

Hear women roar

The latter half of 2017 will be remembered as the time that women all over the globe drew a line in the sand.

No longer will sexual harassment be endured silently. No longer will abusers operate with impunity. No longer will men dominate discussion and decision making in board rooms, capitol buildings and households across the country. And no longer will the people who hear these stories demean the accusers and pick through their lives like vultures in search of rotten meat.

Everyone in this country remains innocent until proven guilty. But the onus is now on those who have been accused of heinous acts — accused by people with nothing to gain but to bring some sense of justice.

It's an admirable, dangerous time.

Beware the court of public opinion. And beware a moral flattening — where years of predatory behavior require the same punishment as a poor choice of words or a momentary lapse. Or a thoroughly reported article is given the same weight as a Twitter accusation.

The sword is coming for people we admire for their art, or athletic prowess, or their control of a corporate board room, or for their political views that mesh so well with our own.

Beware then, too, the desire to make sexual assault and harassment just another partisan division. Find no additional joy from the demise of an enemy, and do not give those whom you admire unfair protection from claims of abuse. That's how this issue became so prevalent and so powerful in the first place.

Politics certainly did play a part in the arrival of this moment. Donald Trump's electoral victory, despite his deeply problematic relationships with women and his televised brags of sexual assault, helped usher in this age. Charlotte Alter of Time Magazine wrote during

the campaign that "the 2016 election was a referendum on what women could achieve and what men could get away with."

A majority of Americans will no longer stand by the results of that referendum and want immediate action to remedy the situation. The 2.6 million-strong Women's March the day after Trump's inauguration put the pressure on.

That movement wasn't just about sexual harassment and assault. It's ultimately about a fair society in which all viewpoints are considered, and women are not held back when they choose not to play games with powerful men.

And that has made us look at our own back yard.

There is a noticeable dearth of female voices in Eastern Oregon. Although Grant County was once led by County Judge Lorene Allen — a true Renaissance woman who was also the county's civil defense coordinator, an author, a pilot, a ham radio operator and a multi-talented musician — the county's current commissioners are all men. While women serve on most city councils and boards, they are generally outnumbered.

No woman has ever represented Eastern Oregon in the statehouse. Oregon has only elected one female U.S. senator in its history. And five of Oregon's six current representatives in the U.S. House are men.

These are deeply distressing statistics.

There are women in positions of leadership in education and business in Eastern Oregon, but to have so many levers of power in the hands of men is dangerous and limiting. If we only include half of our population in important decisions, those decisions are bound to be half as good.

Eastern Oregon can do better. Women across the region should follow Allen's lead, demand their rightful power and take it.



GUEST COMMENT

Capital credit payouts

By Sandra Ghormley
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

I am often asked why capital credits are not paid to Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members as they are earned. Most of these inquiries follow directly after OTEC has mailed allocation notices informing members of their new capital credit balance.

Capital credits are excess revenues — also called margins — earned during a business year. Because OTEC is a nonprofit electric cooperative, margins belong to its members who bought electricity during that specific year, and are allocated and stored in the member's capital credit account.

When OTEC's financial condition allows — and upon board approval — capital credits are returned to members on an annual basis. Capital credits are routinely distributed in December each year. This year, \$2.95 million will be returned to members. This is the largest amount to be retired in OTEC's history.

You may receive a capital credit check if the amount is more than \$15. If the amount is less than \$15, it is applied as a credit on your energy account. Each time the board approves a retirement, your capital credit account balance is reduced by

the amount paid.

You may wonder why your capital credits are not paid in their entirety every year, as opposed to a little each year. This is because margins are accumulated and reinvested in capital improvement projects for up to 30 years, which keeps the OTEC system in good working order so electric service is available when you need it.

Power lines, poles and a myriad of other electrical equipment and devices are essential to sustain reliable, affordable service and are a few examples of items OTEC buys for capital improvement projects. Most electric cooperatives acquire capital this way. What is important to know is that OTEC reinvests margins to minimize borrowing, which ultimately helps keep rates competitive.

One special condition allows a capital credit balance to be "cashed out" or returned before the 30-year maturity date. When notified of a member's death, OTEC's bylaws allow the surviving spouse or executor of the estate to apply for early retirement of all balances. Please note, joint memberships are not eligible for early retirement unless both members are deceased.

There are three options for the spouse, executor or heirs to consider:

- Wait for the capital credits to be processed through the normal retirement schedule, which may take up to 30 years.

- Apply for early retirement of the deceased member's capital credit account.

- Donate the capital credit balance to the OTEC scholarship fund. Each year, OTEC awards more than twenty \$5,000 scholarships to local students who want to advance their education or training beyond high school.

Please contact our office for more information on early retirement of a deceased member's capital credits. You may also find more information, including examples, at otecc.com/members/capital-credits.

During the past 25 years, OTEC has returned more than \$33 million in capital credits to its members — a sign your electric cooperative is financially healthy, stable and working for your best interest. Capital credits are just one of the many benefits of being a member-owner of Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative.

Thanks for asking, and keep those questions coming!

Sandra Ghormley is the director of member and program services for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative. She can be contacted at 541-524-2822.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voter rights and representation

To the Editor:

The Blue Mountain Eagle reported that the John Day City Council voted "to organize an interagency task force to dissolve the current dispatch center and to negotiate a transition plan for a new 911 jurisdictional plan to become operational by 2020."

Upon reading that excerpt, I feel it is necessary to share words that reflect the opinion of many Grant County residents who do not fall within the assumed "affluent self-appointed enlightened residents" that are represented by the John Day City Council:

"My first response when reading this Blue Mountain Eagle article was 'What?!' Still no answers to questions, but regurgitating the same non-responses/excuses to questions raised. It seems that the John Day City Council chooses to keep the bit in their teeth and continue with the runaway process — determined that they and they only will be the deciders of what direction the 911 service and the broadband internet service will go. A better option would be to have a countywide, 911 User Board to research the options."

"Well you know those 'internet trolls' want facts, not fear mongering, they want real, sustainable solutions not taxes. They want accountability not passing the burden and blame. They want truth not misinformation. That's all the city and 911 local page did was try and use fear and people's emotion and mis-

information to try and pass this."

"The same cohorts are now developing the same narrative regarding broadband service, expecting to once again label fiscal conservatives who are urging a cautious, deliberate and collaborative approach to expanding local broadband service, as ignorant mountain folks (internet trolls) who don't know what's best for themselves. Yet, once again, nobody is suggesting that we shouldn't have high-speed internet, but rather are raising issues with yet another city-designed initiative with potentially substantial risks and costs to the greater county."

The residents of Grant County apparently have no say in extravagant county spending. The "we are the governing body, we call the shots" county duo will decide that. What happened to voter rights and representation of all county residents?

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Wolves harm big game populations

To the Editor:

In America, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty unless a wolf is involved. For nearly 300 years a bounty on wolves existed throughout the country. Once the wolf was extirpated, livestock depredations ended and big game flourished.

Since the Canadian wolf was introduced and rapidly spread in some Western states, livestock have been killed and elk and moose pop-

ulations have been decimated.

According to armchair experts, wolves will not harm humans. However, animals the size of moose and buffalo are prey to wolves and sometimes to only a single determined wolf.

Those who believe in yelling and pepper spray, by all means use it if a wolf comes charging in. If a firearm is used in defense and you weren't there, then your opinion does not count for much. The person that felt they were in danger and the intent of the wolf is all that matters.

When in danger, when in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout. Unless you have a gun and use it effectively.

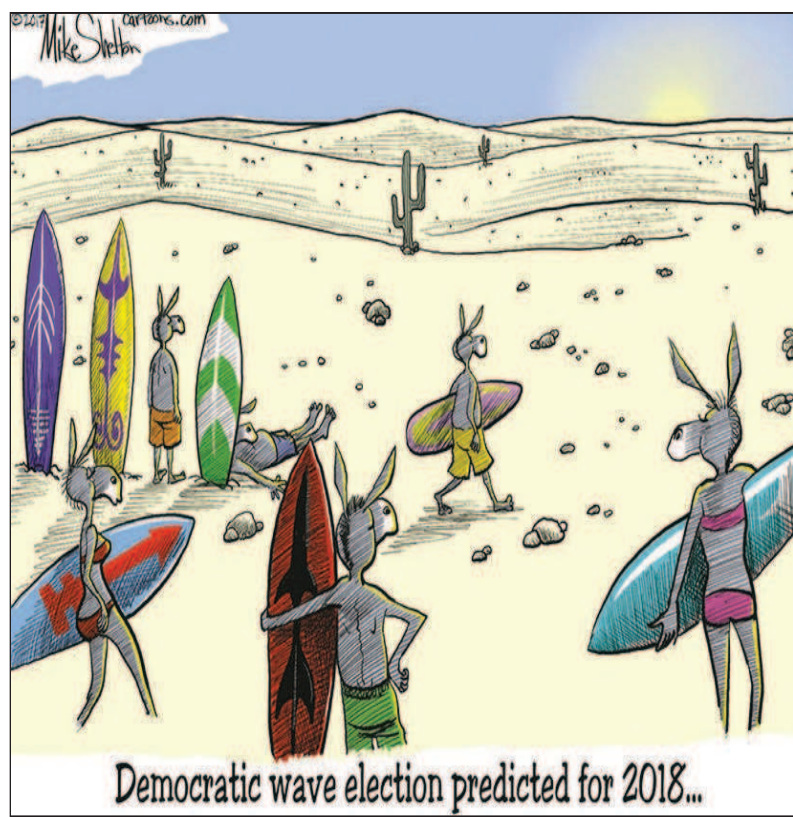
Dave Traylor
John Day

Going the extra mile

To the Editor:

Thanksgiving morning, I found out I had no internet service. I called the after-hours number, which is located in Utah. A very helpful lady tried to help doing the computer things. After maybe 30 minutes, she told me that the problem would have to be corrected at the local level. Oh, great, no internet until Monday, if then. Thursday evening, during a big rainstorm, the Otelco repairman shows up and does his thing outside, and my internet was back and running. I was more than impressed with Oregon Telephone sending a repairman out on Thanksgiving in a storm.

Eddie Smith
Prairie City



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PUBLISHER..... MARISSA WILLIAMS, MARISSA@BMEAGLE.COM
EDITOR..... SEAN HART, EDITOR@BMEAGLE.COM
REPORTER..... RICHARD HANNERS, RICK@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
OFFICE ASSISTANT..... ALIXANDRA PERKINS, OFFICE@BMEAGLE.COM

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