

OUR VIEW

New governor needs a plan for education

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Let's repeat that.

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Plenty of goals, plans, programs and initiatives are out there. Almost every legislative session something new and different gets passed. State employees and school district officials then go off to add the latest churn on top of the churn.

Having a broad, statewide plan is no guarantee of success. But Oregon does need a long-term approach to education goals. It needs measurements. It needs reporting requirements. It needs specifics about how funding gets us to goals and how new initiatives fit in.

Much of that exists. What is missing is how it all fits together in a detailed road map for the future. Any state plan should be heavy on goals and providing performance data and easy on district flexibility to reach goals. There would also need to be a mechanism for accountability.

What are our candidates for governor going to do? They can reflect parental dissatisfaction easily enough. What are their plans for statewide improvement? Do they believe Oregon needs a statewide education road map?

Oregon's public education is far from a mess in every classroom in every school district. It succeeds for many students. And not every education problem is directly related to bad teachers, bad curriculum or poor education investments.

But Oregon's public education system does have problems. Here are some facts from a new state audit of public education:

Less than 25% of Oregon students meet proficiency standards in math in 11th grade.

Oregon's graduation rate may be improving. It has still been near the bottom in the nation.

A statewide review in 2020 found only a third of Oregon children eligible for early intervention special education programs had access to them.

And many of the students that are performing poorly in the system are minorities or low income.

Oregon is getting its level of performance with more recent investment in education. Measure 98 was passed in 2016 to increase graduation rates and career readiness. It was essentially another \$800 per high school student per year. Oregon also established a corporate activity tax in 2019 to bring in what was hoped to be an extra \$1 billion a year to improve education in early childhood and K-12.

We are going to have that new governor in not so very many months. It looks like Oregonians will have three major candidates to choose from: Democrat Tina Kotek, independent Betsy Johnson and Republican Christine Drazan. Which one would be the most likely to deliver a plan for improving K-12 education and pull it off? We don't see anything like that on their campaign websites. Should it be?



OFF THE BEATEN PATH Of women and woodworking

“Anyone interested in woodworking?” asked a woman.

The women's group explored ideas for their next project. They'd sewn flannel, baby receiving blankets for humanitarian needs, enjoyed lessons on baking, quilting, canning, gardening, and home repairs.

“My husband is a cabinetmaker,” the woman added. “Sometimes he gives woodworking lessons. If anyone is interested, he agreed to show us how to make a breadboard.”

Saturday morning the group gathered at the carpentry shop. On a table, the cabinetmaker stacked wood strips about an inch wide and a couple feet long made from a variety of woods with names from the exotic to the common. The colors of the wood ranged from rosy-red to ebony, and from tan to deep brown. The cabinetmaker showed us how to lay out wood strips, glue, and hold parts together with wood clamps.

The next week after sanding and applying a food-grade finish, each participant went home with a personalized breadboard. After finishing that project, the group moved on elsewhere to scrapbooking and family history research.

I asked the cabinetmaker about the possibility of a woodworking class on another project — I wanted to make a six-inch wooden recipe box for recipe cards. No problem. The cabinet-



Jean Ann Moultrie

maker's wife and I would work on projects made of wood.

I wondered if my love of wooden objects dated back to the hours in my childhood I spent perched in trees.

I paid for a lesson and the wood. Topic for the first day of class: Safety. While clad in my safety goggles and earplugs, I received lectures on the importance of not leaving a finger behind in a saw blade. Then equipment demonstrations — a multitude of saws: table, band, miter, circular. And more equipment: router, orbital sander, jointer, planer, lathe, drill press, dust collector, chisels, screwdrivers, etc.

Second class: The wife decided instead to work on a craft and laid out fabric on a table.

Time to sketch out my project. What if I build something bigger than a recipe box? No problem. I'd pay a fee each time I came to class, along with payment for the lumber.

My six-inch recipe box turned into a six-foot baking center/dish hutch base with ceiling-high shelving!

I thought if I built something more complex, I would be able to build lots of projects on my own — just follow the directions. Not so. The master craftsman had to tell me each step,

in detail.

“Cut that board along the pencil mark. Don't sand the veneer board too deep. Those other boards need more sanding.”

One class, I used the “biscuit cutter” to make “biscuits.” In technical jargon, the “thingamajigs” fit into the “doohickies” to hold the “what-chamacallits” in place. One surprise in woodworking: Glue holds a lot of the parts in place. Nails and wood clamps hold pieces until the glue dries.

The big thrill — cutting boards where the saw blade spews sawdust all over. A powerful activity on a Saturday morning!

The top of the base turned out the most spectacular. The teacher located stunning bird's eye maple boards — and when cut, glued, sanded and polished with a food-grade beeswax, I thought it looked too beautiful to use to knead dough. Instead, on it I displayed hand-thrown pottery and a butter churn.

Craftsmen would rate my project as plain. I thought it wonderful — months of labor. Shows you don't have to be the best, or even good at something, to enjoy doing it.

Jean Ann Moultrie is a Grant County writer. She hopes someday to turn wood on a lathe to make six-inch-high candlesticks and not end up making 16-foot Greek columns for the porch.

OUR VIEW

It only takes a single spark

May is Wildfire Awareness Month and while the weather the past few weeks delivered wet and cold conditions, it is wise for residents to remember the hot and dry days of summer are just around the corner.

Warnings about fire danger are now nearly routine because of the dangerous, overgrown state of our forests. The climate isn't helping much either. Add drought to the bigger picture and a recipe for potential disaster is mixed and ready.

Yet the climate can't take all the blame for dangerous wild and forest fires. Blazes accidentally — or otherwise — ignited by humans continue to be a growing problem.

That means those of us who want to take advantage of the great vistas and mountains around our region need to be aware of the danger from fire.

Fires start with a spark and that means campers, hikers and anyone else trudging throughout the great expanse of wilderness around us should

take heed to minimize the potential for an inadvertent miscue with fire.

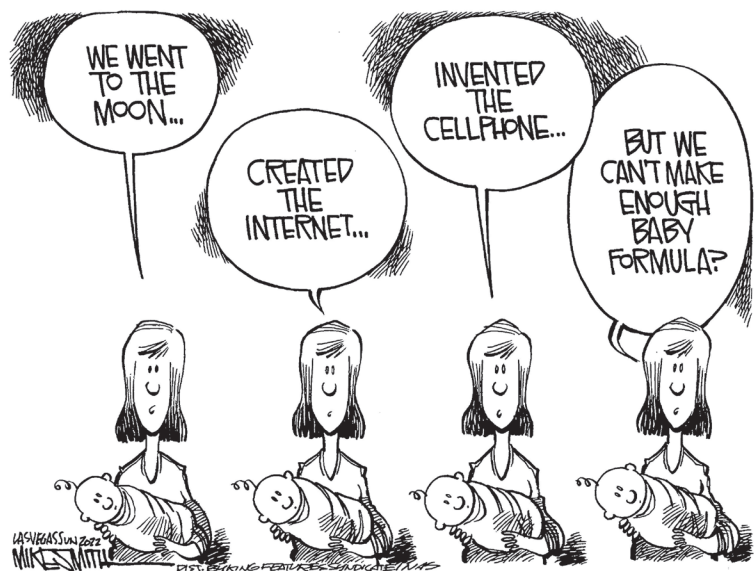
One spark from equipment — especially motorized equipment, such as cars, trucks and ATVs — can create mayhem in terms of fire.

Sparks are also generated by such things as electricity, chainsaws or even target shooting.

Last year, more than 1,000 fires scorched huge swaths of land in Oregon, and while many were sparked by Mother Nature — such as from lightning strikes — the source of other fires could be traced back to human error.

Now, with rainy, cold weather, the threat of wildfire seems like a distant concern. Yet the weather will shift and soon the local climate will be warm and dry. Once we enter into the summer months the threat of wildfire is a real one and all of us should be mindful a major blaze can erupt quickly.

We should all expect to enjoy our great outdoor recreation spots this summer. But with our privilege to tromp around the area's forests comes the responsibility to always use caution.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

John Day visit rekindles memories

To the Editor:

I grew up in Mt. Vernon, completed my education there — all 12 grades in the same building — and graduated in 1964.

My son and I just spent two nights and three days in John Day while squirrel hunting in the area. It is always a treat to come to the John Day Valley area and let my mind be flooded with old memories. Fishing, hunting, and exploring are but a few of the enjoyable memories I treasure.

After looking at my credit card and cash expenditures I realized I spent nearly \$900 while in the valley. We really enjoyed a lunch of

hamburger and fries in Mt. Vernon. The accommodations in John Day were clean and pleasant, and John Day restaurants served up excellent fare.

Overall, your area economy seems to chug right along, which is good to see. I hope to continue these annual visits in the future.

Gary Stolz
Hermiston

Hitch your wagon to success, not failure

To the Editor:

Elon Musk may not be the smartest man in the U.S. but he is certainly the richest. He didn't get that way by buying a winning lottery ticket but by making sound business

decisions made possible by the American capitalist system. Socialism did not make him successful, so why are so many liberal Democrats wanting to go down the path of failed ideologies? Musk has stated the Democratic Party is one of division and hate and he will no longer support it.

So who would you hitch your wagon to? Musk or the likes of Biden, Harris, Pelosi, Schumer, AOC or other far-left Democrats that are forcing America to the brink of disaster?

A recent poll reports that only 18% of the country believes America is heading in the right direction. Daily the numbers plummet, and as the little boy famously said, “It's only gonna get worse.”

Dave Traylor
John Day

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