

O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Cultures in contrast.

Recently, we traveled to the Scandinavian and Nordic countries. Beautiful landscape, lovely people and a vastly different social economy. It was not hard to distinguish socialism from a capitalistic market. All of the countries had high tax rates, up to 70 percent.

Those we spoke to said they had the benefits of health care coverage, free education, liberal maternity time away from work, and a 28-hour work week. But they acknowledged doctor appointments were difficult to schedule and serious treatments could be a year or more out.

The post-50-year-old crowd complained about the free education and free housing for students. Students lived better than seniors on a pension. And that they had to accept students from across the EU and pay for them as well. In Denmark, it was reported that the

millennials had the lowest personal savings rate. They spent their money on near-term choices and personal credit was at an all-time high. The reason stated was that because nearly all their costs were covered by the government, they had no reason to save. A lament that personal accountability was being lost.

In the American system, personal accountability still counts, though it is being eroded. Our history is about a personal work ethic that rewards greater effort. The individual is responsible for their 401Ks and saving options. Personal accountability means "plan and take care of yourself. Don't rely on the government."

Ever notice that those who complain about a cost want someone else to pay? To those who promote increased entitlements, whose funds are you tapping? We might question, is

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 86/48	Sunny 89/49	Sunny 86/45	Sunny 89/46	Sunny 88/47	Sunny 84/NA

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Robert B. Reich

American Voices

It looks increasingly likely that Hillary Clinton, a self-described "progressive who likes to get things done," will have her chance starting next January. But how much that's progressive will she actually be able to get done?

The Senate may flip to the Democrats, but there's almost no way Democrats will have the 60 votes they need to stop Republicans from filibustering everything she says she wants to do.

She is unlikely to have a typical presidential honeymoon because she won't be riding the wave of hope and enthusiasm that typically accompanies a new president into office. She's already more distrusted by the public than any major candidate in recent history.

She hasn't established a powerful mandate for what she wants to get done. Her policy proposals are admirably detailed but cover so much ground that even her most ardent supporters don't have a clear picture of what she stands for.

To say nothing of the moneyed interests — wealthy individuals, big corporations and Wall Street — that are more powerful today than at any time since the Gilded Age and don't want progressive change.

Even if Hillary sincerely intends to raise taxes on rich Americans in order to pay for universal child care, affordable higher education and infrastructure spending, the moneyed interests have the clout to stop her.

They'll also resist any effort to raise the federal minimum wage to \$12 an hour, require employers to offer paid family leave, or push employers to share their profits with employees.

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith noted in the 1950s, a key legacy of the New Deal was creating centers of economic power that offset the power of giant corporations and Wall Street: labor unions, small retail businesses, local banks, and political parties active at the state and local levels.

These alternative power centers supported policies that helped America's vast middle and working classes during the first three decades after World War II — the largest infrastructure

project in American history (the Interstate Highway program), a vast expansion of nearly free public higher education, Medicare and Medicaid, and, to pay for all this, high taxes on the wealthy. (Between 1946 and 1980, the top marginal tax rate never dipped below 70 percent.)

But over the last three decades, countervailing power has almost vanished from American politics. Labor unions have been decimated. In the 2012 presidential election, the richest 0.01 percent of households gave Democratic candidates more than four times what unions contributed to their campaigns.

Small retailers have been displaced by Wal-Mart and Amazon. Local banks have been absorbed by Wall Street behemoths.

And both political parties have morphed into giant national fundraising machines.

The most promising source of a new countervailing power in America was revealed in Bernie Sanders' primary campaign: millions of citizens determined to reclaim American democracy and the economy from big money. That movement lives on. Organizers from the Sanders campaign have already launched Brand New Congress, an ambitious effort to run at least 400 progressive candidates for Congress in 2018, financed by small, crowd-sourced donations and led by a nationwide network of volunteers. Sanders himself recently announced the formation of "Our Revolution" to support progressive candidates up and down the ticket.

Hillary Clinton has been relying on big money to finance her presidential campaign, but she's always been a pragmatist about governing. "A president has to deal in reality," she said last January in response to Sanders. "I am not interested in ideas that sound good on paper but will never make it in real life."

The pragmatist in her must know that the only way her ideas will make it in real life is if the public is organized and mobilized behind them.

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