

KeizerOpinion

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Get out of town

The leaders of Keizer, especially members of the city council, don't like to try new things unless or until they've been done somewhere else. *What is Salem doing?* is a regular question when policy questions are discussed at the council level.

It's a policy that suits Keizer—why take the risk of being first when we can benefit from what other municipalities already know? We may ask the leadership of other cities how they handle a particular issue. When it comes to infrastructure and development ideas the leaders of city staff and the city council should keep an eye on what is done in the places they travel (whether the trip is official or personal).

Keizer as a city is not unique. There are thousands of suburban towns across the country that serve as bedroom communities for larger cities. Every tangible issue Keizer faces has been addressed in a similar city somewhere else. Our community is poised to build a large playground project at Keizer Rapids Park because someone saw one elsewhere and talked about it here. What other ideas can be borrowed from somewhere else?

The things our traveling leaders should observe include public art placement, commercial signage, curb appeal of business areas, amenities in city parks and the like. Collectively our leaders could put forth many ideas for what to do in Keizer.

What cannot be observed by city officials are municipal policies. That

takes communication at seminars, training sessions and conferences. What are like-sized cities doing to fund their 9-1-1 obligations? What are cities doing to actively recruit businesses (and jobs) to their towns?

This is a good thing to keep in mind for the members of the newly created Economic Development Commission. The commission, which will meet only four times a year, is charged with, among other things, to create development incentives for Keizer and create outreach to recruit targeted industries to locate in Keizer.

The members of the commission should leave no stone unturned, no expert unquestioned, no resource unread, no idea dismissed out of hand. We believe one of the duties of the commission is to know what Keizer has to offer now to businesses considering a Keizer address. Commissioners need to know their product from River Road—south to north—to Keizer Station and all points in-between.

The main question that should be asked of targeted business is: "What is needed in Keizer for you to move here?" As a city we can sell what we have but if it is not completely what a business is buying, we need to consider our course of action. That's a good job for the Economic Development Commission and our city leaders as they consider a local, a regional and a national recruiting strategy.

—LAZ

Keizer Rapids Regional Park

To the Editor:

I am under the impression our Keizer Rapids Park was a regional park since Marion County contributed funds to purchase some of the property.

The county was able to spend county park money. If the park is regional, the county should provide the city with funds for some park maintenance. County Commissioner Janet Carlson is the co-chairman of the Community Build Task Force fundraising committee to fund the Big Toy in the park along with former Keizer city councilman Richard Walsh. If the county is so involved why is it that only people living within the city are on the Keizer Parks Board? It only makes sense that someone from the county should have a vote on how the regional park is managed and run since it has money in the park.

The citizens of Keizer should thank the Marion County Commissioners for their interest and financial support.

There are plans to construct a large indoor sports facility within the park in the future. The footprint for the building is set out in the revised park master plan. The money for the facility will have to come from the park budget at the expense of the other city parks. Besides the cost of construction there will be constant maintenance and administration cost throughout the year. The facility would need heating and cleaning in the winter and maybe air conditioning in the summer.

There were rumors that some Keizer Rapids Park supporters want to create a park district for a greater source of revenue. This means a new set of elective officers and a paid staff like the fire district. Of course this would raise taxes on everyone in Keizer. I assume a parks district would not be entitled to receive Systems Development Charge funds. One possibility would be to charge the people who use the indoor sports facility. If and when a sports facility is built in the future, then anyone could pay to use it and not just Keizer residents although we paid for most of it in the first place.

Bill Quinn
Keizer

State of the Union

To the Editor:

The President's State of the Union address is, by long standing tradition, a

letters

chest thumping opportunity for the administration in power. I would have expected no less from Obama.

And a negative rebuttal by the other party is expected as well. It seems like things have never been better—or worse.

Let me give my own "unbiased" views about what has or should have happened since Obama first became president.

One of the Administration's most significant actions, I feel, is beginning "normalization" of relations with Cuba, something that was long overdue.

Closing of Gitmo—on track (I guess) but taking far too long. The previous administration's action in denying prisoners access to courts of law has done irreparable damage to the credibility of the United States.

Renunciation of torture — it's about time. I can hardly believe that we allowed such things as waterboarding and sleep deprivation to occur.

Affordable Health Care—Seriously needed but so many concessions were made to Republicans and the health care industry (that failed to win their support, anyway) resulting in a very flawed health care act. The Administration should have built on the Wyden-Bennett Bill which already had a measure of bi-partisan support.

We have allowed our relationship with Russia to deteriorate, which is a very dangerous thing, indeed. The president should have entered into direct talks with President Putin, attended the Moscow Olympics, participated in the Paris Anti-terrorism Rally and should recognize the legitimate concerns of Israel and moderate Arab states about nuclear weapons development in Iran.

Finally, like his predecessors, Obama has done little toward recognizing and strengthening the UN as the best hope to lead the fight against radicalism and provide support for human rights throughout the world.

At least, that is my take.

Art Burr
Keizer

Share your opinion,
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Who's missing in economic growth?

By DON VOWELL

To say that you are worried about America's future is no different than saying you are worried about America's children. Last week we learned that just more than 50 percent of public school children are now from low-income homes. In the same week we learned that the world's richest 80 men collect the same income as the world's three and a half billion poorest citizens. The richest one percent will control half the world's wealth by sometime in 2016. That's half for one percent, the other half for the 99 percent. Even Congressional leadership is beginning to publicly speak of this inequity as a problem. Is it time to connect the dots?

Income level is now the surest indicator of successful outcomes in public schools. Achievement gap is more reliably predicted by wealth than skin color. Children from low income families often have more hurdles to clear than their financially stable classmates. They often face disadvantages in hygiene, health, nutrition and sometimes safety and nurture in their homes. There is humiliation in poverty.

We are fond of telling ourselves that America is the land of opportunity. Anyone can rise from humble origin to become a success—societal

a box
of
soap

or financial. It isn't borne out by reality. Upward mobility is a hard thing to measure, but in our country children of poverty most often remain trapped in poverty and the children of affluent parents usually grow into the same prosperity. Since the 1960s the achievement gap between low income and higher income students has increased by forty percent. Raised in a 1950s small town, my assumption that we all progressed through K-12 learning about the same stuff and graduated with a common body of knowledge now seems like wishful thinking.

It may help to view this as a national security problem. If America can only remain safe and strong by producing healthy and well-educated citizens then that is our first responsibility. We seem to have turned our backs to it.

Since 2009 the stock market has grown by 60 percent, GDP is up eight percent, and corporate profit as percentage of national income is at a record high while median household income shriveled by five percent. Any talk of reversing this trend through legislation is called "class warfare."

Since 1952 corporate taxes as share of all revenues has dropped from 33 percent to 9 percent. That's class warfare. Since 1963 the top personal income tax rate has fallen from 91 percent to 36.9 percent. That's class warfare. We all tend to socialize and congregate with people about like ourselves. Congress does the same. It is a millionaire's club that is demonstrably passing legislation in correlation with the views of wealthy America. Intentional or not, that's class warfare. Is a hedge fund manager or a schoolteacher more instrumental in forging future citizens?

Even more inflammatory is raising the "socialism" bogeyman. In the Scandinavian countries income is distributed more evenly. I'm not sure why. More significantly they have the best education systems in the world. Their education investment begins in children from one to five years old. They continue to support them by tracking them in high school and then making college affordable to qualified students. These countries know how to prepare for their future. Maybe we can call it something besides socialism while still matching that dedication in taking care of America's children. Our future and theirs depends on it.

(Don Vowell gets on his soapbox regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)

Republicans in the immigrant minefield

By MICHAEL GERSON

Any Republican event convened by Rep. Steven King—he of "calves the size of cantaloupes" fame—could easily have degenerated into a festival of immigrant bashing. It is to the credit of the serious GOP presidential prospects in attendance that the Iowa Freedom Summit generally was not.

Yes, Donald Trump emerged from his stretch clown car to say that "half of them are criminals." And King declared that protesting Dream Act supporters were from "the other planet." But the Republican script in Iowa was mainly focused on criticizing President Obama's immigration executive actions rather than negatively characterizing illegal immigrants themselves. Avoiding offensive language is admittedly a low bar. But it is progress for Republicans to realize that they are walking in a minefield instead of a meadow.

The greatest hazard to Republican prospects with rising demographic groups came in the form of an argument rather than an epithet. Former Sen. Rick Santorum made the case that the GOP should be "the party of the worker." Which is better than being the party of disdain for "takers" and the "47 percent." But Santorum went on to claim that immigration has depressed the earnings of native-born Americans. "We need to stand for an immigration policy," he said, "that puts Americans and American workers first."

The campaign slogan "America first," it turns out, is already taken. But Santorum is proposing a serious response to the GOP's national electoral challenge. Republicans, in this view, need to shift their focus away from high earners to struggling middle- and working-class families; and they also need to choose between courting the working class and courting Hispanic voters, because immigrants take jobs and depress wages at the low end. The party of the worker therefore must be the party of immigration restrictionism.

Santorum is often thoughtful; in

other
views

this case, he is thoughtfully wrong. His economic case is overblown. Economists sift and dispute the evidence. But the long-term impact of immigration on native wages seems to be slight—slightly positive for those with a high school and some college education, slightly negative for those who don't graduate from high school. These effects, however, are overwhelmed by other economic trends, such as the advance of technology and globalized labor markets. The white working class does have many problems, but competition from low-skilled immigrants is not among the biggest ones.

Effectively focusing on the white working class also buys into the notion that Republicans can win the presidency by running up the white vote. This might, for all I know, work in the next presidential election. If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic nominee and gets 80 percent of the minority vote, Republicans would probably need about 63 percent of white voters. (The highest percentage Republicans have ever gotten was Ronald Reagan's 64 percent in 1984.)

This is not impossible, with the right conditions and candidate. But because the electorate is growing less white over time—by about two percentage points every four years—this strategy becomes harder and harder to

implement. Mitt Romney won the white vote in a landslide—59 percent—and lost his election handily. Republicans, in other words, need the appeal of Reagan at his height to narrowly win the presidency in the current electorate. Eventually, even that will not be enough.

It is one thing for a political analyst to recommend a get-out-the-whites strategy. But when this thought is consciously entertained by a politician, something disturbing has happened. We have too much tragic history with political lines drawn along ethnic and racial faults.

The issue of immigration has a way of clarifying some of the deepest beliefs of a political movement. Does it regard outsiders as potential threats or potential allies? Does it empathize or dehumanize? The public character of a political figure is often judged by voters—especially immigrant voters—intuitively, by signals and symbols. When arriving at a party, you generally know immediately if you are welcome or not.

No effective reconstitution of the Republican Party's appeal can begin with pessimism about the drawing power of Republican ideals. A party that has lost the ambition to convince is a party in decline.

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