

Town hall fails to answer all questions

Sen. Ron Wyden should get kudos for sponsoring a virtual town hall session in August regarding his River Democracy Act, and the esteemed lawmaker did a good job of answering questions and trying to alleviate fears. But his legislation still carries more questions than answers.

The River Democracy Act will add more than 4,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers across the state, but the idea sparked some opposition from rural county elected officials and concerns it will impact grazing, potential timber harvests and affect recreational access.

For the most part, the bill seems to be a good-faith attempt in conservation and carries with it several interesting and valid protections.

Yet, there is a bit of an unease with a piece of legislation that carves out so much acreage based on what is essentially a crowd-sourcing attempt where 15,000 Oregonians delivered their personal choices for what should be protected under the proposed legislation.

Wyden has done a good job of answering questions and has assured the public the bill will have no impact on private land or existing property, graz-

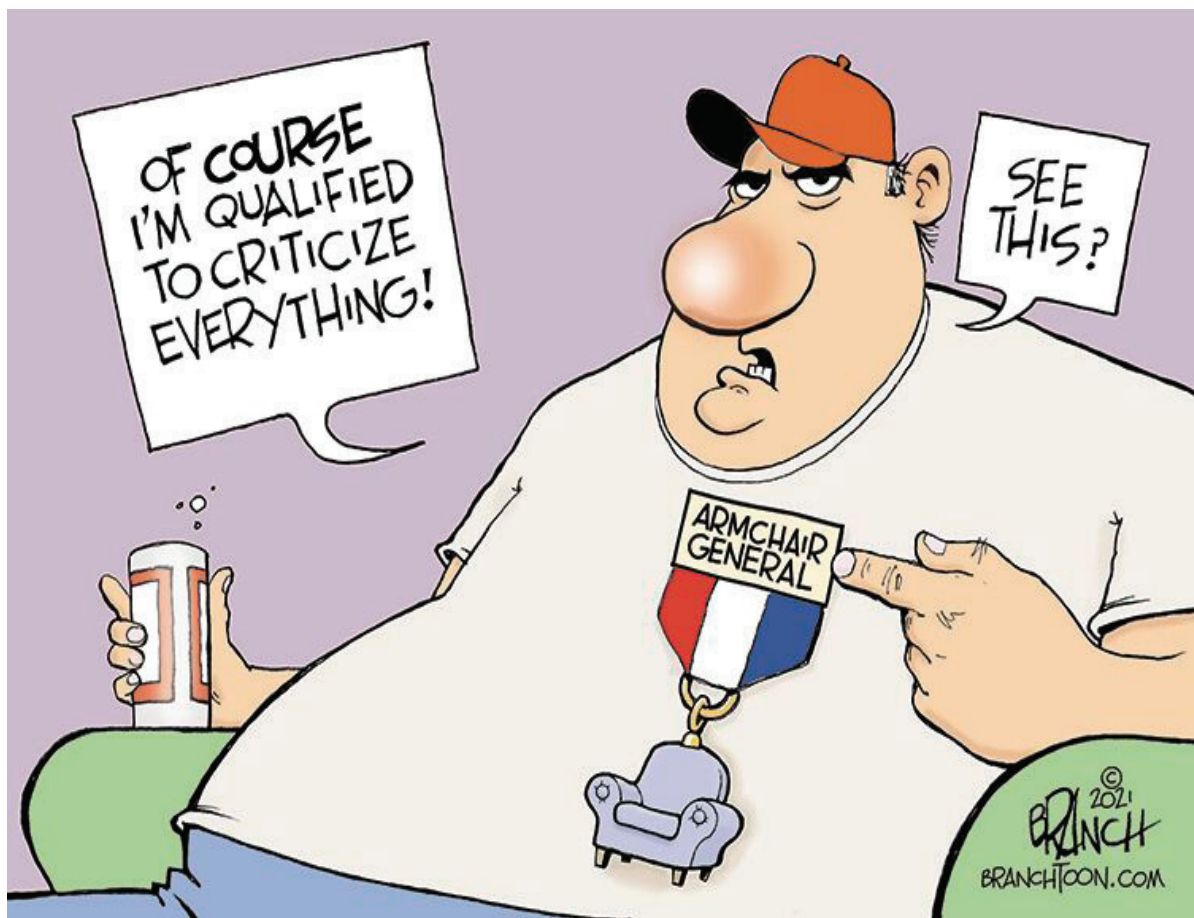
ing or water rights.

Wyden has stated the bill will apply only to federal lands. The bill also contains provisions that will require the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to review wildfire risks in wild and scenic river corridors. Each agency then has up to six years to develop a mitigation plan. The bill also would create a \$30 million fund to restore riparian areas that are scorched by wildfires.

Both are excellent measures that are, in fact, long overdue. And yet, Wyden's ambitious plan leaves a sense of disquiet.

For one, there doesn't seem to be as much interaction with local officials on the broad strokes of the blueprint as one would expect. Some county commissioners in some portions of Eastern Oregon have said they were never consulted about the bill, a piece of legislation that will impact their areas of responsibility.

Secondly, bills such as these have a bad habit of creating unintended consequences. What appears right and proper now may evolve into a problem down the road. Not for the senator, nor for environmentalists who want the legislation, but for people who live in the areas where the bill will make its biggest impact.



EDUCATION CORNER

An essential life skill

We all have busy lives filled with activities from the moment we wake up until our head hits the bed. Yet quite often, at some point in the day, you might hear "I'm bored" or "I don't have anything to do" from one of your kids. Some child development specialists say we often fail to teach our children one important life skill, dealing with boredom. In addition, children's days are filled with activities planned by others, and they can find it difficult to direct themselves to an activity of their own interests.

In her research, Dr. Sandi Mann from the University of Central Lancashire looked at what we often associate with boredom, lack of something to do. When we view boredom from this lens, it allows children to depend on others for their activities, and restricts their creativity. This is not just at home but in our educational system as well. Our schools have cut students' recess times greatly over the past 20 decades. This has impacted children's abilities to develop friendships, work with others and create activities with others independently.

Who would have ever thought making sure that our kids always had activities and events to attend or do might be harming them? Developing and learning how to create



Dr. Scott Smith

their own interests and fill their downtime is a life skill we expect our children to execute. Yet, as adults, we often experience frustration when our children face downtime. The child hasn't learned or developed the skills to fill this unknown time. Instead, they become dependent on others to fill their day with activities, and when faced with unplanned or free time, we hear, "I have nothing to do. I'm bored."

Providing a downtime where a child has to spend time on their own is not free time for the parents at first. Learning not to be bored is a process and takes time. You cannot start with 60 minutes of downtime. You have to build up to 60 minutes. Start with 10 minutes and provide a couple of choices, such as reading a book or drawing a picture. When you hear those beautiful words, "I'm done!" All you have to say is, "You still have more time to choose something else." This is where the learning takes place, so be ready for the pushback. Stick to the 10 minutes. After a bit, you'll be able to increase by 5-minute intervals. Just as you cannot run a marathon the first time out and must build your endurance,

the same is true in learning how to deal with boredom. By providing your child with downtime, you can teach them how to engage in activities independently and not depend on others to create activities for them.

Some schools have cut their recess times during the school day because of the demands on instructional time and to avoid dealing with student misbehavior. They found that cutting recess time cut down students' misbehaviors. Yet, is that best for them? Instead of using this time as a teaching/developmental time, schools shorten the time to run and play, shortening the time to practice these developmental skills.

We so often assume children can use free time for productive things when it is a skill that parents and teachers need to foster. Take the time to guide children out of boredom and model and share what you are doing during your downtime.

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their parent-teacher liaison.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Marketing on social media

In today's world, it is essential that your company has a strong social media presence. Given that well over 90% of businesses utilize a variety of platforms to market their products or services, it's essential to find the right strategy and a way to stand out from the competition.

First, it's necessary to decide which social media networks will best reach your desired target audience. Using a social media platform which your customers don't begin to understand or will never access, obviously won't drive sales. For many, Facebook is the best place to start simply given the sheer volume of users (over a billion daily). Instagram and Pinterest are additional options.

Engaging with customers by creating an open-ended dialogue helps create organic conversations. Inform them about an industry related topic, share ideas and even ask for advice or allow them to share an opinion about your products and services. While it's important to remain professional, you can also show your sense of humor and post a picture of your favorite four-legged friend. Make it real.



Greg Smith

Interesting photos of what's happening at your business (even a sneak preview or behind the scenes photos) are a great way to attract attention. It's not always necessary to accompany the photo with text — a compelling photo just keeps that top of the mind awareness rolling. Find creative ways to demonstrate your expertise through "how-to" content — informative videos are a great way to accomplish this.

Be down to earth. It doesn't always have to be about you — take advantage of national observance days to create interesting posts. These can be used to raise awareness or to simply have a little fun. And who doesn't need a little levity these days? International Peach Pie Day, Polar Plunge Day, Festival of Sleep Day. You get the picture.

If customers are looking for a product or service you cannot provide, it's a great opportunity to offer recommendations for other businesses — perhaps those with whom you shop personally. This helps

build trust with your customers and will foster valuable business to business relationships.

Always be gracious. Take the time to show appreciation to your customers and remember that not everyone is going to love you. If someone has a complaint, acknowledge their concern and express how providing exceptional service is always your goal. Contact them offline to explore options to resolve the issue, and of course, if someone is being vulgar or socially inappropriate, the delete and block buttons are at your ready.

The bottom line is social media is an excellent, affordable and effective way to market and brand your business. Whether you undertake this yourself or employ the services of a professional, finding ways to set yourself apart from your competition and engage your clients to increase revenue is a key part of your continued growth.

Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center, 1607 Gekeler Lane, Room 148 in La Grande. For free, confidential business advising, call 541-962-1532 or email eousbdc@gmail.com.

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- SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
(including online access)
- One year \$51
 - Monthly autopay \$4.25

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187
USPS 226-340

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