

Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance. We've heard the term used in the media, on social media and in classroom settings for years. But what is it? We saw this definition online:

"Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit within that core belief."

Of course, this explanation is pretty simplistic, and ultimately changing the core belief would also be an option, but the definition started us thinking about how much one single belief can define a person's life and the entire way in which they view themselves. What we think so much creates our own realities.

It's tough to accept that what we might have spent a lot of time believing might be wrong. Or that maybe more than one "right" option exists.

When we look to politics, for example, we see the protestors who are absolutely convinced President Trump will destroy our country. On the other hand, his proponents are convinced he will undoubtedly save it. Same man. Same situation. Opposite perceptions.

Plus, all of these claims were formed before the man was even in office and as of today, has still been in office such a short amount of time that the facts don't yet reveal what his presidency will be. But if one attempts to state that to someone with a strong core belief fully ingrained in their mind, you might as well be talking to a brick wall.

If you talk with a person indoctrinated into a cult, for example, who has a concrete belief he is following the design of whichever divine creator—you can argue with facts outside the cult's beliefs. You can even present facts within that cult's system that contradict the belief. You'll still get nowhere fast.

It is confusing and uncomfortable for a person to set aside an idea that has, up until now, defined their very existence.

It's fun to think about what sort of event it would take to really, truly change the nature of a person and their mind ... Next time you turn on Fox News or CNN, deliberately challenge the way you accept what's presented. At least it's not boring.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— GUEST OPINION —

Voting integrity

By Dennis Richardson

As Secretary of State, I am responsible for administering Oregon's elections, audits, archives and corporations divisions. Protecting the rights and personal information of all Oregon voters and ensuring trust in our elections system are serious matters to me.

So today, I will address recent concerns over voter system integrity, as well as the federal government's claim that state elections are part of federal "critical infrastructure."

Last month, President Obama designated state elections as "critical infrastructure" under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

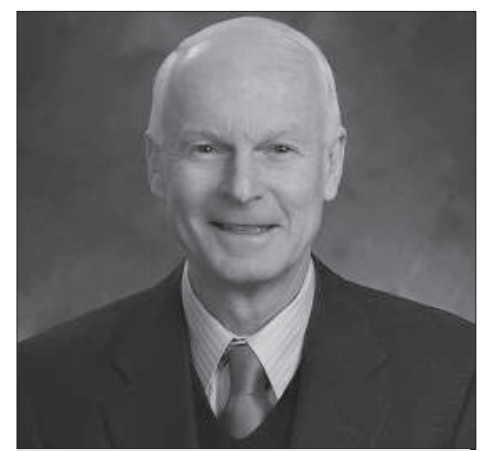
Implemented by Executive Order, the "critical infrastructure" designation by DHS was foisted on the states without consultation of any Secretaries of States or elections officers across the nation. I believe its implementation should be stopped until the consequences of this DHS empowerment can be thoroughly analyzed.

My concern has been elevated as it appears this Executive Order is being acquiesced to by the new Trump Administration. As the administrator of Oregon's state elections, it is clear to me that any elections "infrastructure" policy by the Federal government should only be implemented if it has been proven to be in the best interest of our current decentralized, state-controlled election system.

Recently, I wrote President Trump directly on this issue, and last week I traveled to Washington, D.C. to discuss it with 40 other Secretaries during the National Association of Secretaries of State Conference. The urgency is this, once a federal agency assumes authority to intervene in a state's constitutional duty to conduct fair elections, such an encroachment will be nearly impossible to supplant. There has been no information released by either President Obama's or President Trump's administrations to justify this "critical infrastructure" designation, so I am fighting it.

My letter to the President stated that Oregon's November election results were tabulated correctly and that President Trump's accusations of voter fraud through internet hacking were not relevant to Oregon due to our use of paper ballots. But, counting ballots correctly is not enough.

Restoring trust in Oregon's election system requires more than just counting ballots correctly—it also requires confidence in our voter registration system. Voter registration is a much different issue than tabulating votes on



Submitted Photo

Dennis Richardson is Oregon's Secretary of State.

election night.

It goes without saying that all eligible Oregonians should be able to register and vote. Key tenets of my administration are to ensure more accountability and integrity to the processes and systems of the Secretary of State's office.

To restore greater trust in Oregon's voter registration system, the Elections Division staff has begun to step-up their maintenance of the state voter file. As a starting point, we're reviewing addresses where more than ten ballots are delivered. Surprisingly, 6500 addresses have been identified—mostly fraternity and sorority houses, senior care and assisted living facilities, and R.V. parks. So far, in our evaluation of these data sets, we've encountered only two that appear to be fraudulent. We trust and we verify.

We are also cross-checking voter registration with public records like death certificates. We want to ensure a clean voter file while also maintaining voter privacy. That way, we can ensure everyone who is qualified and registered to vote gets a ballot. In addition, duplicate ballots can be a problem for states. For example, in a recent election, Oregon records show approximately 95,000 duplicate ballots were mailed to Oregon homes. Although we have measures in place to assure only one ballot from a registered voter is counted, we are working diligently to reduce the number of mailed duplicate ballots to avoid confusion and reduce costs.

In short, my job as Secretary of State is to protect and administer the elections system assigned to me by law, and to do so in a non-partisan, transparent and honest manner. While no system is perfect, I've been pleased to see the dedication and integrity exemplified by our county and state elections staff. I will continue to work diligently to support every effort to improve Oregon's elections at all levels of government.

Finally, I will do everything in my power to protect our state's elections system from an unwarranted, and possibly unconstitutional, intrusion by federal agencies and Presidential Executive Orders.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Mental health articles

To the editor:

I'm pleased to see mental illness discussed, but saddened how unaddressed this need is. To mix religion into mental illness is such a slippery slope and presents such a fine line between blasphemy and genuine piety. Interesting subject.

Maybe Ms. Werner could tackle depression in one of her articles? That is my request. Thanks.

Jennifer Johnson
Hillsboro, Oregon

More thoughts on marijuana

To the editor:

In continued response to a letter to the editor last December.

"Marijuana use leads to increased (non traffic) injuries, accidents and absences from school or work."

I searched the internet for hours and could find nothing from a reliable source about increased non-traffic injuries or accidents related to marijuana. Absences from school because of marijuana use is reported. However, once again it must be stated that legalized marijuana is not available to school aged children just as cigarettes and alcohol are not available.

"Inhalation of marijuana smoke is 20% more harmful than regular tobacco."

According to this report from ABC News "the THC found in some cannabis actually helps fight cancer cells and Harvard University researchers have found that, in both laboratory and mouse studies, delta-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) cuts tumor growth in half in common lung cancer while impeding the cancer's ability to spread." (<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Healthday/story?id=4506595&page=1>)

While cigarette smoke does cause lung cancer marijuana smoke does not according to this report which shows why cigarette smoke is more harmful. (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1277837/)

"Tobacco use kills more than 6,000,000 people annually, 30 percent of whom will die from cancer-related diseases due to smoking. If current trends continue, tobacco use will kill 8 million people annually by 2030, 83 percent of whom reside in low- and middle-income countries." (www.cancer.org/aboutus/globalhealth/tobacco-control)

"Tobacco use costs all Oregonians. Tobacco use is the No. 1 preventable cause of death and disease in Oregon, killing 7000 people each year, and costing Oregonians \$2.5 billion a year in medical expenditures and lost productivity due to premature death. All told, the burden of tobacco use equals \$1600 a year per Oregon household." (public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/TobaccoPrevention/Documents/tobacco_facts/costs_of_tobacco.pdf)

According to this report, in Time Magazine, there have been "two confirmed deaths directly related to marijuana worldwide." (time.com/10372/marijuana-deaths-german-study/)

Even the United States Drug Enforcement Agency stated that there are "no known deaths due to marijuana overdose." (www.dea.gov/druginfo/drug_data_sheets/Marijuana.pdf)

Is tobacco smoke actually worse than marijuana smoke? Which one causes the most problems and costs us, the taxpayers, more money? Information, to be useful, needs to be factual and not opinions.

Steve DeFord
Sumpter

Ferrioli talks about economy

Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli, of John Day, expressed optimism following the release of the revenue forecast released today.

Ferrioli said: "The sky is not falling. Today's released revenue forecast is one of the

greatest forecasts in recent memory.

"Oregon's economy is performing exceptionally well because of our small business tax reform and while other's have struggled, we have achieved sustained growth.

"Now, we can move

forward with clear vision to provide the resources needed for our educators and students to reach their fullest potential, transform our transportation system, and fix our broken public pension system to protect current and future retirees."

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Published weekly every Friday.
Subscription rates per year are \$29.95 all areas, e-mail delivery. \$39.95 print issue, home delivery, Baker City city limits only. \$49.95 print issue, mail delivery, outside Baker City city limits only.
Payment in advance.

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Black Lyon Publishing, LLC

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