

The cost of war, at home and abroad

On Monday, we honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice — giving their life because their country sent them to war.

Americans answer the call. Generation after generation, the urge to serve our nation draws excellent people into military service. They defend us from foreign threats, protect vital interests around the world and gain unique experiences and job skills that strengthen the U.S. once they return to civilian life.

Living here as we do in small communities and rural areas, we take special pride in personally knowing servicemen and women. Spring high school graduation ceremonies often include news about local kids making the leap into becoming adult women and men by joining the armed forces. We then follow their accomplishments and adventures on their parents' Facebook pages and in printed news items. It is among the signature experiences of small-town life to encounter young people we witnessed growing up — perhaps playing on the basketball court — now returned on leave from a military assignment someplace far away.

These relationships between civilians and active-service personnel are some of the strongest glue holding the nation together. It is fundamental to the essential national DNA of the U.S. that we respect and appreciate our fellow citizens who man the guard posts of democracy.

There was a time when Congress and the White House contained many veterans. They had personally witnessed the horrible cost of war, in the form of friends shot down before their eyes. Because there is no draft, there are now few veterans among our nation's top leadership — nor do many of their children serve in the armed forces. War has become something they send other Americans' children to do. And in all fairness, fewer U.S. citizens in general have close kinfolk in the line of fire. Most of us, though, in every station of life share a deep and sincere appreciation for our honored war dead.

Since the awful events of Sept. 11, 2001, it is generally reported that more than 5,000 U.S. service personnel have died. More than 50,000 have been physically wounded. Many more suffer from combat-related stress disorders. So even though the generations that fought in World War II,

Korea and Vietnam are passing away, we will be paying tribute to modern American warriors for the next half century or more.

President Ulysses S. Grant — as good a general as the U.S. ever had — said, "There never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword." Our sad drumbeat of wars in the 20th and 21st centuries informs us that we are still too far away from learning this lesson.

But war is not the true subject for Memorial Day. We honor the personal sacrifices that men and women have made in the name of our nation and its Constitution in many forms.

We were reminded of the ongoing struggle Friday night, as complete strangers came to the aid of two Muslim women on the Portland MAX being harassed by an angry and misguided man, a self-described sociopath and white supremacist. Two of the men who stepped forward — a 53-year-old Army veteran and a 23-year-old recent college graduate — were stabbed to death standing between the knife-wielding attacker and the women.

They paid dearly, as did their families, for standing without hesitation for the American promise.

What we honored on Memorial Day is selfless service to the country. But if the day is to be anything but an excuse for a day off from work, we must put meat on the bones of otherwise empty promises.

History teaches the danger faced by powerful nations where the majority of the citizenry no longer remembers the hardship and realities faced by its defenders. It becomes far too easy to expend their lives for meager pay to achieve too little, then bringing them home and forgetting them.

Repairing the disconnect between decision-makers and these sacrifices is essential to the long-term survival of America's great experiment in democracy. Honoring life is the best payment we can make to the dead.

Meanwhile, genuine respect for America's war dead is best translated into remembering living veterans and tending to their needs. Memorial Day is only the start, not the finish, of recognizing the debt we owe to veterans. Truly honoring them means embodying their values and honor in our own lives every day of the year.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Omnibus bill maintains key community and economic funding

To the Editor:

The recently approved omnibus bill supported by Oregon's members of Congress — Sen. Ron Wyden, Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Greg Walden — maintains key community and economic funding through September 2017. Knowing that Congress is working to sustain these programs for fiscal year 2017 is a good sign for these programs' continued funding in 2018, despite the president's proposal to eliminate financing for these important programs.

Why is this important? Eastern Oregon's public infrastructure, such as water, sewer and wastewater systems, are aging and are in need of repair or replacement. The Water Infrastructure and Innovation Act — strongly supported by Sen. Merkley — provides a source of funding to meet the infrastructure needs in Eastern Oregon. Other programs in the omnibus bill that support Eastern Oregon's community and economic development in a variety of ways include:

- Economic Development Administration contribution through investment in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The CEDS process, led by EDA-designated Economic Development Districts, such as the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation, brings together local stakeholders to assess and plan for regional growth. This funding has created or retained 130 jobs annually within GEODC's seven-county district;
- The Community Development Block Grant to support infrastructure and housing;
- FAA Contract Tower Program, which is vital to sustaining the city of Pendleton's airport; and
- USDA Rural Development funding that supports rural infrastructure, entrepreneurship and job creation.

These programs, and many others, return tax dollars to communities that need them. GEODC will work hard to make sure they remain available here in GEODC's seven-county Eastern Oregon District.

Susan Christensen
Executive director
Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation

Draft Purpose and Need Proposed Action, followed by the August 2015 Purpose and Need Proposed Action, then the September 2015 Scoping Package Update and finally the December 2016 Preliminary EA.

You all had almost two years to play "catch up" with a project that had been announced in the local newspaper. The Draft Finding of No Significant Impact is available, and in it, with Final EA, the FS has chosen which issues to address and which comments to ignore.

It ignores my September 2015 scoping comments referencing County Ordinance 2013-01 (with copy attached) pertaining to public road closures within Grant County, statutes on the power of county governing bodies/electors over matters of county concern and county legal adviser Ron Yockim's email that clearly stated the ordinance was enforceable in spite of the federal government's claim against its legality, which was also challenged by ex-judge Webb, head of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners, and has yet to be decided or is still being shuffled around to be hidden until it pops out with the popularity of a red headed stepchild at a family reunion.

There are county residents putting themselves on the firing line to stand up for your customs and culture, economical interests, public access, Oregon statutes and U.S. constitutional rights while most residents sit back, complain and moan, and do nothing while dissenters posture and pose with selfies taken during protests proclaiming "not my sheriff."

At least that product hasn't spilled over into "not my president" yet or burning of the American flag. So sit back and relax while Agenda 21 gets served up to you on a platter.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Ratio of road closures to business closures

To the Editor:

As I was driving through John Day, I took notice of King's being out of business, and it got me thinking: What ratio of road closure would it take to keep our stores open in town?

It's a simple question. The forest supervisor says roads must be closed for projects to move forward, six miles here, 20 miles there.

With each "project," another set of road closures, which should equate to more timber at the mill, if you believe the forest supervisor.

So, what has the Forest Service and the Blue Mountains Forest Partners identified as the correct ratio of road closures to have in a project to keep King's, McDonalds, the bowling alley or other businesses going?

Obviously six to 20 miles isn't enough, maybe take half away, maybe that would meet the need. Or, maybe the opposite is true.

Maybe road closures make an economy less stable, therefore reducing the number of businesses we can retain. Let's see, prior to all this collaboration/cooperation, we had more businesses in town than we do today. Is there a correlation there? Hmm, seems to be.

Maybe the answer is letting the community have open access to the forest and utilize the resources as was intended in 1908 when the Malheur National Forest was formed, as an economic resource to the local community, not as a financial burden to the nation.

The irony of the Malheur is found in the name of the forest, French for misfortune. It has become just that, a misfortune to those it fails to support and to those businesses it lets wither on the vine.

The Forest Service was housed under the U.S. Department of Agriculture to treat "public lands" they administer as "agricultural grounds" to grow a sustainable product the nation could benefit from, not to be a "nature preserve" in a National Parks style. If that was the intent, they would be better suited for the Department of Interior.

We need more access, not less, to sustain our communities.

Ron Rue
Prairie City

European immigrant problems

To the Editor:

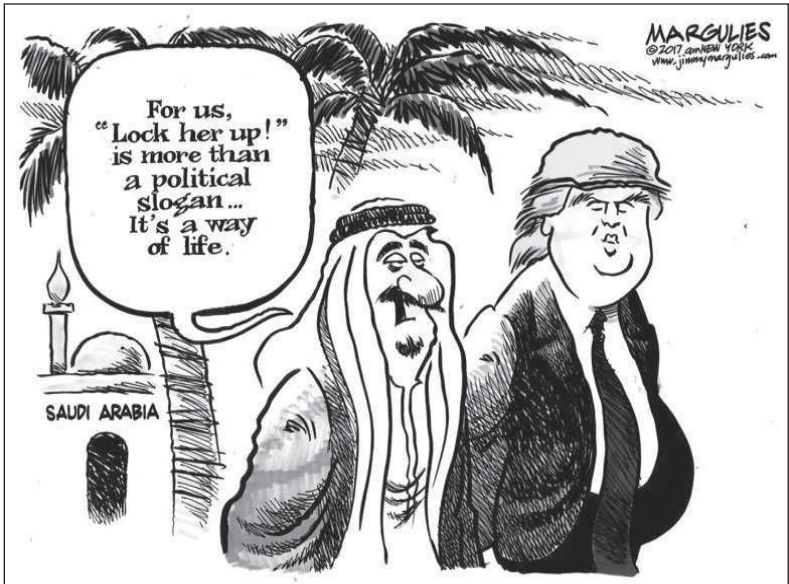
A truck assault in Berlin, Germany, is one of many problems Germany is experiencing with 1 million Middle East and North African immigrants, mostly young males, who are committing murders, robberies and assaults on German Christians and Jews, especially women; and Chancellor Merkel wants to take in another 1 million. The German interior minister said German citizens with dual nationalities who are terrorists and/or a threat to national security should be deported.

These people come from a different culture, and their loyalty is not to Germany. They do not respect native Germans and consider them infidels to be converted or made to pay tribute or killed.

Germany is reaping the whirlwind of what it sowed in the 1930s and 1940s when it murdered about 25 million European Christians and Jews, especially Russians and Poles. Since then Germany has tried to make up for its barbarism and guilt complex by opening its borders to lawless migrants.

The United States should pay attention to the immigrant problems in Germany, France, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium and other European countries, and implement strict immigration policies to bolster our security and prevent potential terrorists of any background from entering our country.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry, New Hampshire



Agenda 21 on a platter

To the Editor:

I am taking the opportunity to comment on the Forest Service May 2017 Final Environmental Assessment of the Summit Creek Landscape Restoration project. Twenty-one people have "standing" to state objections.

So, I guess I am asking: "Where the heck were you when you had the opportunity to speak up for our county's economy and access?" This project raised its head back in July 2015 with the



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PUBLISHER..... MARISSA WILLIAMS, MARISSA@BMEAGLE.COM
EDITOR..... SEAN HART, EDITOR@BMEAGLE.COM
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT..... CAITLIN BROOKS, CAITLIN@BMEAGLE.COM
REPORTER..... RYLAN BOGGS, RYLAN@BMEAGLE.COM
COMMUNITY NEWS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
SPORTS..... ANGEL CARPENTER, ANGEL@BMEAGLE.COM
MARKETING REP..... KIM KELL, ADS@BMEAGLE.COM
OFFICE MANAGER..... LINDSAY BULLOCK, OFFICE@BMEAGLE.COM

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