

Barney Frank on Trump-era politics

The heavy-hitting Democrat from Massachusetts is bringing his game plan to Portland

BY EMILY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

On Jan. 26, the famously free-speaking Barney Frank will deliver what will undoubtedly be an invigorating lecture titled "Democratic Values after Trump: A Frank View" at Portland State University.

The 12th annual Gus & Libby Solomon Memorial Lecture, presented by The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies, will begin at 7 p.m. The event is free to the public, however seating in the main event room has sold out. Overflow space with a live video feed will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis within Lincoln Hall, at 1620 SW Park Ave.

Frank served Massachusetts as a prominent member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 32 years before retiring in 2013. As a congressman, he co-authored the sweeping financial

reform act known as Dodd-Frank, and he tirelessly pushed for gay equality and increased housing for low-income Americans.

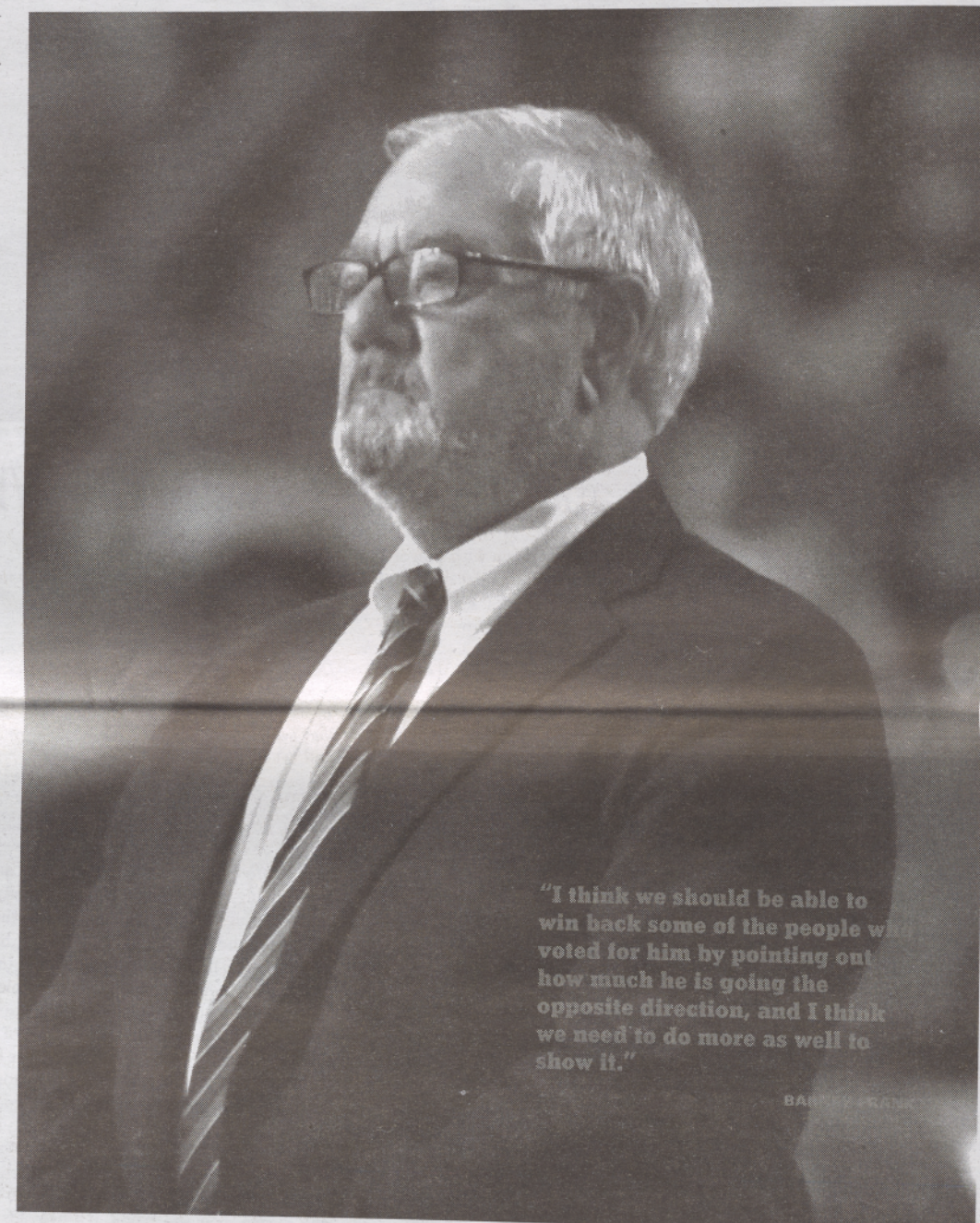
Street Roots spoke with Frank in advance of his Portland appearance. We began by asking him if he thought – as the title of his lecture might suggest – that Democratic values need to shift under a Trump Presidency.

"No," he said. "It's how you best fight for them."

Emily Green: *And how would you say that is?*

Barney Frank: Well, I think we can take advantage of a couple of things that he did. First of all, for years, many of us in the Democratic Party have been fighting against unfair distribution. We were contested by the argument that this is class warfare, and there was kind of an establishment argument against that and overwhelming Republican opposition to it. Interestingly, Trump, in his perverse way, has legitimized talking about the unfairness of the distribution, although the point we have to make is, that having said that, virtually every public policy he talks about, or most of them, is going in the opposite direction.

Secondly, I think we could welcome him having said America doesn't have to be as involved in the rest of the world as we have been. I think that once again, though he says something that I think is sensible – that we've been overextended – but then does the opposite in terms of policy by proposing a vast increase in the military budget. I think we could take him at his



"I think we should be able to win back some of the people who voted for him by pointing out how much he is going the opposite direction, and I think we need to do more as well to show it."

BARNEY FRANK

REUTERS/GARY CAMERON

word – that yes, there is an unfairness in the way the wealth is distributed, and yes, America has been doing too much in other countries, and we've overcommitted ourselves in the world – but (we could) in fact advocate the policies that would make sense given *that*, as opposed to his. Because his specifics – it would conflict with his general (position).

The other point we can make is, once again, he talks about the need to stand up for the average guy, to stand up against some of the established interests, but his policy goes in exactly the opposite direction than what we should be doing. I'm just pointing out, for instance, he's the one who wants to weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and allow the derivatives market to get back out of control.

E.G.: *As he did get elected saying there was great unfairness in wealth distribution, do you see an opportunity here for Democratic voters and the voters who elected Trump to unite, at least, on that?*

B.F.: Some of the voters.

I think there is a chance for Democrats to point out now that he has to deliver, that his specific policies make things worse.

I think what we can do now is, first of all, when he starts making his policy proposals – he's already done that – is point out how he's done the exact opposite of what he said.

How is knocking people off Medicaid, for example, going to make things more equal?

Barney Frank at the Democratic National Convention, July 25, 2016.

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If you go

What: "Democratic Values after Trump: A Frank View," Solomon lecture with Barney Frank

When: 7 p.m., Jan. 26

Where: Portland State University's Lincoln Hall, 1620 SW Park Ave., Portland

Cost: Free

Seating: Tickets are sold out; overflow space with a live video feed is first come, first served