

OUR VIEW

Elections
crucial to
democracy

Oregon voters may well secure one of those rare election moments in November when they can choose from three different candidates but the key, as always, is that all residents take advantage of the opportunity to vote.

That may prove to be quite a challenge, though we hope not.

Now, three candidates — Betsy Johnson, Tina Kotek and Christine Drazen — are vying for the state's top political position.

Kotek is on the Democratic ticket while Drazen is the GOP front-runner. Johnson, who is unaffiliated with any party, recently turned in enough signatures to get a spot on the Nov. 8 election ballot.

While there will be plenty of bombast and wide sweeping proclamations by all the candidates between now and November, what is really key about the election is that enough Oregonians vote.

The right to vote is more than just a nice, quaint concept about America. It is the key element to our Democracy.

Multitudes of people have died on distant battlefields for us to enjoy that right. Many brave souls during the Civil Rights era marched and faced danger to ensure everyone held the ability to vote.

As voters we owe them all a great debt, but if we do not use what is the key tool of our democracy then our very future is at risk.

Sure, at least for now there isn't a whole lot of variety within the candidates. Kotek is as solidly Democrat as Drazen is Republican. Johnson is trying to capitalize on her role as a political outlier to get elected.

In other words, this election doesn't appear to be one that will be needlessly complicated. The battle lines are drawn. The issue is familiar. Now all that needs to happen is that eligible voters actually vote.

Regardless of what one reads or hears, every vote does count. We, as Americans, enjoy a specific ability to peacefully complete a process that selects those who will represent us during every election. Our privilege to vote — and it is a privilege — is only as effective as those who choose to use it.

We must guard against apathy and the dissonance created by modern day pop culture, toxic social media and political sound bites to focus on exercising our right to vote.

The state faces many challenges, no doubt about it. Yet we have the opportunity to do something about those challenges by voting. Every election is crucial in a democracy. Let's not allow our great privilege to be wasted.



COLUMN

Every day is dog day in Malgesini pack



TAMMY MALGESINI
INSIDE MY SHOES

I would be in the doghouse if I didn't give a shout-out to our canine kids leading up to National Dog Day.

While the special day is Friday, Aug. 26, every day is dog day in the Malgesini pack — well, at least that's what the General, my 10-year-old German shepherd, and Biko, my husband's nearly 2-year-old Siberian husky/German shepherd mix, would like us to think. If truth be known, our canine kids really do have us wrapped around their dewclaws.

For instance, this past Friday marked the 10-year anniversary of when the General joined our pack. To celebrate the occasion, John, even though he doesn't eat it, made steak for me and the boys.

The General was a chubby little ball of fur when John and I picked him up from Geyer German Shepherds out of Milton-Freewater.

While he's not too keen on other people — and he was downright boorish when we first brought Biko home — he absolutely adores John and I.

If there is one thing I could change about dogs, it would be to have them live longer. John periodically reminds me that every 52 days or so is like another year in the General's life. Honestly, sometimes I feel like that but I definitely see signs that my best buddy is slowing down.

It's harder for him to jump in the rig and onto the daybed. In fact, he's on the "senior circuit" during his morning jaunts — rather than hiking to the top of the Hermiston Butte, he does more frolicking on the lawn at Good Shepherd Medical Center.

Quite the contrast, Biko is living up to what my physician said about his mix. Dr. Earl likened him to a German shepherd with ADHD. Biko has an incredible amount of energy and runs like a rocket throughout every inch of our extra large lot.

Earlier this summer, John installed a magnetic screen door, which Biko quickly learned how to negotiate. Even if the sliding glass door

is only open a few inches, Biko somehow wiggles himself through, darts around the yard and attempts to sneak back in without getting caught.

A couple of weeks ago, I returned home after a shopping excursion. The dogs were in the backyard supervising John while he watered his garden spots. Biko heard a car door shut and came tearing around the corner.

Barking and with his hackles raised, he was hellbent on securing the perimeter. Taken aback, I finally spoke — while Biko kept coming at me, his demeanor changed and I was met with wags and licks rather than snarling and the gnashing of teeth.

A number of studies suggest that dog ownership is good for your health, both mental and physical. And I couldn't agree more. There's something about having a pair of happy faces bounding to the door to greet me after a long day at work — it almost makes me wag my tail.

■ *Tammy Malgesini, the Hermiston Herald community editor, enjoys spending time with her husband and two canine kids, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Commissioner Doherty is to thank for nitrate regulation

Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty in attempting to make political hay over the nitrate issues related to the Port of Morrow, and the declaration of a county emergency over a more than 50-year nitrate issue has awakened state regulators and now the Environmental Protection Agency. Today this may seem only about a specific aquifer that everyone will attempt to regulate, but no doubt all Oregon aquifers will need equal attention soon.

Keep in mind the Port of Morrow is not that much of a contributor to the overall nitrate issue. No doubt the port will make the investment to remove nitrates and move on. That will leave agriculture holding the bag. Most of the nitrates detected in the aquifer come from actions taken more than 50 years ago. Farming practices that have ended and would be unacceptable today by those of us in agriculture.

What a gift Commissioner Doherty has given the environmental groups and regulators. It must have been exciting for the 23 state of Oregon agencies that met with Doherty to realize that a rural conservative agricultural county was ready to have it private landowners property regulated.

Those of us in agriculture will someday be able to name Commissioner Doherty,

the self proclaimed environmental justice warrior, as the person that opened the door to the regulation of nitrates on our private property.

I encourage everyone in farming and ranching in Oregon to thank Commissioner Doherty the next time you see him.

Jerry Rietmann
lone

The climate crisis is actually a crime

As someone who follows local and national news reports, I must tell you I am worried about the recent extreme heat and wildfires raging across the country. I feel for people who lose their lives and livelihoods to extreme weather, and I'm scared that it's only a matter of time until it directly hits me and my community.

Seeing headlines in local news outlets covering these climate disasters made me realize that most news stories show no connection between them and their main cause: fossil fuels. This is dangerous, because many people will continue to refuse to see that longer, hotter and deadlier summers are caused and perpetuated by the disastrous coal, oil and gas projects — and the fossil fuel industry.

The science is clear — the longer we allow coal, oil and gas companies to dig and burn, the worse the impacts of the climate crisis will be. With every fraction of a degree of

warming, we'll see and suffer more extreme heat, droughts, floods, wildfires and hurricanes. But the fossil fuel industry continues to ignore these alerts and undermine our chances for a safer future, and carbon dioxide emissions keep rising. We all know this is causing global heating and resulting in extreme weather events, yet they keep digging, burning and profiting, with zero accountability.

Climate impacts — like the recent heat waves and wildfires — disproportionately affect people and communities who are already marginalized and disadvantaged. People who did the least to cause the climate crisis suffer the worst from its impacts — they lose livelihoods, hope and worse: their lives — while oil companies continue to hit record profits. This is wrong on so many levels.

Local, regional and national media have an important role to play — and a moral obligation to tell the whole truth. It's time to make one thing about extreme weather very clear: It's not a "crisis" that just happens to us — it's a crime, and the fossil fuel industry is to blame. And saying it once isn't enough. Media has an important job to do to turn the tide of public opinion and help the world avoid the worst of the climate impacts.

Please tell the real story about the climate crisis.

Louise Squire
La Grande

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