https://www.newportnewstimes.com/opinion/letter-voting-on-autopilot/article_06a0fdec-ef39-47a5-8068-3c0c034dd7dc.html

# Letter: Voting on Autopilot

Voices of the Community
Apr 30, 2026

I know cognition – how we think, remember, and recognize. Much of what we do is automatic.

Ever find yourself at realizing that you weren't paying attention as you drove? We depend on reacting to familiar cues, like traffic lights or car signals. You see a red octagon, you stop.

People also think in categories made up of more and less common members. If I ask you to name a kind of fruit, a common one comes to mind first, like apple as opposed to mango. The same goes for animal, flower, or County Commissioner.

People rely on familiar cues and categories to vote. For example, when voting for Lincoln County Commissioners, people will vote the most familiar name that springs to mind in a "red" or "blue" category. If no name springs to mind, they may not vote or may vote randomly.

Another example: a voter sees "tax" and thinks "bad" automatically. So, they vote against it whether it is needed or not.

You can argue that voting shouldn't be guided by automated responses like this, but humans are, well, human. On the plus side, humans can learn, teach each other, listen to each other. To change how we vote, we must talk about political choices. So, here are some of mine.

I'm voting for these County Commissioner candidates because I think they will serve our diverse county, act with integrity and honesty, and communicate effectively: Cathie Rigby for Position 1; Cristen Don for Position 2; and Walter Chuck for Position 3.

Furthermore, I support Measure 120 because inflation and fewer drivers have created a transportation funding crisis in Oregon. An additional 6 cent tax increase on gas prices means we would still pay less than Washington and much less than California. Without it, fire emergency responses will be poorer, service to public-transportation-dependent riders will suffer, more ODOT workers will be laid off, & road surfaces w
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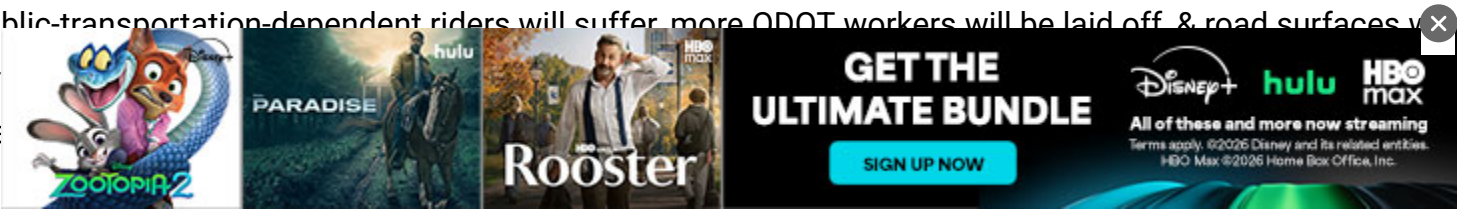

Turn off your autopilot when you vote.

Shar Walbaum

Lincoln City

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