

Tri-City Forum

OPINION

GUEST OPINION

Horse Heaven project would provide jobs

BY MIKE BOSSE



The Tri-Cities region is an incredible community. The people who call this area home, including our many union-proud workers, care deeply about our community's well-being. Clean air and water, good schools, safe and reliable

public services, and of course, good jobs with family-supporting wages are the kinds of livability features that we value and wish to enhance. It's these kinds of features of the Tri-Cities that continue to attract people to the region.

Even still, a recent study showed that the Richland-Kennewick metro area is fast growing. Since 2015, we've seen 24,538 new residents join our community — an 8.8% increase in population, which is high-

er than the national average. With all these new people — and more on the way — we know that family-supporting job opportunities are going to be needed.

New opportunities for steady work with good wages critical to the health and vitality of the region. That's why we, Operating Engineers 302, are encouraged by new industries and technologies taking interest in setting up shop in our community. We need thoughtful in-

vestments in the region that can support our workforce. Industries like clean energy can provide high paying, family supporting jobs for hard working folks in the Tri-Cities.

Our region is sought after for our access to alternative energy resources including solar, wind, hydropower, and nuclear. We should be embracing these opportunities to employ a whole range of skilled workers — from construction to engineering to maintenance to

delivery. And because clean energy will become an increasingly prominent part of the country's energy mix, investments in our region now will provide the long-term jobs needed here in the Tri-Cities.

One new proposed project, Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center, published independent economic reports that found that their project would support a total of 458 jobs in Benton and Franklin counties in the first phase of construction, and support between 472 to 539 total jobs and approximately \$37.6 million to \$41.9 million in labor income during the second phase of construction. This includes engineers and construction crews directly, but also a host of other jobs that would come

SEE BOSSE, 3C

COMMENTARY

Ukraine stands ready again

BY OLGA TOKARIUK
Special To The Washington Post

As Russia and the United States clashed at the United Nations on Monday over Ukraine, all I could feel was anger. That has been the predominant feeling these past few weeks here in Kyiv.

Because of the actions of a madman, it's as if we Ukrainians have ceased to exist: We cannot worry about raising children, do the work we love, make plans, build our future. Instead, we are forced to pack go-bags, make evacuation plans and spend our weekends studying how to survive in an occupied city — and learning first aid.

We have a lot to lose. Most people don't stop very often to think about independence and sovereignty, but those things were hard-fought achievements. The Ukrainian nation, with its language and rich culture, has existed for centuries. Millions of lives were lost just in the 20th century as a result of failed attempts to create an independent Ukrainian state.

But since official independence was gained in 1991, a whole generation has come of age. It's a generation that witnessed two revolutions and a war, and that refused to give up in the toughest times. And it's precisely this determination, resilience and courage that scare Vladimir Putin the most.

I am a part of this generation, and my personal story is closely interconnected with that of an independent Ukraine. I was born in 1985, six years before the Soviet Union collapsed. The same year, the Ukrainian poet and dissident Vasyl Stus died in a Soviet gulag. He was yet another victim of a Soviet repressive machine, active until the last days of the U.S.S.R.

When I was 6 years old, on Dec. 1, 1991, my parents took me to the polling station on the day of the referendum for Ukraine's independence. As we walked hand in hand, I was feeling very proud: I knew my parents were going to vote in favor of it. My family was able to transmit the feeling that independence was something precious, worth cherishing and preserving.

My turn to do that came when I was 19. The Orange Revolution began in 2004, when a wave of mass protests exploded following an attempt to rig presidential elections in favor of a pro-Kremlin candidate. On the day of voting, I was working as an election observer in the Luhansk region, bordering Russia. I saw with my own eyes brutal electoral violations and intimidation of supporters of pro-democracy candidate Viktor Yushchenko, who was poisoned during the campaign but miraculously survived. I was kicked out from the polling station using a false pretext before the vote count even began.

The day after the election, thousands flocked to

SEE TOKARIUK, 3C

Rein in the governor's emergency powers

(The Ellensburg) Daily Record

As always, there is no shortage of critical issues and potential votes before the state Legislature this session, but none is more urgent or needed than reining in the emergency powers of the governor.

COVID-19 has exposed flaws and shortfalls in systems and the ability of systems to respond in a crisis, and that includes this state's open-ended emergency powers provision for the governor.

Those emergency powers were needed and justified at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak to respond to a rapidly changing situation where much about the virus was unknown.

As time has passed though, much of what we know about COVID has changed but the governor continues to enact emergency powers.

This should have ended last session and must definitely end this session. The change will have to come from Democrats, who hold majorities in the

state House and Senate. Republicans can propose all the measures they want to restrict the emergency powers but those efforts will go nowhere without backing from Democrats.

Democrats need to realize they are on the verge of damaging our democratic institutions just as much as Republicans are as they mount assaults on our election system across this nation.

If the state can only operate if the governor has the authority to ignore the state House and Senate, then it is not a representative democracy. It is something more akin to a totalitarian regime.

People have to be able to trust the government and government has to trust the people.

The argument for Gov. Jay Inslee containing to wield emergency powers is that is the only way for the state to continue its efforts to stem the spread of the COVID virus. Unfortunately, this is an justification that may never go away.

Also, it just does not work. It's false premise

NORTHWEST EDITORIALS



The Olympian

Gov. Jay Inslee calls for action from the legislature in his annual State of the State speech at the Capitol in Olympia on Jan. 11.

easily disproved. In areas of the state with concentrations of Democratic voters, the vaccine rate is high. In areas of the state with higher percentages of Republican voters, the vaccination rate is low. That shows that casting Republicans as unworthy of the responsibility to share in governance means Republicans will not respect or accept the outcomes of that governance. Maybe that's not such a big deal in Seattle, Tacoma and Everett but its huge deal in Ellensburg, Yakima, Moses Lake and more.

At some point in the distant future people will look back and wonder in dismay how an otherwise rationale people could

have allowed a public health crisis to become a political litmus test.

Inslee by refusing to relinquish emergency powers is perpetuating and deepening mistrust in government by a significant portion of the population. He also is an excellent example of why power should not be concentrated in one person's hand. Once a person holds that level of power, he or she becomes incapable of letting go. Not that everything is analogous to the "Lord of the Rings" but there is a reason that Galadriel refuses the ring when it's offered by Frodo. She knows even her goodness would be corrupted by the power.

There is a debate over

how long emergency powers should extend — 30 days, 60 days, etc. — but there is no debate that they need to have an end date, after which the governor must consult with the legislative bodies.

There is no indication Inslee is ready to let go, but at least some elected Democrats in the House and Senate are ready to take these steps. This effort needs to be supported by people regardless of party affiliation. It is not a partisan issue — it goes straight to core that governance is for the people and by the people.

The legislative bodies are a check on the governor's power. They need to do their job.

Congress key to getting cash out of cannabis

The (Vancouver) Columbian

A surge in armed robberies at marijuana stores in Washington highlights the need for Congress to meet the needs of the cannabis industry.

Nearly 20 states and the District of Columbia have legalized the recreational use of marijuana; more than one dozen additional states have legalized medical marijuana. Yet in the halls of the U.S. Capitol, this burgeoning industry that annually generates billions of dollars still is treated like the back-alley pariah of yore, with marijuana remaining illegal at the federal level.

The connection between federal policy and a spate of robberies is clear: Because marijuana is regarded as contraband, major banks are reluctant to

provide full services to proprietors. Cannabis remains a mostly cash industry without access to standard credit-card payments, providing an invitation to thieves.

"It certainly is a concern of ours," Sgt. Tim Meyer of the King County Sheriff's Office told The (Tacoma) News Tribune. "Anecdotally, I would say yes, I think we're seeing an increase."

The Washington Cannabis Business Association reports there have been roughly 30 robberies since mid-December. Over the past two years, numerous Clark County cannabis dispensaries also have been targeted.

Meyer said: "Certainly word is on the street that these dispensaries hold a fair bit of cash, and in some cases folks are willing to risk their freedom

to get it. . . . We've got to get the cash out of the business."

Getting cash out of the business will depend partly on Congress — specifically the Senate. The Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act, SAFE, passed the House of Representatives in 2019 but did not advance in the other chamber. It passed the House again last year but is stuck in a Senate committee. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler has voted in favor of the bill in each session.

As Congress.gov explains: "This bill generally prohibits a federal banking regulator from penalizing a depository institution for providing banking services to a legitimate cannabis-related business."

Rep. Ed Perlmutter, D-Colo., who introduced

the 2021 version, said this week: "Cannabis-related businesses — big and small — and their employees are in desperate need of access to the banking system and access to capital in order to operate in an efficient, safe manner and compete in the growing global cannabis marketplace."

That resonates in Washington, where the marijuana industry generated \$1.4 billion in revenue and \$474 million in taxes during 2020. Nearly two-thirds of the tax revenue is allocated to specific public programs outlined by Initiative 502, which was passed by 56 percent of statewide voters in 2012; in Clark County, 50.32 percent of voters opposed the measure.

Despite running a business that is legitimate in Washington, retailers

remain on the outside looking in on the big banks. But Bloomberg.com recently reported that credit unions and state-chartered banks are increasingly welcoming cannabis businesses. One industry expert said: "We're seeing more and more bankers recognize that there's a clear path to serving these customers. The playbook has been established showing banks and regulators how to work with the industry."

The hope is that customers won't have to visit an ATM before shopping. As The Columbian wrote editorially in 2019: "If customers had to use cash every time they stopped for their favorite pint of microbrew, we're guessing that Congress would get an earful."

Those members of Congress should start listening to the concerns of the cannabis industry.

COMMENTARY

Give nuclear exposure victims a break

BY R. HUGH STEPHENS
Progressive Perspectives

Every month or so, my law office will get a call from the spouse of a nuclear weapons or uranium worker who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. We help file a claim for the worker with the Department of Justice or the Department of Labor, both of which run a compensation program.

Typically, these claims can be handled in a matter of weeks. Modest compensation allocated through these programs provide help with medical bills and certain other financial obligations.

Most people don't realize that these programs exist, or even that our nuclear weapons system affects so many people across the country.

Originally known as the Manhattan Project, the U.S. nuclear weapons program in 1945 produced its first nuclear blast, the Trinity Test, in Alamogordo, New Mexico. But the impact of this testing has not been limited by either time or geography. Every day, downwinders, on-site participants, uranium miners, millers and ore transporters are diagnosed with cancers, pulmonary fibrosis and other serious illnesses from exposures that happened decades ago. Even today, nuclear weapons workers are being made ill at facilities across the country.

Those who become sick as a result of work in the nuclear weapons manufacturing and testing industry are eligible for health care benefits and compensation from those two federal programs: the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program (RECP) and the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation

Program (EEOICP).

The programs, not unlike the Veterans Affairs program that provides benefits for U.S. soldiers, provide vital benefits to workers who have borne the brunt of the physical and financial toll imposed by the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Currently pending bills would extend the RECP and allow on-site participants and downwinders to receive medical care for their accepted conditions under the EEOICP. This would make their claims more similar to the other beneficiaries, including uranium miners, millers and ore transporters, thereby eliminating a flaw in the RECP that prevents on-site participants throughout the country and downwinders in the southwest from receiving the same medical benefits as uranium miners, millers, and ore transporters receive.

Without action from Congress and the president, RECA will expire in July of this year. One path forward is a set of bipartisan bills introduced by Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (H.R. 5338) and Sen. Mike Crapo (S.2798). These bills extend and make important improvements to these compensation programs.

My experience working with nuclear weapons and uranium workers has shown me that these programs continue to provide essential benefits to workers and their survivors, whose lives have been disrupted by participation in the nuclear weapons program. Both of these programs should be extended and improved.

We owe that, at least, to those who have sacrificed their health in the service of the nation's nuclear ambitions.



COMMENTARY

Trump and Johnson have much in common, with one vital difference

BY GEORGE F. WILL
The Washington Post



WASHINGTON

Transfixed Americans, watching from afar, are perhaps nonplussed by events in London. There, Her Majesty's first minister is, as this is written, in danger of losing his lease on 10 Downing Street because he lied. Astonishing.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson might survive, for a number of reasons, one being that he, like two of the five most recent U.S. presidents (Bill Clinton and Donald Trump), has the awesome strength that comes from being incapable of embarrassment. Also, to his critics he can fairly respond: "What did you expect?"

He has never disguised his belief that in any situation, truthfulness is merely one option among many, and not to be preferred over more advantageous or just more entertaining choices. As Winston Churchill said of another politician (evidently Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin), he "occasionally had stumbled over the truth, but hastily picked himself up and hurried on as if nothing

had happened."

With his carefully tousled hair that looks as though his barber used pruning shears, his sham-bolic manner of an unmade bed walking, and his louche lifestyle, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson — Eton; Balliol College, Oxford University — brings to mind Dolly Parton's quip "You'd be surprised how much it costs to look this cheap." A lot of thought seems to have gone into Johnson's self-presentation as someone indifferent to appearances — a toff but with scuffed shoes familiar with the grass roots. An instinctive populist, he has mastered what Alexander Hamilton deployed (in *Federalist 68*) as "the little arts of popularity."

Johnson's immediate predicament is pandemic-related. Parties occurred in his residence, which includes his office, and in the basement, and the garden, while the British people were enduring severe lockdowns — and stern scoldings, prosecutions and fines for evading them.

Indignation has ensued, to which Johnson's rainbow of responses has included: There were no parties (although invitees were told to "bring your own booze"). There were parties but he did not know about them. He did not know that any he attended qualified as par-

ties. Of one perhaps party he said: "Those people were at work talking about work." Of another, he "believed implicitly that this was a work event." Sixty years ago, during the Profumo scandal (a secretary of state for war lied in the House of Commons about an affair with a young woman), this doggerel was popular: "To lie in the nude / May be terribly rude / But to lie in the House is obscene."

The Economist calls Johnson "possibly the biggest cynic ever to become prime minister." He was fired from a prominent job in journalism for inventing a quote. A former conservative leader fired him from a government position for lying. His ascent to Downing Street was propelled by his campaigning for Brexit, Britain's exit from the European Union. He brunched a smoked kipper, ridiculing the European Union for the regulation requiring such fish to be shipped on ice pillows — a regulation written by the British government. He warned, preposterously, that Turkey would soon join the European Union. He promised that leaving the European Union would free 350 million pounds (\$480 million) a week for the National Health Service, a factoid plucked from the same ether where Trump got his promise to eliminate the

U.S. national debt in eight years.

Writing in the *Financial Times*, Rory Stewart, a former Conservative cabinet minister now teaching at Yale University, says Johnson "is a terrible prime minister and a worse human being. But he is not a monster newly sprung from a rent beneath this world and the next." A majority of Conservative MPs voted to make him prime minister after "thirty years of celebrity made him famous for his mendacity, indifference to detail, poor administration, and inveterate betrayal of every personal commitment." This, Stewart says, is because British culture "remains trapped by the idea that politics is a game."

Mortification loves company, so Americans might take comfort from the fact that their British cousins managed to produce a head of government as shambolic and careless as a recent and perhaps future president. There is, however, a deflating difference.

Simon Kuper notes in the *Financial Times* that Johnson's net favorability rating collapsed from +29% in April 2020 to -52% in January 2022. "Here, in microcosm," Kuper writes, "is the uniqueness of American polarisation": Those who favor Trump are bound to him as with hoops of steel, come what may. This total indifference to evidence is today's "American exceptionalism."

George Will's email address is georgewill@washpost.com

FROM PAGE 1C

BOSSE

online to support the increased economic activity.

Jobs supporting the general public could all be supported through projects like this too. The studies found that revenue generated by the project will lead to re-investments in Benton and Franklin Counties that could fund public services in the community and much needed positions such as teachers, firefighters or and registered nurses. This enhances so much of what makes the Tri-Cities so livable.

Our workforce needs to be competitive for future jobs, too. Clean energy has already become a leading industry in the state and will continue to grow as we work to meet Governor Jay Inslee's climate goals. We can set up our younger generations for success when we create opportunities to access to the industries of tomorrow, today.

Training and education in these fields is also critical. Operating Engineers 302 represents skilled workers who dedicate time and training in apprentice programs to hone and eventually master their trade. We expect anyone coming into the community to support and prepare our workforce with professional devel-

opment, skill building and education.

Our skilled workforce is critical to ensuring the ongoing livability of our region. Our communities, families and hard-working community members deserve to have jobs with dignity — good-pay and benefits, opportunities for growth and meaningful work. When so many types of professions can be supported through proposed new projects, we should really take note.

This region can continue to be a leader in the 21st century opportunities afforded by new projects like clean energy. And we should be proud of the many ways in which we have led this industry so far. These kinds of opportunities ensure our families and communities can thrive. What could be more important than that?

Mike Bosse, of Benton City, is a field representative for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 302, District 5. He is also a member of the Benton Franklin Workforce Development Council, Washington State STEM Education Board and other committees on the Hanford Site.

FROM PAGE 1C

TOKARIUK

Maidan Square in Kyiv. I joined them as a volunteer, distributing leaflets with the latest news to thousands of protesters camped on the square in freezing temperatures. Those people didn't just want their candidate to win; they demanded free and fair elections, and they believed in a democratic Ukraine. And they won: After three weeks of peaceful protesters, another round of elections was ordered, which Yushchenko won.

At 28, I witnessed yet another revolution: the Euromaidan, or Revolution of Dignity. It began in late 2013, when pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich, who came to power in 2010, refused to sign an association agree-

ment with the European Union. People's outrage with Yanukovich's corrupt regime — which reversed Ukraine's course toward the West, concentrated power in his hands and cracked down on democracy, just as his role model in the Kremlin had done — poured into the streets. I was there too, with a smartphone, live-tweeting the Euromaidan for the world to know.

This time, the protests lasted for three winter months and ended in bloodshed. In late February, the regime's special forces started shooting protesters with live rounds, killing about a hundred people. I cried with tens of thousands Ukrainians at Maidan Square, when the "heav-

enly hundred," as those killed became known, were bid the last farewell. That tragic moment

marked the end of peace in independent Ukraine. It soon became clear we were facing a much stronger enemy than Yanukovich: Just a few days after his escape to Russia, Putin launched the war against Ukraine. It began with the annexation of Crimea, which caught Kyiv and its Western partners by surprise. It continued in Donbas, where Russian special forces seized government buildings and instigated an armed insurgency. Russia continues to send soldiers, weapons and money to nurture this conflict, which has already killed more than 14,000 people.

And that's where we are today: facing a Moscow bent on keeping Ukraine poor and corrupt, undemocratic and divided. But

the Ukrainian people have shown more than once they will have the last word on their future.

We might have regarded independence as a gift when we were children, but later in life we realized that it was not just given to us; we had to protect it with our lives. We have been hardened but never broken. We might be angry and frustrated, but never defeated.

I know my generation will prevail again. I know Putin's plans for Ukraine, whatever shape they take, are doomed to fail. Millions of Ukrainians stand united, once again, ready to resist.

Olga Tokariuk is an independent journalist and researcher based in Kyiv. She is a nonresident fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis.