

KeizerOpinion

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There was no staggering increase in coal jobs

To the Editor:

It seems timely and fitting to address “alternative facts” and “fake news” for which the Trump administration has become infamous. This example has to do with jobs in mining coal and was delivered the other day by Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, Scott Pruitt, on *This Week With George Stephanopoulos*.

Pruitt announced that the Trump administration has presided over “a staggering increase in coal-industry employment.” “Over 50,000 jobs increase since the first of 2017, coal jobs, mining jobs created in this country,” with “almost 7,000 mining and coal jobs created during the month of May.”

Facts from the U.S. Department of Labor statistics report that the coal industry added 400 jobs, not 7,000, in May, 2017, and has added just 1,700 since last October, 2016. The mining and coal industry employs currently a total of 51,000 people and there were not merely 1,000 people employed therein before the Trump election.

It would seem ill-advised to plan America’s future energy policy around the goal of maximizing jobs in an industry that’s reputed to offer fewer jobs than the Arby’s franchise. Then, too, the solar industry employs twice as many Americans as the coal industry. Meanwhile, if one wants to live in a fantasy where greenhouse gas emissions do not trap heat in Earth’s atmosphere, one may as well pretend a scenario with imaginary jobs.

Gene H. McIntyre
Keizer

Make Keizer an inclusive community

To the Editor:

This is a letter that was sent to Mayor Cathy Clark, who read it before the whole council:

Dear Mayor Cathy Clark,

Previously, we came before the City Council with a goal to make sure Keizer is a safe, welcoming, and inclusive city and for the Council to consider creating an Inclusivity Resolution for Keizer. We expressed concerns and you asked that we think of some actions that could be taken. Thank you for your considerations, listening so far, and for your support and suggestion in including us in these discussions and actions.

At this time, we feel that having an Inclusivity Resolution is a foundational action we need to take in order to ensure our goal. We could help create a group or task force, so that we can work together with you and the city council to create a Resolution and future actions that embody inclusivity.

The work group or task force would ideally include city council and community members. It would be a diverse membership that re-

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fects Keizer’s population, and include representatives from community groups like Mano a Mano, NAACP, Causa; the LG-BTQI+ community; education and religious leaders; and members from the

Keizer Police and Fire District. We’d collaborate to form a resolution and ongoing future actions related to our goal.

We feel that an Inclusivity Resolution is essential for Keizer for the following reasons:

To show Keizer’s values of inclusion, equality, and respect for all residents that call our city home, and that Keizer embraces, celebrates, and welcomes all residents of any national origin, race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual preference, marital status, disability, income, citizenship status, or religion, and their contributions to the collective prosperity of all residents.

To show Keizer resolves to fight racism, religious discrimination, sexism, homophobia, and violence or bullying in our schools and neighborhoods.

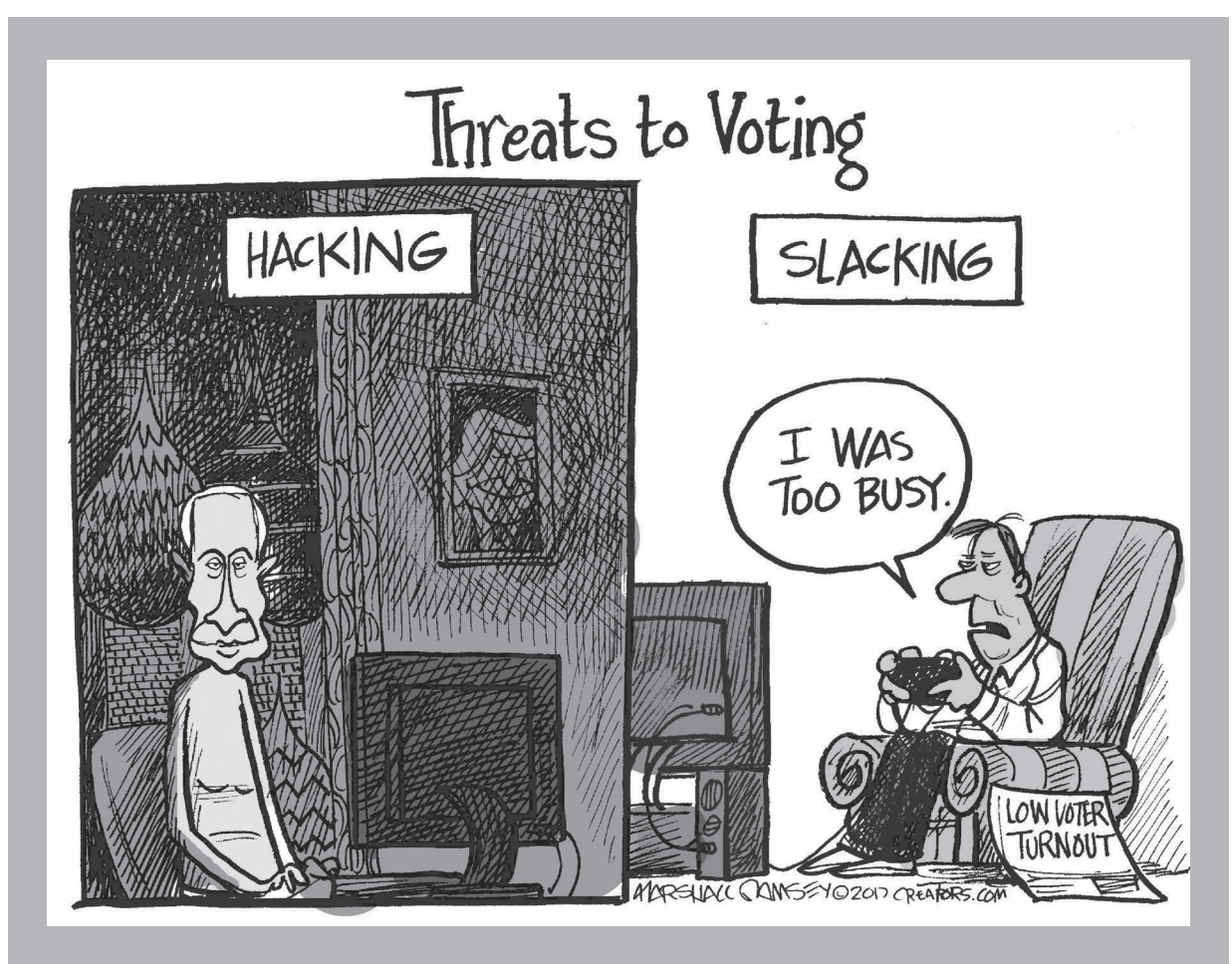
It is an uncertain time for many immigrant families, and the treatment of newcomers has had ripple effects throughout the immigrant community. Many have been afraid of going to the court house, taking their children to school, and going to local government buildings for fear of running into Immigration Customs Enforcement. To ensure the safety of everyone, we want immigrants to be able to call the police for help without worrying that their families will be broken up or that reporting a small crime will result in a disproportionate punishment. Effective policing requires trust between law enforcement and community members.

To understand that chronic discrimination leads to community disengagement, diminished opportunities for integration, increased stigmatization, and it negatively impacts local economic activity. Many cities in Oregon are working to get resolutions in place or already have one. Passing an Inclusivity Resolution strengthens the state law by showing that other cities or counties support it.

We must unite against any attempts to separate and treat any members of our Keizer communities as less than any other member. No matter where we come from, we are all Oregonians and we want all to be safe and welcome in Keizer.

We who are listed below, urge the city council to create a work group or task force to work together with us to create an Inclusivity Resolution for the City of Keizer that embraces, celebrates, and welcomes all its residents and their contributions.

Sincerely a group of concerned friends of Keizer,
Cyndi Swaney
Carol Doerfler
Paula Doughty
Robert Glasgow
Levi Herrera-Lopez,
Mano a Mano Representative
John Scott



Does it matter what Bernie Sanders thinks?

By MICHAEL GERSON

It is apparently not enough for some of the liberal minded to help those on Medicare and Social Security; now people must be guaranteed eligibility for heaven as well. Or at least be protected from those who believe in the other place.

At a contentious confirmation hearing last week for Russell Vought as deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget—generally not known as an institution with theological job requirements—Sen. Bernie Sanders took vigorous exception to an online post Vought had written claiming that Muslims (and, presumably, others) who “have rejected Jesus Christ” therefore “stand condemned.”

Sanders found this “indefensible” and “hateful.” But at least when it comes to a belief in hell, Vought is hardly a rarity. Universalism is not universal. According to recent Pew polling, about 80 percent of evangelical Protestants believe in hell, along with 76 percent of Muslims and 63 percent of Catholics. Even 27 percent of those who identify as “nones”—the religiously unaffiliated—retain a belief in hell. And then there is that forlorn 1 percent who don’t believe in God at all but still believe in hell. Perhaps they are with Jean-Paul Sartre: “Hell is other people.”

Not every religious tradition features eternal damnation. The Hebrew Scriptures have only the faintest hints about an afterlife of any kind. So it makes sense that Jews reject the existence of hell by an

80/20 split. In Hinduism and Buddhism, hell is more of a way station than a final destination. But traditional interpretations of Christianity and of Islam feature a day of final judgment, at which some people don’t make the grade.

For a lot of people, hell is little more than a mental holding place for Hitler. If you believe in an afterlife, the question naturally arises: Can saints and genocidaires really share the same eternal fate? But the argument cuts the other way. As it occurred to evangelical pastor Rob Bell: “Gandhi’s in hell?” Bell went on to write a book, *Lovex Wins*, that embraced universalism and got him branded unorthodox and worse.

Bell is not alone in trying to blunt this particular religious edge. Christian history is studded with figures who expressed a universally inclusive notion of grace, such as 17th-century poet and pastor John Donne: “Christ hath excommunicated no Nation, no shire, no house, no man.” Even defenders of the idea of hell such as C.S. Lewis felt compelled to soften the concept. Lewis’ literary depiction of hell is not a lake of fire but a gray suburb in which it is always raining and nothing is satisfying and everyone quarrels with the neighbors. For Lewis, hell is eternally self-chosen by those consumed by egotism. “The doors of hell,” he said, “are locked from the inside.”

In all the complexities of theology and metaphysics that this topic raises, I am utterly confident of one thing: No one has ever asked, “What is Bernie Sanders’ view on this?”

other views

But he has offered it. In justifying his opposition to Vought, Sanders said: “This country, since its inception, has struggled, sometimes with great pain, to overcome discrimination of all forms. ... We must not go backwards.” Thus liberal fairness is applied on a cosmic scale. Ending theological bias is the final civil rights frontier. Equal salvation for all.

Perhaps Sanders was just meaning to deny a government job to someone whose theology he finds objectionable. Which is not only presumptuous but unconstitutional (see Article VI). The same would be true in the case of a Muslim nominee or anyone else willing to serve the country and uphold the Constitution. A pluralism too weak to protect Christian believers is too weak to protect Muslim believers, and vice versa. And both have the right to think they are right.

A few questions for the senator: Does he really want to begin examining Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Zoroastrians and everyone else for theological beliefs that offend his ideal of liberalism? How strongly does a belief need to be held to be disqualifying for employment? Would he permit a Christian colleague to shoot down a government job seeker if that man or woman believed that the universe is an echoing void and that human beings are merely bags of chemicals?

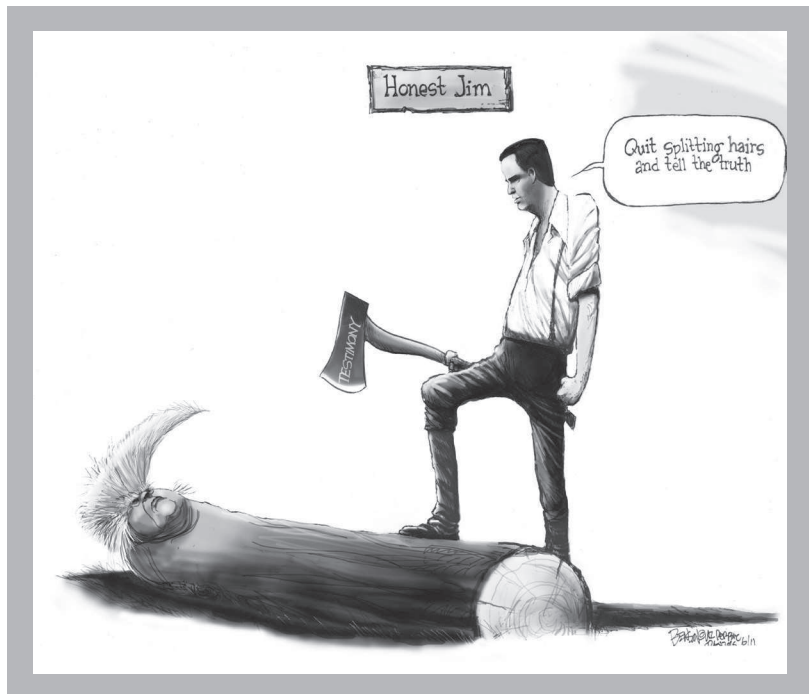
But, on second thought, never mind about these questions. Thanks to the Constitution, we aren’t required to give a damn what Sanders thinks about the religious views of any American.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Share your opinion

Email a guest opinion (550 words) or a letter to the editor (300 words) by noon Tuesday.

Email to: publisher@keizertimes.com



Russia inquiry a bit of history repeating

By DEBRA SAUNDERS

If you watched the testimony of former FBI chief James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee, you heard Democratic senators refer to Russian attempts to interfere with the 2016 presidential election as a “hostile” act by a “hostile” government, an affront, their tone suggested, heretofore unknown in American politics. Yet two decades earlier, a Senate committee investigated Chinese attempts to interfere with the 1996 presidential election. In his opening statement, Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, warned of a plan “hatched by the Chinese government” designed to “pour illegal contributions” into U.S. election campaigns. A key beneficiary was President Bill Clinton.

It was a big story that seems hauntingly familiar to the Russia probe. In 1997, *The Washington Post*’s Bob Woodward reported that a Justice Department “investigation has established that the plan was launched in 1995 as a relatively benign congressional lobbying activity, but became an effort whose goal was to illegally funnel money into political campaigns. Approved at the highest levels of the Beijing government, the plan was placed under the control of the Chinese Ministry of State Security, Beijing’s equivalent of the CIA.

“Thus far, however, federal investigators have been unable to dis-

cover a direct link between money from Beijing and the Democratic National Committee or the Clinton re-election campaign.”

The Thompson committee held 32 days of hearings, interviewed 72 witnesses and spent \$3.5 million never nailed a definitive connection to the Chinese government. But a number of individuals targeted by the committee were convicted of or pleaded guilty to violating election law.

The Clinton fundraising scandal produced some unforgettable images and characters. Vice President Al Gore attended what was supposed to be a community outreach event at a Buddhist temple in Los Angeles but turned out to be a fundraiser. A trio of Buddhist nuns testified about the event and the decision to destroy a list of donor names.

Los Angeles entrepreneur and big donor Johnny Chung famously said, “I see the White House is like a subway. You have to put in coins to open the gates.” Chung visited the White House at least 49 times.

Was the Chinese government pushing for Clinton to win?

“If they gave them money, which they did,” Madigan answered, “and he didn’t get in, then they would have wasted their money.”

There may be superficial similarities between the two committees, Lanny J. Davis, who was special counsel to the president at the time, opined Friday. Thompson “never was able to find” evidence that Beijing was behind the dodgy

donations. “He has circumstantial evidence,” nothing more.

Thompson could never tie China to Clinton in 1997, Davis continued, but in an October 2016 statement, the intelligence community expressed confidence that Russia was behind hacking of U.S. political institutions. And that settled the question for Davis. Note that the intelligence community has been confident but wrong before.

Davis added that Trump’s rhetoric and actions raised red flags: Trump said, “I love WikiLeaks,” said Davis, whereas Clinton never said, “Yeah, I want the Chinese money. Why not?”

So 20 years ago, a Senate committee saw numerous instances of inappropriate behavior linked circumstantially to China, which, like Russia, is not exactly a U.S. ally. The investigation produced a number of stories that put the White House in a bad light. For their part, Democrats on the Thompson committee were not eager to pursue allegations wherever they led.

Madigan believes that with more resources and time, a solid link might have been found. It could be that some things never are going to become clear in the muted light of a congressional investigation.

A month later, America learned about former Clinton White House intern Monica Lewinsky. To Madigan, that story spelled the end of the China probe.

“My own view,” he said, “because of the Monica situation and (the fact that) they wanted to impeach him, it just died!”

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