

Wish list

Sadly, the 2015 holiday season is slowing ebbing away. The Christmas gifts have been opened, the wrapping recycled and the tree is beginning to look a little forlorn.

The time between Christmas and New Year's Day is spent by many looking forward to the coming 12 months, some people make resolutions (and stick to them). Others think about what they will do with the new year and what they wish to happen.

We have our wish list, too, of things we'd like to see in the coming year.

- The round-about at Chemawa Road and Verda Lane to be completed on time and with signage that will make it easy for uninitiated drivers to navigate a traffic control tool that works just fine all around the globe.
- A plan to make the Keizer Civic Center conference room financially stable, enough so that a lighting system can be installed that won't leave speakers and performers in dark.
- Money is obtained to finish the big playground at the Keizer Rapids Park and other amenities so we can move onto other projects.
- A home for Keizer Homegrown Theatre. We think a pavilion at Keizer Rapids Park would do very well. It would serve not only as a 200-seat theatre for our performing groups including the Keizer Community Band and non-profit groups. The pavilion would also serve as a green room for weddings and concerts held at the Keizer Rotary Amphitheatre.
- A move forward to expand the Urban Growth Boundary. We advocate for an expansion along Interstate 5 north of Keizer Station and zoned

editorial

for light industrial, medical and office park that would attract the types of business that would create jobs here.

- A serious and sober discussion on the state of Keizer's main commercial thoroughfare.

Wishing River Road to be a vibrant retail core won't make it so. We seek action utilizing all the tools the city and other organizations have to foster a plan involving business, property owners and stakeholders.

- Push to have the 97303 zip code correspond exclusively to the border of the city of Keizer. This will make marketing the city to business a more straightforward endeavor.
- We push for the Keizer City Council, once again, to add neighborhood tours to its agenda just as they do park tours several times a year. National Night Out in August is a good time for residents to see their councilors, but we want them to be seen more regularly out in all the neighborhoods, where the people are.
- We want to see a push for more density in the city's core in place of infill development that makes our desirable neighborhoods less so. The city should build up rather than out. Small town Keizer is long gone—our city is a mid-sized city that is close to busting at the seams. Rather than encroach on valuable agricultural land, let's go tall and make it expensive for those who want to push out.
- We wish everyone a good new year that is filled with good health, prosperity and tolerance for others.

— LAZ



Which party loves the USA?

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

Which political party loves America? Not the United States that once existed, but the flesh-and-blood nation that we all live in now.

The debates we have witnessed —too few and far between for the Democrats, frequent enough for the Republicans to constitute a new reality TV show—have provided an incontestable answer to that question.

The Democrats embrace the United States of Now in all of its raucous diversity.

Democrats are not free of nostalgia. They long for the more economically equal America of decades ago and celebrate liberalism's heydays during the New Deal and civil rights years.

But Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley all stand up for the rights of a younger America —today's country—that is less white, more Latino and Asian (and, yes, more Muslim) than was the U.S. of the past. The cultural changes that have reshaped us are welcomed as part of our historical trajectory toward justice and inclusion.

The Republicans, particularly Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, don't like our country right now. They yearn for the United States of Then. The current version is cast as a fallen nation.

True, the party shut out of the White House always assails the incumbent. But a deeper unease and even rage characterize the response of many in the GOP ranks to what the country has become. This can cross into a loathing that Trump exploits by promising to deport 11 million undocumented immigrants and block Muslims from entering the country while dismissing dissent from his program of demographic reconstruction as nothing more than "political correctness."

other views

I am certain that in their hearts, every candidate in both parties still likes to see us as "a shining city on a hill" and "the last best hope of earth." Within the GOP, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush have been especially careful not to abandon the virtue of hope and any confidence in the present. But this makes them stronger as general-election candidates than within their own party.

The stark cross-party contrast complicates any assessment of last Saturday's Democratic debate. As Clinton, Sanders and O'Malley all made clear, each believes their own disputes are minor in light of the chasm that has opened between themselves and the Republicans.

"On our worst day, I think we have a lot more to offer the American people than the right-wing extremists," Sanders declared at the debate's end. O'Malley concluded similarly: "When you listened to the Republican debate the other night, you heard a lot of anger and a lot of fear. Well, they can have their anger and they can have their fear, but anger and fear never built America."

Democratic solidarity was Clinton's friend. She emerged stronger simply because neither of her foes made a clear case for upending the campaign's existing order. Her own solid performance will reinforce those who already support her.

But two big quarrels between Clinton and Sanders are important to the Democrats' future. By pledging to avoid any hike in taxes on those earn-

ing less than \$250,000 a year, Clinton strengthened herself for her likely fall encounter with the other side. But Sanders deserves credit for speaking a truth progressives will need to face up to (and that social democrats in other countries have already confronted): that the programs liberals support are, in the long run, likely to require more broadly based tax increases.

On foreign policy, Clinton continued to be the more openly interventionist candidate. Here again, Clinton likely positioned herself well for the long run. But Sanders may yet capitalize on his comparative dovishness with the generally peace-minded Democratic caucus electorate in Iowa.

Each also offered revealing one-liners as to whether "corporate America" would love them. Clinton nicely deflected the question by saying, "Everybody should." But Sanders was unequivocal. "No, they won't," he replied with starchy conviction.

Above all, this debate should embarrass the Democratic National Committee for scheduling so few of them, and for shoving some into absurdly inconvenient time slots that confined their audiences to political hobbyists.

Debates are a form of propaganda in the neutral sense of the word: They are occasions for parties to make their respective arguments. Given that the divide between the parties this year is so fundamental, it's shameful that Democrats did not try to make their case to as many Americans as possible.

If you have faith in your response to anger and fear, you should be ready to bear witness before the largest congregation you can assemble.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Back on the job

By MARK GLYZEWSKI

"Without my back I could not do this job," said Greg Biben, a firefighter/paramedic with the Keizer Fire District for the past 14 years.

Unfortunately, Biben hurt his back while on the job on two different occasions. The first was in 2012 while lifting a man onto a stretcher. Biben ended up with a ruptured disk and needed surgery.

Two years later at the scene of a house fire, Biben felt his back pop as he was cutting siding off an exterior wall to get at the fire.

"That took me to the absolute lowest that I've ever been," said Biben. "With the injury and my mental state of being hurt again and not being able to go to work, I felt hopeless."

His doctor referred him to Salem Health's Outpatient Rehabilitation Services and its Work Injury Management team of physical and occupational therapists.

"The staff there is just amazing," said Biben. "They create a routine that mimics your work, whatever it is. In my case, they customized all of the exercises for firefighters."

"I eventually pulled a 50-pound bag that was strung from a second floor balcony in the rehab center to mimic lifting a bundle of fire hose from one floor to the next," said Biben. "Also, I pushed a 300-pound sled to simulate rescuing somebody

guest column

or moving the heavy gear we have."

"The exercises shadowed the constant barrage of bending and working your back on the job. The rehab staff took the time to research my job and customize my experience there," said Biben.

The Work Injury Management physical therapist also developed a customized workout routine for Biben to help prevent future back injuries.

"Every time I get off work, I have a set routine that strengthens my back and core, and puts me back to square one," said Biben. "And hopefully it will see me throughout my career."

"I owe them my life," said Biben. "I really appreciate what those folks did for me. I'm back on top again."

For more information about Salem Health's Outpatient Rehabilitation Services, ask your doctor or visit salemhealth.org/rehab.

(Mark Glyzewski is a public relations consultant with Salem Health.)



Submitted Photo

Gap in incomes gets wider and wider

gene h. mcintyre

Should we in any way be concerned that middle income Americans are no longer America's economic majority? Concerned or not, it is reported that the middle income set is no longer the economic majority as there are now more low-income and high-income Americans than there are people earning middle incomes.

According to a PEW Research Center report, there were 120.8 million adults living in middle-income households and 121.3 million in lower- and upper-income households combined in 2015. This marks the first time in the center's four decades of tracking this data that the size of the two lower and upper groups have been greater than the middle group.

The study defines middle incomes as adults earning two-thirds to double the national median, translating nowadays to a range from \$42,000 to \$126,000 a year in a 3-person household. Meanwhile, the Pew folks report that since 1971, the percentage of adults living in the low income bracket (below \$42,000) has increased from 25 percent to 29 percent, and the percentage of adults living in the highest income bracket (above \$126,000) has increased from 14 percent to a stratospheric 21 percent. The middle class has diminished to near 50 percent from 61 percent.

These percentages can be viewed as good news, meaning that shrinking middle incomes have gone into the upper class ranks, and bad news that as many formerly in middle incomes have gone downhill to be among the low income Americans. These numbers tell us that more Americans are doing better by a 7 percent increase while the others falling down have

"gone south" by 4 percent. As with all percentages derived from data gathering, a person can grieve over the rich getting richer at a pace considerably faster than all others but that there's always room for the smartly industrious to realize gains in America practically unheard of most elsewhere in the modern world.

The rich are getting richer at a pace much faster than the middle and lower classes. It's not within my socio-economic position to be pals with anyone in the much maligned "one percent" or the very top-most income set in Oregon or anywhere in the U.S. Meanwhile, my out-and-about views of others leads me to conclude that while there are many in America who are homeless and apparently destitute, everywhere I go I see hordes of other American shoppers who are moving about malls and the stores within them or the supermarkets with shopping carts full. Drive by any one of Oregon's outlet store malls, (such as the one in Woodburn) or big box stores and the parking lots are full.

Credit remains relatively loose and state and federal agencies make it possible through food stamps and other help programs to lessen the pain of lower income. That probably explains why wherever anyone like myself goes these days, consumers are very busy being consumers, buying, buying, and buying. That can be the purchase of anything from wool socks to new cars.

What's written here so far prob-

ably sounds good, right and true, or very "American." However, there are a couple of boils on the national skin that appear in the form of persons who work for wages too low to meet even basic needs and the homeless, being among those desirous of affordable housing of which there is a kind of deprivation crisis. There are other pertinent issues like a better design for national health insurance, a college education without lifelong debt and a whole host of matters in need of redress. These boils could be lanced effectively and the body America could heal itself. Perhaps, the greatest weakness in the U.S. nowadays is inadequate income distribution.

It is optimism about improvements that keep this writer seeing the glass as half full, not half empty. Where I grew up in Oregon was a fairly typical Oregon community back 50 years ago: Everyone who wanted to work found a job, a living wage was paid to those who worked and, since there was full employment, there was not one case of homelessness known to this former Astoria resident. Hence, from seeing with my own eyes that we can do much better than we do now by providing an economically viable place for everyone who wants one. It simply requires a change of attitude where all income levels think of "America" as worthy of saving—without going everywhere in the country to peasants and overlords—and act in concert, mainly the excessively wealthy doing more to help those without means, to make this nation once again the best place to live in the world.

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

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