

Political hate dangerous for our society

Bumper stickers proclaim, “Kate Brown is not my governor.” T-shirts, magnets and decals declare, “Donald Trump is not my president.”

Those items are reprehensible. They are far from the magnitude of the shootings at a Pittsburgh synagogue and the mailings of pipe bombs to high-profile detractors of President Trump.

But they are dangerous to our political souls and those around us, if not to our physical bodies. Kate Brown in Oregon and Donald Trump in America hold public offices that represent all of us, regardless of whether we agree with them or not.

Public disagreement and civilized protest can be a sign of a healthy republic, but defining your life by the protest can be destructive.

It certainly appears to have been for Cesar Sayoc, who has been charged with sending pipe bombs to prominent Democrats. His ardent support for Trump isn't what defined his life — his hatred toward others is.

Ronald Lowy, a lawyer for Sayoc's family, described it well in a New York Times interview: “He lacked an identity. He created a persona.”

That persona was stoked anonymously in a like-minded online community, and his actions, while ultimately failing their intended purpose, showed the logical conclusion to such rage.

In Pittsburgh, the consequences of that anger were tragic, as 11 people were gunned down during religious worship.

Although it will come as news to many partisans, political views can be polar opposite and legitimate. Neither Brown nor Trump deserves vilification.

Trump has intensified America's political and cultural divides through his polarizing, us-vs.-them mentality. Sadly, many Democrats have responded in kind. There is no good end to this game.

Such rhetoric might be

appropriate for a football coach, but this isn't a sporting event. While that sort of team loyalty may work on the field against an opponent, it doesn't work when the two sides are on the same American team.

This is not a plea for everyone to play nicely, but we must remember that parking lot brawls do not change the outcome of the game, or advance the sport.

We suggest that if people are dismayed by the current political tenor — and we believe most are — they take it upon themselves to change the tone. This might sound like a contradiction, but the place to start is with those who share their views — the candidates, political parties and organizations whom they support.

Yelling at or degrading another person will not change their mind. Research indicates that such arguing usually cements a person's existing view. Instead, people have greater opportunity to influence the like-minded individuals who already have their trust. Together, help them see the value in pulling back on the rhetoric and reclaiming truth instead of pushing insinuation.

Consider what could happen if voters demonstrated irrevocable civility and demanded civility from the candidates they supported. Until that becomes the societal expectation, the current political climate will only worsen.

A place to start is Oregon's gubernatorial race, where both major candidates and their allies have been competing over who can wallow deeper in the gutters of political slime, mistruths and negativity.

Kate Brown and Knute Buehler are both decent individuals, though you would not know that from the opposition campaign ads. Both deserve respect for aspiring to the office of governor. Neither is perfect.

Yet, after the election, one will have the task of unifying Oregon.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Smoke alert

To the Editor:

Another beautiful, sunny, warm fall day with no clouds in the sky. Just smoke. Wait, the radio news says the EPA is declaring a health alert for us here in Eastern Oregon until Tuesday next week. No burning outside; if heating with wood, use as little as possible. Older people should stay indoors. The very next news story: Forest Service continuing to control burn in three areas in and around the John Day Valley. One plan was to burn 700 acres. Evidently the government doesn't have to listen to the government, but we do. Something is really wrong, and I'm tired of living here where the air should be clean and clear most days of the year. Now we live in smoke from April to October. You can give numerous reasons and excuses and you would be partly right, but the main reason is the mismanagement of our natural renewable resources.

Ken Koser
Prairie City

Ag associations support Buehler

To the Editor:

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association and the Oregon Farm Bureau encourage Oregonians to vote for gubernatorial candidate Knute Buehler in the governor's election.

Knute has demonstrated he understands and cares about the challenges facing rural Oregonians, and he'll serve our needs to help us overcome those challenges. It's essential for natural resource stakeholders to unify behind our candidate.

Your vote does make a difference. The mindset that “only Portland votes count” is not true. In the 2010 election, the number of rural voters who voted, but left the governor slot blank, was larger than the difference between John Kitzhaber and Chris Dudley. Your vote matters.

This race may be closer than ever before. Not voting, or writing in a name, is a vote against the values of rural Oregonians, and it's a vote for more of the same in Salem. The stakes are too high to risk.

A quote from Ronald Reagan: “Die-hard conservatives thought that if I couldn't get everything I asked for, I should jump off the cliff with the flag flying — go down in flames. No, if I can get 70 or 80 percent of what it is I'm trying to get ... I'll take that and then continue to try to get the rest in the future.”

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association and the Oregon Farm Bureau support Knute Buehler for governor and encourage you to vote in this crucial election.

Jerome Rosa, executive director
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Sharon Waterman, president
Oregon Farm Bureau

Forest Service prescription burn strategy should be reconsidered

To the Editor:

I'm writing on behalf of many concerned Grant County residents. I've heard more complaints about the smoke this year, as the result of the Forest Service's controlled burns, than ever. I think people are getting weary of breathing smoke, from June until just about the end of the year. If it's not our forests burning up by the millions of acres, it's the Forest Service swinging drip torches.

The following excerpt is from the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) website.

“One of the main components of smoke is particle pollution (PM), which is a regulated air pollutant. Wildland fires, which include wildfires and prescribed fires, now account for 40 percent of the total PM emitted in the country, making it a major source of the pollutant, which

causes lung and health problems.” (<https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/danger-wildland-fire-smoke-public-health>)

So on one hand we have the EPA (a government agency) acknowledging the adverse effects of wildland fire smoke, and on the other we have the Forest Service (another government agency) exuberantly making more of it. Do you see anything wrong with this picture?

What's worse is that the controlled burns we see here on the Malheur forest provide no measurable benefit to the forest. The reason being, they're only carried out on tiny fractions of the forest and in areas that are actually in decent health. The Malheur forest is 1.7 million acres, and most controlled burns don't exceed more than a few thousand acres. The largest controlled burns represent less than 0.3 percent of the forest.

So, the Forest Service creates large quantities of smoke while treating only minuscule portions of the forest. These controlled burns do nothing for the high majority of the Malheur forest, which remains in sorry shape.

Also consider that smoke is especially harmful to the young and elderly, and people with respiratory conditions like emphysema and asthma. A number of such people live in areas like Bates, which experience high concentrations of smoke from controlled burns.

In conclusion, I believe the Forest Service's “prescription burn” strategy should be reconsidered.

Gregg Boethin
Canyon City

Burns should not take place during stagnation

To the Editor:

On Oct. 18 at 9:30 a.m. the National Weather Service in Pendleton issued an air quality alert for a stagnant air mass over much of the state. This alert was broadcast on television and weather channels. People were advised of dangerous levels of pollutants and also asked to limit wood stove burning where possible and to do no outdoor burning. The alert was lifted Oct. 23 at 10 a.m. During this air stagnation alert period, the U.S. Forest Service, in flagrant disregard of air quality and the health of citizens, continued to do prescribed burns throughout Grant and surrounding counties. After contacting three Department of Environmental Quality offices, the State Fire Marshal and the USFS in John Day, I learned the USFS does not ask permission to burn and has no oversight by any other agency. DEQ in Pendleton said they frequently burn when they shouldn't and certainly should not have been burning during the period of poor air quality. DEQ urged citizens to make complaints. Forgive the pun, but we have not had any “breathing space” between the catastrophic wildfires this summer and the USFS prescribed burns. Complaints have already been filed with DEQ, EPA and the USFS Region 6 director. I urge more citizens to register their concerns with these agencies.

Patti Yellow Hand Bull
Monument

Larson has ‘experience and aptitude’

To the Editor:

My family and I have been fortunate enough to get to know Gordon Larson and his family. I was surprised, and disheartened, to see such a negative ad from Mr. Palmer last week, and I'm glad Gordon has stayed away from that. Grant County has the potential to restore the population that it had a few decades ago. To do this, we need forward-thinking leaders who can work towards a shared vision and diversified, strong local economy. It requires someone with the experience

and aptitude of Gordon Larson.

Negative campaigns stifle Grant County's progress. Gordon lives and works in Grant County, and has not only served us as an Oregon State Police lieutenant, but for 12 years on the Grant School District 3 board, including 10 as chairman. That's the kind of dedication, budget expertise and teamwork we need in a commissioner.

Gordon has spent the last year personally representing his campaign, hosted 13 meet and greets and personally manned his own fair booth. He's accessible and not afraid of public speaking or meeting the people of Grant County face-to-face. It's good to know that he won't shy away from publicly representing our best interests and is willing to speak up and stand up for Grant County on a local, state and national level.

That's the kind of leader we need. Please vote for Gordon Larson.

Sherry Nehl
John Day

Larson not operating from extreme ideology

To the Editor:

Gordon Larson has broad support from a wide variety of Grant County voters. He's reached out to all corners of Grant County, engaging Republicans, Democrats, Independents, ranchers, loggers, state and federal employees, teachers, law enforcement officials, “old timers,” newcomers, etc., etc. When I see his campaign signs, letters of support to the editor and social media responses, I see names from the entire spectrum of Grant County citizens. Isn't that what we want in a county commissioner? Someone who respects all voices, who is qualified to engage many perspectives and who truly wants to work for all of us and the home we love? The position of commissioner is nonpartisan. Gordon is not operating from an extreme ideology or a personal agenda, but rather from reason, lawfulness and a genuine desire to unify and grow our county. Join me in moving toward a civil, inclusive future for the residents of our county and vote for Gordon Larson.

Lindsay Rausch
Prairie City

Open your eyes

To the Editor:

How would you encourage the older generation in Grant County to open their eyes to what will make Grant County a good place for young people to live? That was a question asked of Gordon Larson at his last meet and greet in Canyon City. The speaker also said that she believes young people want to stay in Grant County, but they need better job opportunities, better internet and more input into how our county is run. She pointed out that some of the county elders are looking backwards into a time that they remember, instead of opening their eyes to what the younger generation needs. Now is the time to make a positive future for the young people in Grant County. I believe Gordon Larson understands that need and will work to make Grant County a place where young people can earn a living.

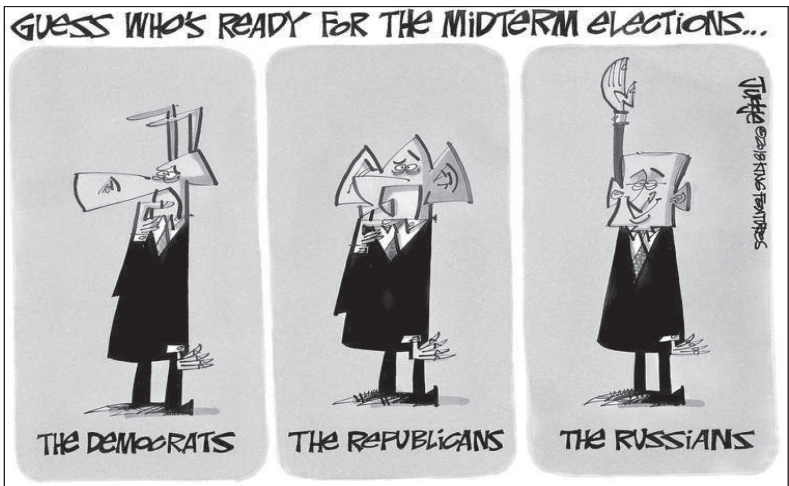
Sheilah Mezzo
John Day

Choose Larson for commissioner

To the Editor:

When we vote, we are choosing someone to represent us. I voted for Gordon Larson to serve on the county court because he will do what is best for Grant County. I urge my fellow citizens to choose Gordon Larson.

Nancy Viggers
Prairie City



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