

INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

I appreciated Shawn Boles' clear-eyed viewpoint on the Nancy Shurtz Halloween party flap [12/29].

The professor was, perhaps unwisely, injecting her professorial role into a party environment, which seemed to get everybody confused. Seems she surprised her guests with an unscheduled pop quiz on a book regarding white privilege that she hadn't assigned them to recognize, much less read.

A costume party is not a book discussion group. Without enough clarifying conversation, her costume was doomed to become a projective test for the whole campus, stampeding the administration into hysterical and unprofessional reactions.

The UO is now a national embarrassment as a bastion of academic repression, having attracted the attention of *The Washington Post* for punishing speech that "offends" numbers of people beyond some unspecified threshold by some unspecified standard of measurement.

But when did speech interpreted as offensive, disturbing or "harassing" by some students and/or faculty in a university environment become prohibited and worthy of sanction? When did subjective reactions to perfectly legal behavior become a stan-

dard for sanctions? When did elemental legal mechanisms such as hearings and mediation disappear, and in a law school of all places? More importantly, why?

Privatization of higher education funding is undoubtedly a key factor. Under the unelected tyranny of neoliberal capitalism, colleges and universities live in terror of alienating large donors.

In UO classes I have had the depressing experience of observing that truths inconvenient to influential outside powers are assiduously avoided. Faculty subservience to the hidden sources of their paychecks often deprives our students of knowledge crucial to their eventual functioning as effective citizens of our deeply troubled and dysfunctional republic.

The UO president and provost may well discover in court whose actions in this matter were and were not "indefensible."

Jack Dresser, Ph.D.

Co-director of Al-Nakba Awareness

Project

National vice-chair of Palestine and

Middle East Working Group

Member of Veterans for Peace and Int'l

Society of Political Psychology

Springfield

HIGH-TECH HURT

As concerns climate change, your grandchildren will be dealing with natural disaster as a way of life.

They will also be so high-tech they'll be able to trace their parents voting for Donald Trump.

Your grandchildren will look you in the eyes, hurt you were the people of their trust. God bless us.

Philip Byron Renow

U.S. Army Medical Corps '67-'70

Cheshire

DO SOMETHING

I have a suggestion for Chris Percival and anyone else who is planning to "sit back and enjoy the ride; it's going to be a doozy" during the next four years [Letters, "Lessons Learned," 1/5]. Get off your butt and do something.

Volunteer, contact members of Congress, make donations to causes you believe in, join 350Eugene, get trained in peaceful civil disobedience (which is offered throughout the year in Eugene), and join others in peaceful rallies standing up for women, equal pay, the environment, LGBTQ community, public education and/or whatever policy you believe is impor-

tant in the United States and locally.

Finally, please read the book just released in August 2016 entitled *Trump Revealed* by Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher. You will learn the history from childhood to the present of the president-elect — learn how he makes deals, the relations he has with his past and present corporate circle, his relationship with leaders and citizens of countries around the world and how he plans to use those techniques to "Make America Great Again."

It will help you make plans for the next four years rather than sitting and watching it all unfold around us.

David Babcock

Elmira

HEADSCARF POWER

We are kicking off the "Year of the Head Scarf" as a continual visible sign of protest against the misogynistic and anti-American policies voiced by the incoming Trump administration.

The headscarf is used as a unique enhancement of female beauty. It can be a fashion trend or a religious garment. It's a lifesaver for a bad-hair day too. As an evocative emblem of overarching women's matters, it is the perfect icon for a coalition of like-minded women — a sisterhood.

VIEWPOINT BY PETE SORENSON

Don't Call It Retirement

PETE SORENSON ANNOUNCED JAN. 9 THAT WE'LL HAVE A NEW COUNTY COMMISSIONER IN FOUR YEARS

Harriet Beecher Stowe said, "Never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn." I've always lived by that view. Today is no different.

And today is the sixth time I've been sworn in to a four year term as Lane County commissioner for the South Eugene District. I've also been sworn in twice as Oregon state senator and sworn in three times as Lane Community College board member. I've been privileged and honored to be called to public service.

But let's face it: even by today's low standards, that's a lot of swearing.

Today, as with the other five times here at Harris Hall, this is an opportunity to thank the people of our district who've entered into a partnership with me: If I wanted to be the commissioner and they wanted me to be the commissioner, then it would be a good match.

Today is a day of celebration at the fact that the people of Lane County have elected several people, me included, to terms in elective office. In a sense, it's a celebration of representative democracy, something that too many people take for granted.

Today is the ceremonial first day of these terms of office. I'm fortunate to be elected and look forward with enthusiasm to serving the people of the South Eugene District for four more years.

Today, however, is a bit different for me: at the end of this term, I'll have served 24 years as commissioner. That's a long time: In 2014 the National Center for Health Statistics said the average American had a life expectancy of 78.8 years. So 24 years is 30 per cent of that average. As my 95 year old mom knows, it's a about a quarter of her life, and I hope a quarter of my life.

By the way, I wouldn't be here without my Mom, Jean Sorenson. She's the mother who helped to give me the support and give me the confidence to serve in public office. Please stand mom.

We all owe a lot to our families — the families that make a sacrifice for us to serve as elected officials. I have a whole slew of family members who've sacrificed.

Another one is my wife, Kim Leval. Thanks and please stand, Kim!

By the way, I also wanted to thank my kids. They are taxpayers now and they are both South Eugene High School graduates, both college graduates, both married, both breadwinners, both homeowners and wonderful young adults. I know they aren't here but I still want to thank them, for their sacrifices, too.

Does this sound like I'm retiring? Here's what Nobel Prize winner Ernest Hemmingway said straight out: "Retirement is the ugliest word in the language." He should know: he won his Nobel Prize for literature.

So, no, I'm not retiring.

As George Burns said, "Retire? I'm going to stay in show business until I'm the only one left."

For a while, I think the other commissioners thought I'd try to stay here forever, but today is the day — not that I'm retiring — but the day I say I'm working hard for four more years as a commissioner and giving the progressive and practical viewpoint — and that today is the day that there will be another commissioner from the South Eugene District here in four years.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said it best: "Sooner or later I'm going to die, but I'm not going to retire."

So, no, I'm not going to retire but I won't be a commissioner in four years. I'm moving on to a different adventure, maybe in public service, mostly likely law practice.

Someone else will be elected and will be entrusted with the responsibility and honor to serve the people of the South Eugene District.

Finally, I want to say that I enjoy my work as a commissioner. It's not always easy, but I think it's important to help people, help with the board's work and help as a leader in this community. That's what I do.

I live by simple ideals, recent expressed by First Lady Michelle Obama: Don't be afraid. Be focused. Be determined. Be hopeful. Be empowered. Build a country — and for those of us here today I'll add build a county — worthy of your boundless promise. Lead by example with hope, never fear.

Thanks for giving me this opportunity.

Remarks given by Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson Jan. 9 at the State of the County address