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## EDITORIAL

### Goldschmidt's private woes won't diminish public success

Former Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt has led a political career rivaled by few Oregon politicians. His accomplishments are numerous, and his dedication to the public's interest over his lifetime has been commendable.

But, unfortunately, his record came crashing down on top of him when he resigned from his two public and private posts — chairman of the State Board of Higher Education and chairman of the Oregon Electric Utility Company — amid the revelation that he had sex with a 14-year-old girl while he was the mayor of Portland nearly 30 years ago. He was 35 years old at the time.

Such an indiscretion can't be forgiven with a mere apology and relinquishment of his offices. The girl with whom he had sex has since suffered severe emotional trauma and had problems with drugs and alcohol, according to several media reports. Furthermore, the girl had been molested by her grandfather for years before he died — and then Goldschmidt came along, the girl's cousin told The Register-Guard.

In a time when the girl should have been healing and seeking to alleviate the pain of the crime against her, another man came along to once again take advantage of her.

Still, disgusting as the act was, it's important to acknowledge Goldschmidt's service to this state rather than automatically dismiss it in light of his private indiscretions.

In his political life, Goldschmidt, a University graduate, began as a Portland city commissioner in 1971. In 1972, he became the youngest mayor of Portland at age 32. From 1987 to 1991, Goldschmidt served as Oregon governor. Goldschmidt also served as transportation secretary under the Carter administration and was an executive for Nike during his career. Before throwing his hat in the political ring, Goldschmidt used his law degree to aid the public as a legal aid attorney from 1967 to 1969.

Conversely, in his personal life, Goldschmidt has a reported history of infidelity. Were Goldschmidt to be tried for his sexual crime in 1975, the charge would have been third-degree rape. The perversity of his actions and his subsequent attempts to cover it up have dishonored him in the worst possible way.

But are his political accomplishments materially diminished by his private actions? No.

Goldschmidt is living in shame for what he has done and has resigned in disgrace from his political positions. He's paid monetary compensation to the girl — now a grown woman — and continues to face his own demons, as he has indicated to the media. If the public wishes to crucify him, which it inevitably will, we hope it will keep in mind his immense contributions to the public good and separate them from the indiscretions of his private life.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

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Eric Layton Illustration

## gray elephants go marching



**Chuck Slothower**  
Taking issue

In the 1960s, a young generation of post-war baby boomers came of age and wrought extensive changes in the political, social and sexual arenas. Long-haired and radical, they led the charge for women's rights and gay rights and they added urgency to the civil rights movement.

Then they aged and decided taxes were the real enemy. They elected Ronald Reagan president and the conservative resurgence began. But the baby boomers were not unique in abandoning liberalism. Generally speaking, people become more conservative as they age.

For example, Americans age 65 and older support the death penalty by a 71 percent majority; only 59 percent of those age 18-24 feel the same. Older Americans are also less likely to support stricter gun control and less likely to say abortion should be "always legal," according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

In 1970, the median age of the population stood at 28.1 years, the youngest it had been in four decades, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The prevalence of youth directly contributed to the burst of social advancements.

In 2000, the year George W. Bush won the presidency, the population reached a median age of 35.3 years, the oldest it has ever been. Clearly, old age and conservatism have correlated strongly in recent decades.

The United States' population as a whole continues to age, and fast. By 2025, the number of Americans age 65

and over is expected to jump nearly 80 percent, while the population of younger Americans will grow at a relatively paltry 15 percent, according to the Census Bureau.

Besides changing how we think about old-age entitlement programs, the graying of America indicates that the current conservative vogue in American politics is in fact a long-term fixture. Progressives better steel themselves for decades of playing defense.

The older population might bring about vast changes in American politics. Watch out for further solidification of the tax revolt, attacks on public education and abortion rights, militarization and an ever-increasing privatization of government services.

It's an open question as to why people grow more conservative as they age. Perhaps it's because older Americans have more income to protect from taxation than younger Americans. Perhaps people care less about supporting public schools when their kids have grown up. Maybe it's just a simple loss of idealism.

In any case, it's pretty sad. Increased

selfishness may lead to greater personal wealth, but it also contributes to the decay of civil society.

I wish more old adults would realize that supporting education — higher education in particular — benefits everyone. It leads to higher wages, which results in greater government revenue.

Every government dollar that gets someone into and through college comes back to the Treasury in spades. According to the Census Bureau, a high school graduate can expect to earn \$1.2 million over the course of his or her working lifetime. Those with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$2.1 million, and it gets even better with advanced degrees: Those with a master's earn an average of \$2.5 million, doctoral graduates earn an average of \$3.4 million, and those with professional degrees earn an average of a whopping \$4.4 million.

A conservative might argue that higher tax revenues result in bigger government, which is what true conservatives object to in the first place. However, having financially self-reliant citizens instead of citizens dependent on public assistance lowers the tax burden for everyone.

The value of other commitments to government are less quantifiable, but just as real. Older Americans should keep in mind that their declining support for government harms us all.

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