

Commentary...

Living up to the spirit of Valley Forge

By Joe Gunterman
Guest Columnist

It's Veterans Day. I'm a vet. It was 46 years ago this month that I kissed my new bride goodbye and went off to serve my country during a war that I strongly disagreed with. Of course, I was far from alone in these feelings. Beforehand, we did some protesting of course. But when called, we served. My comrades and I all worked hard, and we even swore to give our lives to protect our country, our way of life, and even or freedom to disagree. Eventually, America came back stronger and better than ever.

This morning I woke up thinking about our first major challenge as a people. About how, our then "President to be" risked his life, his family, his farm and his fortune in leading our first veterans as their pathetic and depleted army trudged to frigid winter quarters at Valley Forge. Witnesses reported old men and women along the way were moved to tears as they gave the hungry troops bread and drink as they passed by. Later it was said you could trace the army's path by the bloody footprints left on the frozen ground by soldiers who had no shoes.

Compare that scene with that of this past week: angry mobs taking to our nation's streets to riot, destroy property, and even beat their fellow citizens. This because they didn't like the outcome of a legal election — the very institution the Valley Forge men and women suffered and died to give us. Less than a week ago I saw posts and reports from many folks who were so proud and happy to have voted, and were encouraging others to do the same. I thought, "Well, I'm so proud that the American spirit of

cooperation and pride in our system is still alive." But now, just a few days later, I'm seeing extremely ugly behavior, even violence, apparently justified because some people didn't get their way. This is just plain scary. During my military time overseas I saw things like this going on, and I always thought, "Wow — I'm so glad to be able to some day go home to a place where we peacefully make decisions as a people." I was in the service during all or parts of two shooting wars, and the Cold War. But, this is the first time in my life that I actually fear for the fate of the Republic, and for my children and grandchildren. Inspired by the men of Valley Forge, I was always confident about our ability to defend ourselves from foreign enemies. But I'm no longer so confident that we can save ourselves from each other.

So maybe we can use this Veterans Day as an opportunity. It's time to stop with the hate talk and demonization of our brothers and sisters who don't agree with us. Get over yourself. Because someone disagrees with you, that does not make them deplorable. Nor does it mean they hate you, nor does it mean they are racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, or Islamophobic. It just means they see the world differently than you do. This is probably because of varying life experience. Perhaps different forces mold their world views than mold yours.

Turn your own ego down a few notches. Listen. Seek first to understand. Veterans are carved from a diverse population of extremely unlikely backgrounds. But what we do share are noble values and goals. They are American values and goals. We treasure and defend what we have in common.

Shouting down, marginalizing, or maligning others just makes you lose the benefit of their knowledge and respect. Through mutual respect and the give-and-take of ideas, you can both learn and be better off. Of course you don't have to be a veteran to do any of that. But you have to try. Isn't that what this diversity that we treasure is all about?

This is the time of year we remember and give thanks for those who went before. There were so many vets of the Greatest Generation who gave all. Others came home and built the country we are fortunate enough to live in today. In 1776, our nation was founded as an experiment. Many, if not most of the world thought it would fail—hoped it would fail. It was thought that a people couldn't govern themselves. That only a "ruling class" was capable. Well, we just got to peacefully pick our leader for the 57th time in that history. I pray for our continued strength and unity as a people, and that our original detractors from way back in 1776 will continue to be proven wrong. I fear someday, that in the after-life, I'll have to account for things in front of all of my sisters and brothers in arms. I don't want to have to say "thanks for your sacrifice, but we wasted it."

Democrats still control Oregon legislature

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — Republicans, by the thinnest of margins, managed to grab one seat from the Democrats in the Oregon Senate, while the ratio remained the same in the state House.

Results from the 2016 general election enable Democrats to still dominate the Legislature, though they are one seat short of a supermajority in each chamber that would have enabled them to pass laws more easily.

The Democrats' one-seat loss in the Senate, which also cost the party its supermajority there, was of the seat previously occupied by Sen. Alan Bates, who died of an apparent heart attack Aug. 5 while on a fishing trip. Retired Southern Oregon University administrator Kevin Talbert is filling in the remainder of the term until January of the seat representing the 3rd District in southwestern Oregon.

Former Ashland mayor and car dealership owner Alan DeBoer, a Republican, gets to go to the Oregon State Capitol for the next legislative session by edging out Democratic candidate Tonia Moro by only 1 percent, or 535 votes.

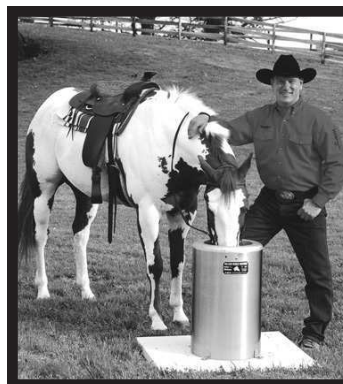
"It's going to be a challenge going up there," DeBoer was quoted as saying

on KOB1, a TV channel in Medford. "We'll be in the minority, and the Democrats will still have control. But I'm used to that, working across party lines, and I think we can accomplish some things."

The loss of Bates' former seat to the Republicans dropped the Democrats' control of the Senate from 18-12 to 17-13 seats. The Democrats maintained their 35-25 edge in the House, one short of a supermajority there.

Another close Senate race was in the 5th District along the central coast, where incumbent Arnie Roblan, a Democrat, held on with only a 1 percent margin, beating Republican Dick Anderson by only 294 votes, according to the secretary of state's office.

In the House, the closest race was in the 51st District, with newcomer Janelle Bynum, an African-American, edging Republican Lori Chavez-Deremer by 2 percent.



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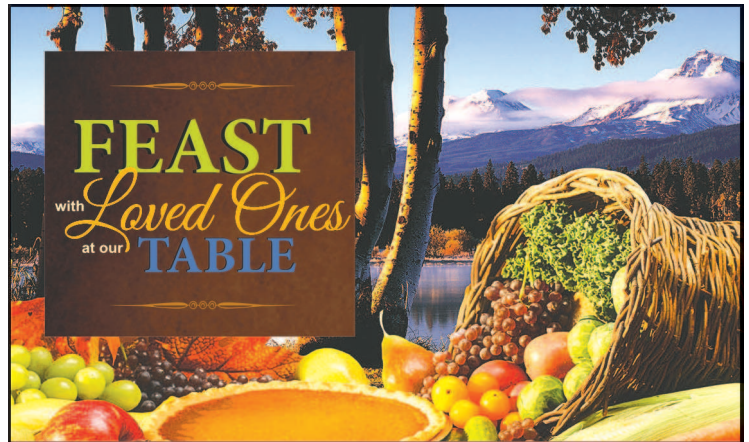
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