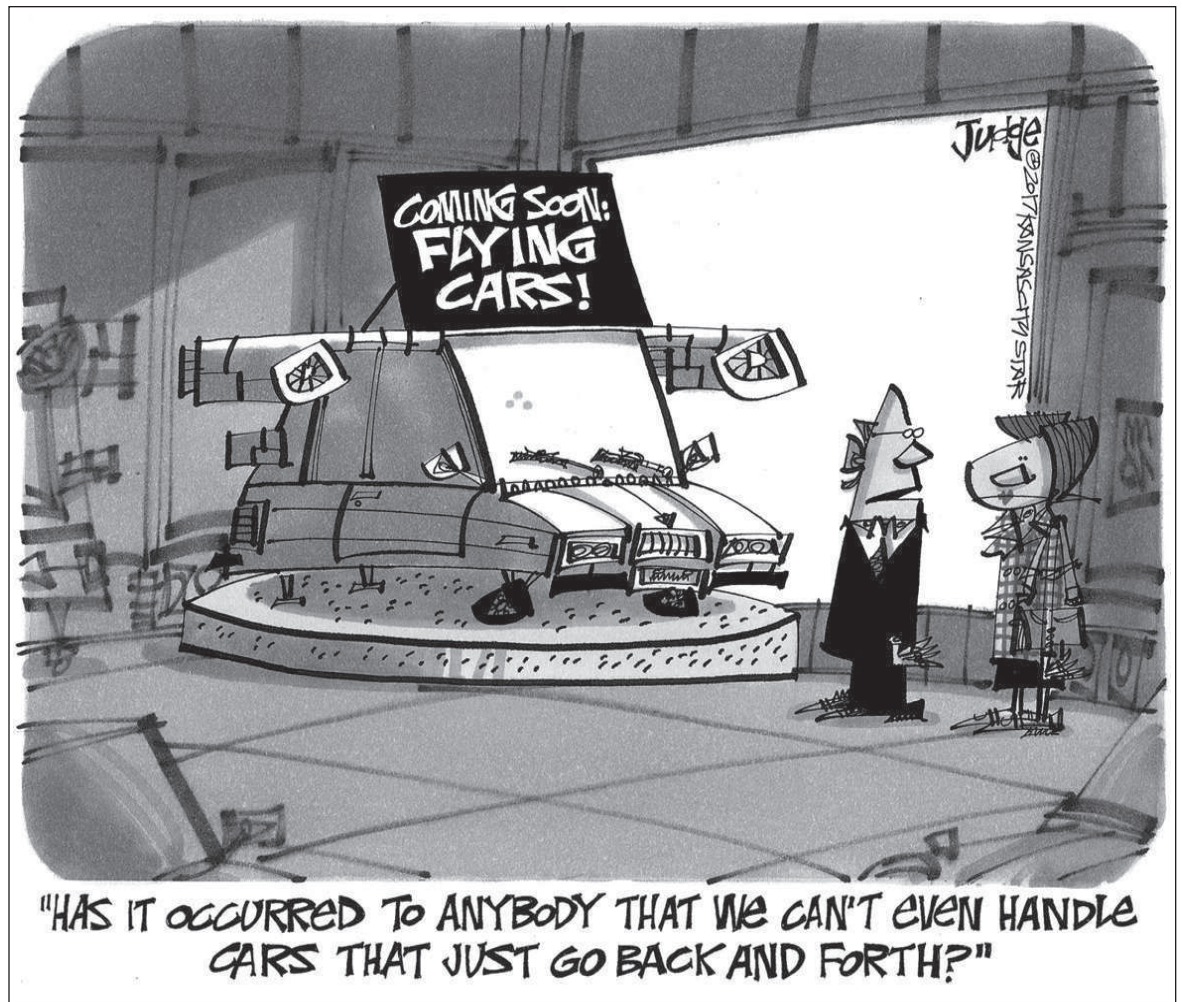
If the six current dispatch positions are cut, those employees may have to move out of the county. Six fewer families would pay less in property taxes to local governments. Six fewer families would enroll in local schools. Six fewer families would shop at local businesses.

The rural blight this county knows all too well will have claimed another industry that will only clear the way for more casualties in the downward spiral.

But even more important than the economy is safety.

Who do you want answering when your child or parent or spouse needs immediate attention? A local dispatcher more familiar with the area? Or someone who may have never stepped foot in Grant County?

We hope the state Legislature will fix the 911 tax to provide enough funding for rural dispatch centers, and we hope county residents will support this vital local service in the meantime.



What to do before the lights go out

By Dave Robinson
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

OK, admit it. You promise yourself every year that you're going to put together a few extra supplies, just in case. Everybody from the Red Cross to the government, to the local newspaper suggests that you "Get A Kit, Make A Plan, and Be Prepared." And every year, you mean to, you really do. And the next thing you know, there's an earthquake off in some far away place, or a hurricane on the other end of the country and you think, "I've really got to do this thing!"

But where to start? What to do first? Which kit to buy? What will my friends think? Here's my approach: "Just pretend that the power goes out all over the area, and you can't get to the store for at least three days or longer. What are you going to need to get by?"

In the event of a disaster and depending on your priorities, you're going to need to eat, drink and find your way around in the dark. And that's just for starters. So here's what

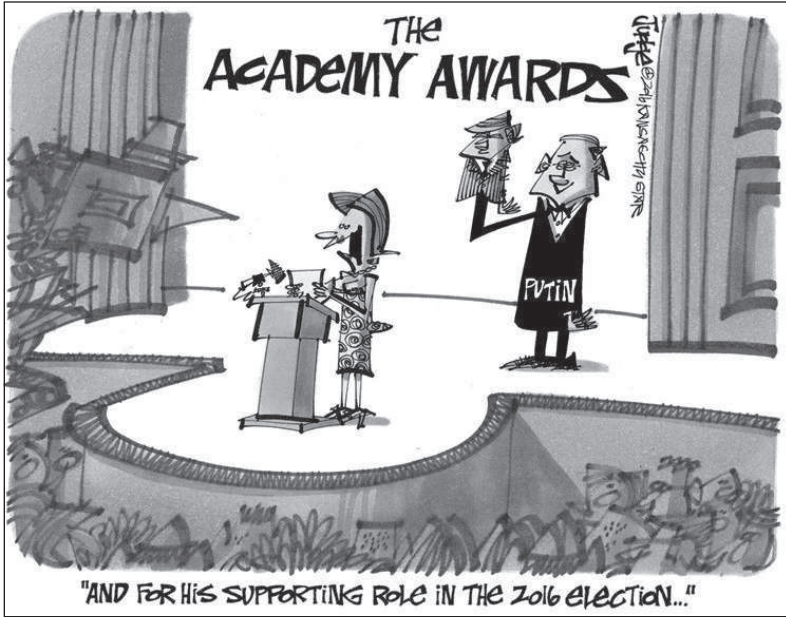
you do. Haul out that old camping stove and see if it still works. Clean it up, put some fresh fuel in it and try it out. While you're at it, dig out your lantern and do the same with it. If you don't own either and you are solely dependent on electricity for all your energy needs, then you need to at least pick up a stove. (Watch garage sales or the classifieds for some real bargains.) Then make sure you have fresh batteries for your flashlight. There are lots of battery-powered lanterns on the market. Kerosene lanterns and candles are just fine, but bear in mind they produce a flame. Always a fire hazard.

Now, see how easy that was, and you're on your way to getting your kit together. And oh, by the way, I don't suggest that folks buy a kit. There are hundreds on the market, they usually have stuff in them that you will never use, items that don't fit your needs and, believe it or not, some kits even have low-quality components. It is always best to assemble your own kit. That way you will know what you have and ex-

actly what you don't have. Besides you can go online and see what the commercially available kits have in them, and get ideas for your own. Just remember, survival is not a kit anyway, but it does help to have a few things together. Skills and information are more important than stuff.

Disaster preparedness doesn't have to break your budget, but with a little careful planning, you can, over time, accumulate a few things that will make life a whole lot easier the next time the lights go out. And if this prompts you to go out and buy fresh batteries for that flashlight in your kitchen drawer, or an extra bag of soup mix, then it has served a good purpose.

Dave Robinson is the postmaster in Bandon and the author of "Disaster Prep For The Rest Of Us," available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and other online book-sellers. Send your questions and comments to disasterprep.dave@gmail.com. Previous columns can be found at disasterprepdave.blogspot.com.



WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
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 - **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Predator control and compensation should be increased

To the Editor:

The wolf article in the March 1 edition of the Blue Mountain Eagle struck a very disappointing accord with me. We shouldn't be cutting funding at all to predator control or compensation, in fact there should be marked increases! This only shows our governor's disengagement with problems in Eastern Oregon. If Eastern Oregon follows the rest of the western states that have been forced to allow the introduction of Canadian gray wolves, the population is about to explode. With that, so are the problems. One glaring difference is we don't have the vast wilderness of the other states. Our deer and elk herds won't stand a chance supplying these voracious predators. Rural Eastern Oregon will take the full impact of these roaming packs. Livestock producers and our already shaky economy will take yet another hit. Something I have never understood about these invasive predators is this: All the old timers and predator control people I have talked to have said that the wolves that were here in the 1900s weighed only 70 to 90 pounds. These Canadian gray wolves can top 170 to 190 pounds. Hm... does that mean that we never had Canadian gray wolves here? Now if that is true, shouldn't they be treated the same as the Eurasian collared dove or the lowly eastern brook trout? Somehow I just bet the

problem would be better controlled. I'm sure the western Oregon politicians and our governor would never allow this. Now, I do see one more solution: If Eastern Oregon were annexed into Idaho, the wolf problem could be much better handled. There would be an open season on these Canadian gray wolves. This would solve at least two problems. We would no longer be under the thumb of the "progressive Democrats," and the wolves could be put in their rightful place. Under that scenario, I would even be willing to endure Idaho's sales tax.

Jim Boethin
Canyon City

Cultural exchange breaks down walls

To the Editor:

I visited Mt. Vernon outside John Day for four weeks in 1982. I stayed with Roy and Renae Cates and their four kids in Mt. Vernon. I remember Mr. Cates, who had his own enterprise working as a lumberjack, asking me about the chainsaws made in Sweden. He pronounced the name in such a strange way so, at first, it was impossible for me to understand what he meant. It turned out to be Husqvarna, a brand well known to a lumberjack in Oregon!

I had my own Husqvarna motorcycle when I was 16. I also remember me making Swedish meatballs with an American recipe Mrs. Cates had looked up. It was nothing like real Swedish meatballs, but we had

fun making and eating them. The stay with the Cates family was a wonderful experience and a good example of why a people-to-people exchange program is such a good thing. The Cates family was one out of eight families I stayed with as part of the exchange program organized by 4-H, at that time the world's largest rural youth organization.

I think we desperately need more of those cultural exchange programs more than ever. The last couple of weeks your new president, Mr. Trump, has spoken about my home country in words I thought was not possible.

It is sad to see the leader of the world's most powerful country deliberately spreading fake news in order to fool people who don't take the time or have the possibility to find out for themselves what the rest of the world looks like. It is only when we meet in everyday activities that we can develop understanding for each other's habits and customs. Building walls is not a solution.

Today, I'm a Professor in human-computer interaction at Uppsala University in Sweden. The stay in Oregon helped me appreciate another culture in ways that have helped me organizing research with people coming from all over the planet. This fall, I will organize a conference in Uppsala, and I have invited people I appreciate working with, among them several researchers from the United States.

Anders Jansson
Järlåsa, Uppsala, Sweden

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