

KeizerOpinion

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Keizer's best foot

Keizer is celebrating all weekend long as *Early Risers*, the 2015 Iris Festival, kicks into gear with a variety of events and activities to please every family and every budget.

Saturday morning the Valley Credit Service Iris Parade gets started at 10:30 a.m. at Lockhaven Drive and River Road. Parade entries will include a mix of favorites and newbies.

The grand marshal of the parade is Steve Pfaff. A Keizer resident and a past president of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, Pfaff chaired the Iris Festival Parade committee for more than 13 non-consecutive years. He has overseen the parade from the early 1990s until last year.

The organizers of the Iris Festival parade have a solid history of choosing the right grand marshal each year; 2015 is no different. The Iris Festival Council unanimously chose Pfaff due to his important imprint on one of Keizer's biggest events.

The festival seems to have found a good home in central Keizer at the Keizer Lions Club. Cherry Avenue is closed from the club to Walery Plaza. Parking for attendees didn't seem to be an issue last year. This year there will be a shuttle between the Keizerfest area and parking at the Sentry Insurance lot on Cherry Avenue across from Plymouth Drive.

For runners the Iris Festival is a bonanza of choices. The pre-parade

5K and 3K Kidz runs down River Road is succeeded on Sunday with a marathon, a half marathon and a 10K run on starting at Keizerfest at the Keizer Lions Club. The Sunday runs have become very popular and it's hard to think they won't eclipse other festival events in the coming years.

Besides events this weekend there were Iris Festival events earlier this month with the Keizer Volunteer Firefighters Mother's Day Breakfast and the Keizer Distinguished Young Woman program held at McNary High School Saturday night. Fatima Falcon and Cambria Rushton were co-winners. Both will represent Keizer at the state program this summer. The two were chosen out of a field of 21 women (all juniors) who stepped outside their comfort zones to speak before an audience and perform a talent.

Beer lovers will have a grand time at the Keizerfest Tent with five local breweries selling and sampling their beers.

The community stage inside the Lions Club hall will be filled with lots of local talent including elementary school choirs, dancers and a performance of *Always...Patsy Cline* by the Keizer Homegrown Theatre.

It's the middle of May. The irises are blooming and Keizer is putting its best foot forward again.

—LAZ

Commitment to community

To the Editor:

Betty L. Hart is running for Keizer Rural Fire Protection District Board, Position 5.

As the election days are coming nearer, I wish to get the community to take a closer look at Hart and why she is the best choice.

Hart is a long-time volunteer in both Marion and Polk counties. Hart understands public policy, local government budgeting process, and the role of a board. Hart has experience in non-profit finance and has an extensive background in engaging both counties in local government activities and explaining issues.

These are just a few of the reasons why I am supporting Betty L. Hart in her campaign for Keizer Rural Fire Protection District Board, Position 5.

I hope that you will join me in backing Betty L. Hart.

Janeen L. Baker
Salem

Support for Stevenson

To the Editor:

On May 19 voters in Keizer will be selecting a new board member for the Salem-Keizer Transit District (subdistrict 2).

I recommend a vote for Richard Stevenson. He has many years' first-

letters

hand experience of the Transit District as a regular rider of both the Cherris scheduled bus service and the CherryLift service for disabled riders.

Mr. Stevenson and I were original members of the Transit District's Citizen's Advisory Committee when it was created in 2012. Mr. Stevenson is one of the few of that original committee who is still serving, demonstrating true commitment to transit in our community. He is now the committee's chairman. He has attended many Transit Board meetings since then, frequently offering comments to the board pointing out both our successes and our shortcomings, as well as suggesting sensible improvements.

He is the best-qualified candidate for this position. I believe Mr. Stevenson will serve our board and community well in the coming years; with a voice that will both support our successes and work to overcome our shortcomings.

John Hammill
Salem-Keizer Transit
District director
Salem

The *Keizertimes* welcomes all points of view.
E-mail to: publisher@keizertimes.com
by noon each Tuesday

Paper's endorsement is puzzling

By GREG EGO

While I support the right of the *Keizertimes* to endorse candidates for local elections, I believe you got it wrong for Keizer Fire District Position 4. Betty Hart is the better choice to lead the fire district with her considerable knowledge of how it operates.

I am curious that there was no response from candidate Taylor in your article of May 8 (*Fire board candidates sound off*) regarding the questions presented to the other four candidates. Yet you chose to endorse him "due to his call for changes in daily operations of expensive equipment."

What does that mean? Does he believe the fire district is doing it incorrectly? What is his expertise to say how we should deploy? Is it a matter of other districts do it differently?

Keizer Fire responds to medical emergencies with an advanced life support medic as well as an engine. In many medical emergencies it requires more than two people to properly assess and treat on the scene. Additionally, moving patients from their predicament to the ambulance requires more manpower. By sending the on duty engine, both of these areas are addressed. As the ambulance

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leaves to transport the patient the engine is then returned to the station. In the event of another call, fire or medical, the engine is available

to respond from the current scene saving time.

Mr. Taylor does not state, nor does your endorsement say, how he would change the daily operations. Since Keizer Fire is a transporting agency we have little wiggle room in what equipment we respond with. In some departments, who do not provide transport services, they have utilized rapid response vehicles such as small SUV's. That works well if you are only stabilizing patients and then returning to the station. In the case of Keizer Fire, rapid response vehicles would require additional equipment and manpower. We could not replace current apparatus with smaller vehicles because of our mission to transport patients and be prepared to fight fire. We also need to maintain the current staffing for our medic and engines. While we do have a strong volunteer program, Keizer Fire asks more of its

volunteers than most districts and adding additional response duties to them is a stretch.

The current board has worked diligently, through the staffing committee process, to augment the staffing of the fire district. We have utilized SAFER grants, Chemeketa student program and a solid volunteer program to provide excellent service to the community. Personnel costs represent the largest share of the annual budget.

My second point is where does he get his information on how we operate? In my 14 years on the fire board, I have not once seen Mr. Taylor at a board meeting or budget committee meeting. I can only surmise that his information is second-hand and accuracy of that information may be compromised.

I believe Betty Hart is the better, and right choice, for the Keizer Fire District. She has been very involved as evidenced by her attendance at board meetings and budget meetings as well as her work on our successful levy campaigns. She has the knowledge base to step in and offer excellent guidance as the district moves forward.

(Greg Ego is president of the Keizer Fire District Board of Directors.)

Seeking mutual respect amid conflict

By MICHAEL GERSON

The sign of a first-rate intelligence, according to F. Scott Fitzgerald, is "the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." When it comes to Islam and blasphemy, many Americans are having trouble accepting even consistent ones.

Under the law, blasphemy is fully protected speech, precisely because there is no public orthodoxy. Elevate the crucifix in a professional or dip it in urine—the state neither genuflects nor cringes. The defense of unpopular or offensive speech plays a particularly important role in our constitutional order; it defines the expansive boundaries of First Amendment guarantees. Religious people of all backgrounds should recognize that this legal neutrality on religion has produced a society remarkably amenable to religion. Those who attempt to intimidate or silence the believer or the blasphemer are attacking a central tenet of the American creed. And if they resort to violence, they may end up as chalk outlines on the pavement. At the same time: Under most moral codes, setting out to demean or mock the deepest, defining beliefs of your neighbor is rude and cruel. While permissible in our constitutional order, it is ethically disordered behavior — malicious and dehumanizing. It is a violation of the Golden Rule and all its variants across the faiths. It deserves protection but not sympathy.

There is no contradiction between First Amendment absolutism and a moral commitment to the cultivation of mutual respect among the Abrahamic faiths (and outside them). Just as there is no inconsistency between the vigorous defense of America against

other views

terrorists and a respectful engagement with Islam. They are, in fact, inseparable.

I can hardly be described as a softy when it

comes to the global war against terrorism. I participated in an administration (headed by President George W. Bush) that pursued this war aggressively. Precisely for this reason, I know that it can't be won without Muslim allies—loyal American citizens who report suspicious activities; allies and proxies who fight against violent Islamism; hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world who repudiate Salafism by the peacefulness and tolerance of their daily lives.

When Americans engage in high-profile, attention-seeking acts of blasphemy, they are not joining American military and intelligence forces at the front line; they are complicating and undermining their work. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State thrive on the narrative of the West vs. Islam. America and our Muslim allies benefit from the narrative of civilization vs. barbarism. Both radical Islamists and some of their most vociferous American critics share the same conviction: that the most authentic form of Islam is the most violent form. If this view prevails in the Muslim world, no amount of drone strikes or commando raids will shield America and our allies from eventual and serial catastrophe. The isolation rather than elevation of radical Islamism is essential to the successful conduct of the war against terrorism.

Modern technology has made the

job of ideological containment much harder by creating a forum for endless provocation and offense taking, not to mention radicalization and recruitment. The alternative, however, is not to demand that religious people become less religious—a hopeless task when much of the world will become less secular in the 21st century.

What is needed is "theological work," according to the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, Jonathan Sacks. Speaking at a recent conference of the Faith Angle Forum, Sacks argued that religion remains "the most powerful creator of groups, stronger than ideology, race, nationalism." When monotheism is tied to dualism—the belief that history is a cosmic conflict between the children of light and the children of darkness—it becomes "the most dangerous doctrine ever invented," allowing people to "commit evil with a clean conscience."

Both Judaism and Christianity have made progress over the centuries in weeding out dualism—reinterpreting their violent scriptural texts and finding resources of "respect for the other." For Christianity, this transition wasn't easy, involving the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War. But this bloody, chaotic process eventually produced a flowering of powerful ideas in the 17th century: the social contract, human rights and liberty of conscience.

Islam is a younger faith, going through a similar internal struggle. Sacks believes that serious, sympathetic dialogue among the Abrahamic faiths can "speak to our better angels" and challenge the violent narrative of sibling rivalry. He may prove naive, but it is certainly a better strategy than mockery.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Ohio's Kasich is best candidate in 2016

Any natural-born citizen of the United States who has reached the age of 35 years can be president. President Obama, limited to two terms, must leave the highest political office in the land with a new American taking his place in January, 2017.

So far the Democrats have only two who've declared their intentions to run—Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders—although others have indicated interest, including Vice President Joe Biden.

On the Republican side, there are a large number who've declared themselves as well as a number of others who are, so to speak, "waiting in the wings."

Some of the GOP hopefuls include those who seem at first blush to be unlikely to succeed. Mike Huckabee may be the most well-known among the unlikely as he is a by-the-Goode-Book evangelical conservative whose anti-sentiments number several issues like being against abortion, gay marriage and gambling. He staunchly criticizes mainstream media, Jay-Z, the "ick factor" in gay relationships, adoption of children by gays, and hawks quack medicine. He scolded Obama and his wife for letting their daughters listen to Beyoncé and blames gay activists for the Indiana governor's reversal on that state's religious freedom act that would have allowed-by-law, discrimination against gays in public business establishments.

Another of those who chances are slim is Ben Carson, the retired pediatric neurosurgeon, who has become a Obamacare scourge: he compares

the health care

program to slavery. Further, he compares the U.S. under Obama to Nazi Germany and the Internal Revenue Service

gene h. mcintyre

vice to the Gestapo. However, so far, he is the only GOP black candidate. Carly Fiorina ran in California for the U.S. Senate and lost and was also ousted as CEO of Hewlett-Packard after a highly questionable merger and chief-in-charge of massive layoffs at H-P. But, she is the only woman GOP candidate so far.

Unannounced to date is the perennial-one for president, Donald Trump, aka The Donald, who reminds those of us among the senior citizens set of Harold Stassen who ran for the high-office 12 times between 1940 and 2000. Trump offers the entertainment factor and will be missed if he does not enter the race as will Newt Gingrich, who was casino billionaire Sheldon G. Adelson's man for president.

More serious, yet undeclared GOP candidates are former governors Bob Ehrlich of Maryland, Jim Gilmore of Virginia, and George Pataki of New York. Governor of Ohio, John Kasich, who won re-election recently with 64 percent of the votes, is considered a strong prospect if he chooses to run. Less likely to make a successful run since Bridgegate is Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey and the governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, who's come across as weak and inde-

cisive.

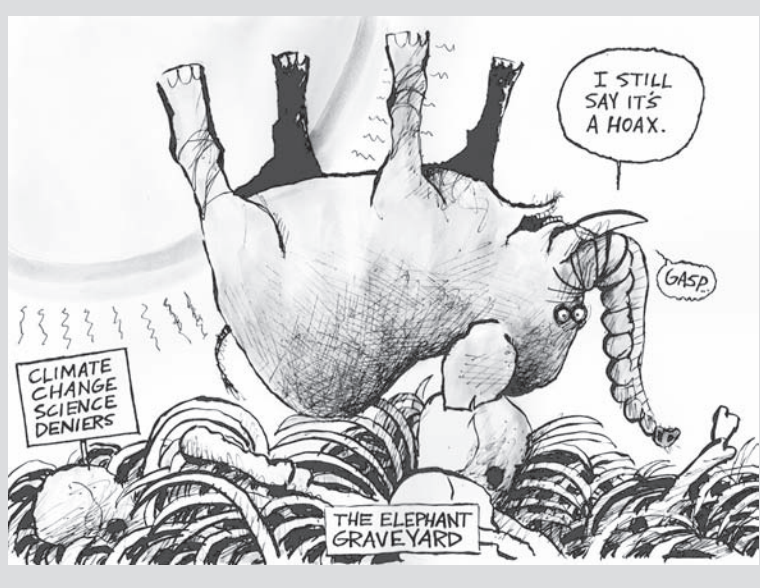
There are also the three mouseketeers who reside now in the U.S. Senate. They are Ted Cruz the bomb-thrower, Rand Paul who has difficulty remembering what he said late week, and Marco Rubio who's glib but represents something like a Hollywood set where there's nothing beyond the facade. They to a one lack experience at managing anything beyond their daddy's rabblousing, a small medical office or a state commissioner's desk.

Personally, I prefer that we not elect Bush No. 3 unless we're going to establish a U.S. royal family and give them the White House. As for the Clintons, they appear money- and power-crazed and continue at national politics so they can become billionaires like the exclusive set of rich bankers and corporate heads that are thought to be their friends and companions. Further, I shudder at the thought of Bill turned loose in the White House again to prey on young female interns.

What we need is a governor who has been able to do good things for the citizens of his state.

First and foremost the name of a viable occupant of the White House who has done well at serving the people of Ohio is Governor John Kasich who has also served in Congress. He's a smart, middle-of-the-road Republican who knows how to manage a large state government and works well with all people.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)



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