

Wrong solution for housing pinch

Not content to legislate wages, a Portland Democrat now wants state government to act as Oregon's Chief Landlord. It's one more example of the wave of proprietary governance that began in our largest city and has swept south to our state capital.

Housing already is one of the most regulated industries. And rent controls exacerbate the problems supporters claim they fix: affordability and supply.

No matter, political leaders like Tina Kotek are anxious to exert more control over the private

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

sector. The speaker of the House, fresh off her victory to raise the minimum wage and salivating over the \$3 billion Measure 97 would generate in higher taxes, has made rental housing her next crusade.

Kotek, who represents northeast Portland, says she will lead an effort next year to repeal the state's ban on rent-control laws. She also pledges to restrict all but "reasonable" increases in rental fees and further restrict the ability of landlords to evict tenants.

"We need to prevent property owners from making excessive profit and protect tenants from economic eviction and displacement," Kotek said. Her solution is to cede more control to state government — the same folks who have wasted billions of dollars on technology boondoggles and recently handed out \$347 million in improper or suspicious energy tax credits.

Oregonians should be encouraged to look at how rent controls have worked in two other bastions of "progressive" politics: New York City and San Francisco.

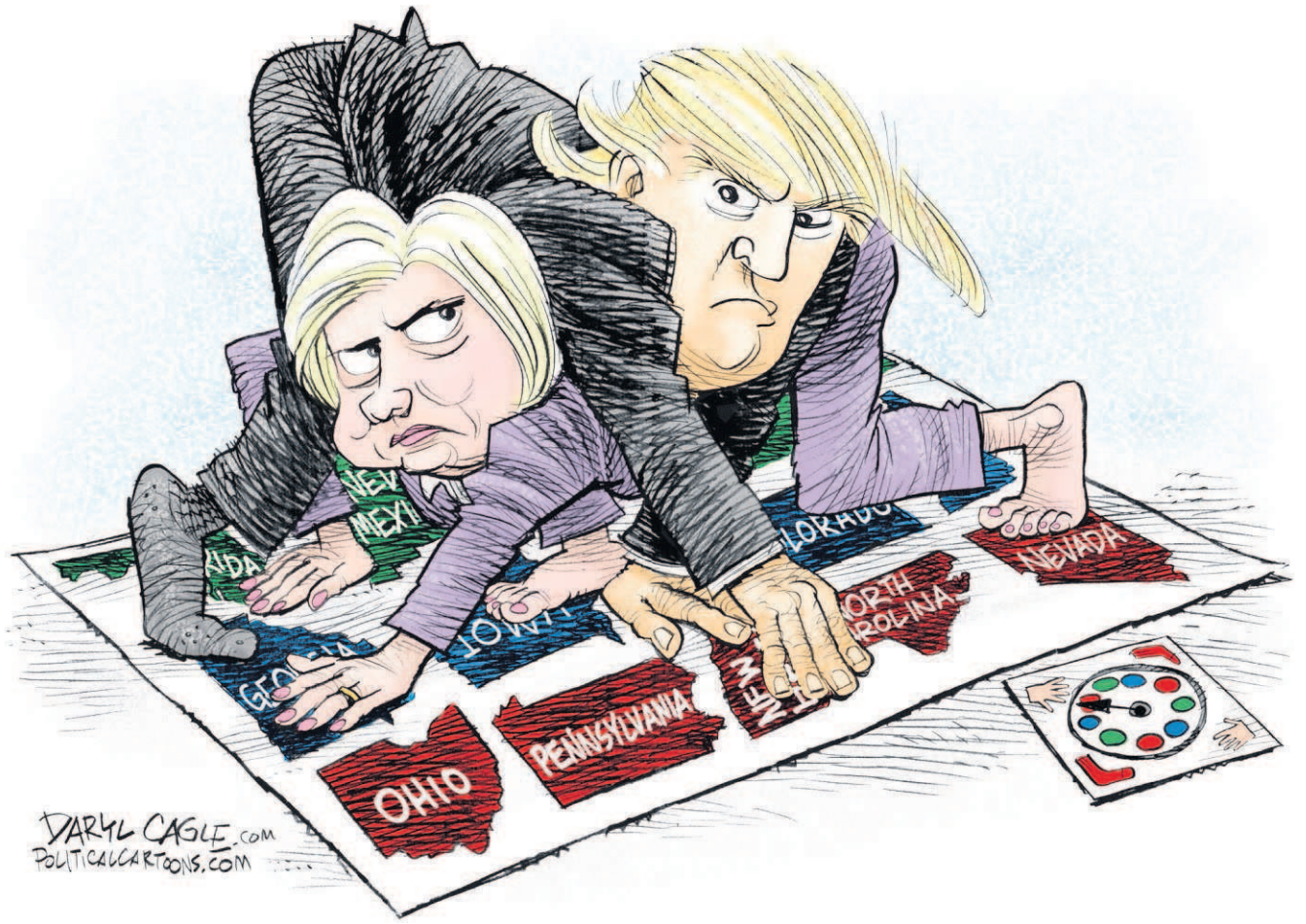
The Big Apple has imposed rent controls on and off since World War I. Apartment vacancies have all but vanished as tenants in rent-controlled units renew their leases in perpetuity. In San Francisco, government limits the amount rents can increase each year in an effort to preserve affordable housing. The policy has backfired. Instead of renting out units at below-market rates, owners offer their apartments to well-heeled visitors as weekend getaways and vacation rentals.

Government-imposed rent controls also discourage construction of new apartments and the maintenance of existing units. There is no incentive for builders to build if they cannot quickly recoup their investment. The resulting housing shortages benefit existing homeowners, but create significant disadvantages for the poor and those seeking to rent.

There's no doubt that Portland is experiencing steep increases in the cost of housing. The booming tech economy and the city's allure for young professionals has created an imbalance between housing supply and demand. Home price increases are among the highest in the nation. Portland also has the 15th highest apartment rents in the country.

But state and local governments can better address the situation by encouraging the supply of new and refurbished dwellings. Let the private sector respond with market-based solutions rather than by government directives that overreach.

Unfortunately, that's not The Portland Way.



Think carefully before saying 'You're hired'

Sometimes when one thought process does not appear to be working, it's a good idea to try a different one. Let's set aside at least temporarily the peculiar customs that our national media have recently adopted whereby a presidential election is treated as if you were voting for your favorite reality television character or circus act.

Please imagine instead that you are a member of a hiring committee whose mission is to find the most qualified candidate for the highest public office in the United States. You are encouraged to give weight to each candidate's relevant professional experience along with his or her demonstrated history of character and leadership.

Your committee has four applications. The first comes from Green Party candidate Jill Stein, a Harvard professor and physician. Although her liberal platform appeals to the more progressive members of your selection committee, a glaring gap in her resume is her lack of legislative or executive political experience beyond one term in the Lexington Town Assembly. Your committee determines that she is not qualified for the position.

Another application has been submitted by Libertarian Gary Johnson, a former Republican whose background was in construction prior to two terms as governor of New Mexico. There he was known primarily for budget cutting and frequent vetoes along with his support for the legalization of marijuana. The conservative members of your committee like his cuts in social programs but do not support his liberal position on marijuana, while the progressive members of your committee



POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

John McColgan

feel precisely the opposite in both areas. His application is set aside for further consideration, but with skepticism from all your committee members.

The third application comes from Donald Trump, a billionaire businessman who has built resorts, golf courses, casinos and skyscrapers in the United States and throughout the world. His detractors on your committee point out that he has zero experience in elected office, and that his business record is a mixture of successes and failures checkered by bankruptcies and defaults to creditors and contractors. They also point out that he is arrogant, insulting, sexist and xenophobic. His supporters counter that Trump is not afraid to say what he thinks and that he would make America great again.

Curiously, the conservatives on your committee do not appear to be troubled by Trump's denouncement of the war in Iraq, his harsh criticisms of President Bush regarding the 9/11 attacks, his outspoken admiration for Russian strongman Vladimir Putin or even his personal history as a playboy with multiple divorces. There is sharp division on your committee regarding Trump's fitness to serve as president and considerable uneasiness about what he might do with his finger on the nuclear weapons button.

The final applicant for the job is Hillary Clinton. Even her critics on your committee concede that she has the strongest resume for the position. She already has served eight years in the White House as first lady, eight years as U.S. Senator from New York and four years as secretary of state, in addition to her earlier experience as first lady of Arkansas and in private law practice. Her critics also acknowledge that she is tough and politically resilient. Her supporters on your committee insist that she is by head and shoulders the most qualified candidate for the job. Her detractors counter that she is not trustworthy, that her term as secretary of state was marked by growing unrest in the Mideast, and that she should not have used her private email server for government business that involved national security. Her supporters counter that Colin Powell also used a private email server while he was secretary of state and maintain that there is much more smoke than fire in the whole email scandal.

Outside your committee chambers, a crowd is gathering. A loud group is chanting, "Build That Wall!" and "Lock Her Up!" while across the street, another group is quietly holding signs that say, "I'm With Her."

The time is closing in for you to make your decision. You are about to choose the leader of the free world, the person who will help to determine the future of your children and grandchildren.

Please choose wisely. Our republic is in your hands.

John McColgan writes from his home in Joseph.

Home sweet home remedies

Among the many enjoyments of living in Wallowa County are my friendships with people descended from pioneer stock. Because they are rich in common sense, I benefit from their wisdom.

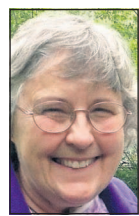
My Wallowa County elders are agile and active, quick-minded and smart — how I aspire to be well into my 80s. Many conversations center around growing and preparing their own food. Therefore, my health has improved a hundredfold by following their eating habits and trying out home remedies.

One winter day, as I was visiting some friends, they asked me about the Band-Aids on each of my fingers. Upon hearing of my dried and cracked cuticles, they suggested I coat my fingers with lard.

My questions led to a demonstration on "rendering lard" and I was gifted with a jar of the prized substance.

Before bed that night, I applied the hog fat, even covering my entire hands because it felt so good. After carefully crawling between the bed linens so as not to rub it off, I fell asleep ignoring the fact that I smelled like bacon in a frying pan.

The only problem from this experiment was that an hour later I woke up to my cat and dog licking my fingers.



GUEST COLUMN

Katherine Stickroth

I wore gloves the rest of night, and sure enough, it worked.

Another condition that required attention might be a sensitive subject for some, but because October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I'm going to share my story.

This past July, on my first day at the Outpost writers workshop offered by Fishtrap, my breasts became fire engine red and very, very painful. An emergency room visit that night armed me with antibiotics, yet when I returned home from Outpost at the end of the week, things had not improved.

Breast cancer is normally thought of as only determined by the discovery of a lump. But I remembered Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC), the fast-growing kind with no tumor. My research indicated my condition matched IBC symptoms and photos.

Flooded with memories of my husband's fight with cancer, a terrible fear drove me to several doctors for a defini-

tive diagnosis.

The appointment with Doctor No. 4 led to a recommendation for a sports bra. She thought I had said I was attending a "riders" workshop (a horseback riding clinic), not a "writers" workshop. When I explained I was only holding a pen, we broke into giggle fits. She referred me to a surgeon for a biopsy, and a close friend arranged for me to see a breast specialist in Boise. This physician readily diagnosed mastitis, an infection of the breast tissue.

What? It had been 34 years since I had nursed a baby.

Tears of relief ... then joy, pure joy. Friends at home had been holding their breath, praying for me. Upon leaving the clinic, I immediately called them with the good news.

And being from Wallowa County, where so many of my friends are ranch women, by the time I got off the phone, I had five offers of bag balm for my udders.

I promptly bought my own, and can personally attest to the value of home remedies.

Katherine Stickroth is a freelance writer who blogs at awallowagal.com. Look for a recent post there for more information on what she learned about breast health.

Heroes earn thanks from student

Dear Hometown Heroes of Wallowa County:

I would like to thank all the heroes in our county such as the veterinarians, paramedics, businesses, mechanics, farmers and ranchers, Life Flight, Red Cross, ODOT, ODFW, city halls, Search and Rescue, Humane Society, volunteer fire fighters, teachers and school boards, all police officers, doctors and nurses

LETTERS to the EDITOR

and Wallowa Memorial Hospital, the National Guard and all the branches of the military and veterans.

Thank you for your service. Not everyone can be a hero. You are special people. You have done a lot for us.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Thank you.

Treyton Sams
Wallowa

Editor's note: Jennifer Gibbs' fifth-grade class at Wallowa Elementary School recently wrote letters to local heroes in honor of 9/11. Treyton Sams wanted to write to everyone.

Correction

Heather Poor's name was misspelled in an article about a dodgeball tournament in our Sept. 21 issue.

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