

KeizerOpinion

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Obama promised hope, but...

By MICHAEL GERSON

Now let us praise laundry lists. Every year at State of the Union time, the president and his staff say the speech will not include them. But the laundry won't keep track of itself. The union is varied and expansive, and so are the responsibilities of its chief executive. Enumerating accomplishments and objectives amounts to lists, which Obama had in plenty Tuesday night.

The interesting thing is why this particular laundry was chosen. By what principle does the president want personalized medical treatments, paid leave, pre-K for all, the cure for cancer, a transition away from dirty energy, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

Obama advanced no ideological claim of what government should do; no technocratic vision of how its performance might be improved. The lists exist because Obama, who sees the "next frontier," chose them. His person unites his agenda—not quite in the leadership league, he admits, of Lincoln or Roosevelt, but he has obviously thought hard and long about the comparison.

This was the way Obama was introduced to the country eight years ago. His victory in the Iowa caucuses had little to do with an ideological vision or policy agenda (which was, in fact, the utterly predictable liberalism of a backbench senator). That giddy night, he claimed that a "divided" and "disillusioned" country found "a common purpose." His 38 percent in the caucus proved "we are one people." We would "move beyond the bitterness and pettiness and anger that's consumed Washington." "This was the place," Obama said, "where America remembered what it means to hope." Elsewhere he would say: "I have become a symbol of the possibility of America returning to our best traditions."

Obama would bring balance to the Force. Prospectively, with eight years ahead, this was inspiring. Retrospectively, with seven years behind, the same claim comes across as self-centered and a little sad—a world-historic figure picking through the refuse of the years for this shiny accomplishment and that. His solutions to 21st-century problems look suspiciously like 20th-century liberalism. And where has Obama actually left his party and American liberalism?

Obama is the first Democrat since Franklin Roosevelt to win back-to-back electoral majorities. But members of his party who venture beyond the 18 acres of the White House will find political ruin. Since taking office, Democrats have

other views

lost 13 Senate seats, 69 House seats, 11 governorships, 30 state legislatures and more than 900 state legislative seats.

In border states that not long ago produced national Democratic leaders—such as Arkansas and Tennessee—the Democratic collapse is especially pronounced. Few presidents have done better for themselves and worse for their parties.

And perhaps most disturbingly for America's liberal party, trust in government to do the right thing is near historical lows. According to a Pew Research Center average, just 19 percent of Americans trust government to do the right thing all or most of the time. The whole of the Democratic agenda, the whole of Hillary Clinton's agenda—from gun control to immigration reform to reducing greenhouse gases—requires some modicum of trust in the capacity of government to act in the public interest. What is liberalism without public trust in government? A college class.

Declining trust in government is part of a larger decline in the trust of institutions generally. But it is fair to say that the launch of Obamacare, the Veterans Affairs hospital scandal and the IRS political targeting scandal did little to halt the slide. Obama was either complicit in the trend, or helpless against it.

The same could be said of political polarization—which Obama eventually decided he could not fight, and joined with enthusiasm. Or the rise of an angry, anti-establishment populism. More than 10 years of belief that America is on the "wrong track" has hardened into outrage and cynicism, and left some Americans vulnerable to ideologues and demagogues. These will be remembered as the characteristics of the Obama era—not hope, but anger and cynicism. It was a time when many Americans learned to rage.

The president and the future nominee of his party now have one advantage. Somehow these trends have produced another cult of personality, on the other political side—untethered to ideas, offering only himself as the solution to our problems, turning bitterness and pettiness into a previously undiscovered political art. This might be the strangest turn: a Republican Party that copies and amplifies the worst tendencies of our time.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

art show. That said, we do not have all of the processes in place to accommodate this in a seamless fashion.

We feel we have accomplished this now and that the All Student Art Show will move forward and become a great success. As the chair of KPAC, I want to personally apologize for the frustration, fits and starts that getting to this point has caused any of our public educators, SKEF staff and students.

Please forgive our inexperience and growing pains while we endeavor to serve the people of Keizer and local artists by providing an exceptional public art gallery for their use.

In a related note, there is a fabulous show by the Mid-Valley Quilters Guild up now at the Keizer Civic Center. Please stop by and see the extraordinary artistic work.

Lore Christopher Keizer

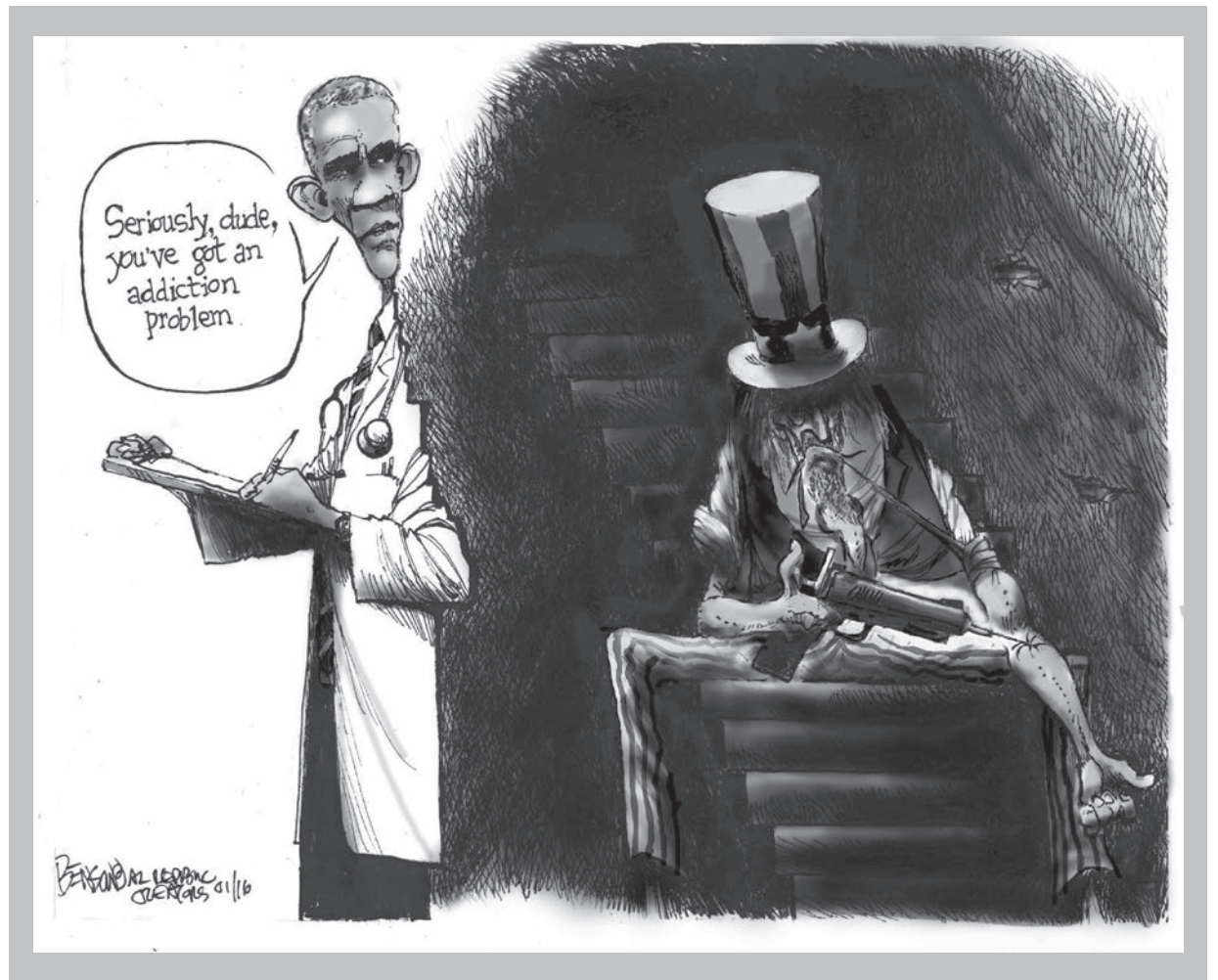
KPAC, SKEF work for student art

To the Editor:

Regarding the article regarding the All Student Art Show (*Questions arise over student art show at KPAC meeting*, Jan. 8 *Keizertimes*) I want to clear up any perceptions that the Salem Keizer Education Foundation (SKEF) or Krina Lee were in any way part of the concern. SKEF and Krina have been nothing but gracious, patient and flexible in working with Keizer Public Arts Commission (KPAC), our citizen volunteer committee, and the City of Keizer.

Our Community Gallery is only a few months old and KPAC is having growing pains determining processes and procedures that accommodate each unique situation and art show. We want to be a great community partner with SKEF and serve all of our kids by providing an exceptional location for their annual

letters



Who encourages Harney militiamen?

gene h. mcintyre

Kate Brown became governor by Oregon's law of succession. She wants to be governor in her own right by the election this year. However, she has not impressed this voter by her apparent reluctance to do anything that's not in her electable interest. Case in point here has been the standoff in Harney County by a bunch of criminally-minded invaders from other states.

The dispute is mainly about the use of federal lands by out-of-state ranchers out for private gain. Any Oregonian or any American living in or visiting Burns or Harney County is not necessarily living on federal land and therefore should be looked after for their safety by Gov. Brown. After all, Brown's in charge of the Oregon State Police and the Oregon National Guard.

Meanwhile, letter writers to newspapers all over the state are writing to say they are fed up with what's going on in Harney County. Here are but a few examples from the *Oregonian* of what they are writing:

"This collection of traveling gun nuts is just looking for a reason to go into their 'government-is-after-us' paranoid psychosis that fuels their insanity."

"Ammon Bundy and his self-styled militia cohorts are misinformed, misguided and mistaken. Their occupation of the Malheur (r)efuge has nothing to do with the Constitution."

"I'm writing to express my frustration and anger over the ongoing armed robbery and theft of public lands by the Bundy gang of terrorists and traitors."

"You cry patriotism as an excuse to shield your true intentions which are to turn over our public land jewels to

mining, logging, fracking and grazing interests. You have attacked the United States in an act of war and should be dealt with as such, by

government entities."

Negative reactions to this takeover can be found all over the media and yet no action from the capitol by Gov. Brown. It is all very disappointing and leads me to believe Kate Brown is just another partisan who will take no action—no matter how serious the matter—to avoid controversy in her attempt to be elected.

So how did we get to a place where a bunch of goons takes over southeast Oregon? Taking over a refuge and leaving the nearby citizens nervous should not be happening to the Malheur Refuge or any of the other 51 refuges around the country, although the Bundy tribe got away with the same thing on a related matter in Nevada.

Clues abound as to how we got to where lawbreakers believe all they have to do is occupy whatever federal "ground" they want. Kim Davis, of Kentucky county clerk fame, refused to recognize same sex marriages and wouldn't issue the licenses for it. Canadian-born Ted Cruz identified her jailing as "judicial tyranny" while Mike Huckabee encouraged her with all his political strength. Donald Trump says, if elected, he will not permit Muslims into the country due to their religious preference. Marco Rubio stands by his motto, "God's rules always win and take precedence over man's." Rick Santorum signed a

pledge "not to respect an unjust law that directly conflicts with higher law."

Nevada's Cliven Bundy refused to pay grazing fees for his use of federal land. He received the support of Cruz, Trump, Huckabee, Rand Paul and Ben Carson. It's been reported that Rand Paul met with Bundy earlier this year for nearly an hour, even after Bundy was discredited for his racist remarks. Now, when the son of Cliven, Ammon Bundy, a man who says he's under God's instructions, took over the federal compound at the wildlife preserve a couple of weeks ago, only John Kasich, among the aspiring GOP contestants for U.S. president, protested it; the others were silent where silence condones and, further, hints that as president each would surrender all that we want protected and preserved to mining, logging, fracking, grazing and, possibly, hunting preserves for the wealthy, upscale retreats for the rich, and golf courses.

Whatever the case, Gov. Brown finally sent out an electronic message from her office a week after the occupation got underway, calling the action "unlawful" and demanding the group "decamp immediately." A no-budge pledge was the Bundy group's reply with nothing more from Salem as consequence. Am I surprised by Brown's lack of attention? No. She's also been 'at sea' over Syrian refugees to Oregon among which, most certainly, include ISIS terrorists.

I'm remind of a proverb from a 1930s: A democratic government that allows anti-government forces to rule, soon has no democracy at all.

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

New rules for 2016 presidential races

a box of soap

It is 2016 and we're doomed to a full nine months of presidential election campaigning. There will be no avoiding the hip-deep toxic sludge of campaign ads but I wonder if we might at least set one or two basic ground rules. The first and most basic rule ought to be that you can't say stuff that's not true. There should be some consequence if you do.

Donald Trump claimed in an interview that he saw, (from Manhattan), thousands and thousands of Muslims in Jersey City, N.J. celebrating the fall of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11. That never happened and the televised coverage he claims to have seen doesn't exist. When confronted with those facts he simply doubled down and said yes, it did. So he is either a liar or has invented a memory. Why is he still viewed as a serious candidate? Why was he ever? More than any other candidate he has been factually incorrect and more than any other candidate his fabrications have been just shrugged off.

As a reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement a War on Cops campaign has surfaced. Two thousand-fifteen was the second safest year in history for police fatalities by gunshot, and one of the safest years overall for fewest police giving up their lives in the line of duty. Gov. Chris Christie's analysis of this welcome news was blaming Obama for "police officers being hunted." In actuality, traffic accidents claimed more law enforcement lives than armed miscreants. Mike Huckabee said this War on Cops was responsible for "a surge in crime." Ted Cruz has a little

more Congressional heft and was able to convene a Senate Judiciary hearing titled "War on Police." He

blamed Obama for "creating a culture where the men and women of law enforcement feel under siege."

Even though facts support a complete opposite reality this overheated rhetoric somehow wins converts. In a September Rasmussen poll 58 percent of Americans believed there is a war on police in the United States today. If we don't insist on candidate's sticking with the facts then it is our added responsibility as voters to dig through the muck to find the truth.

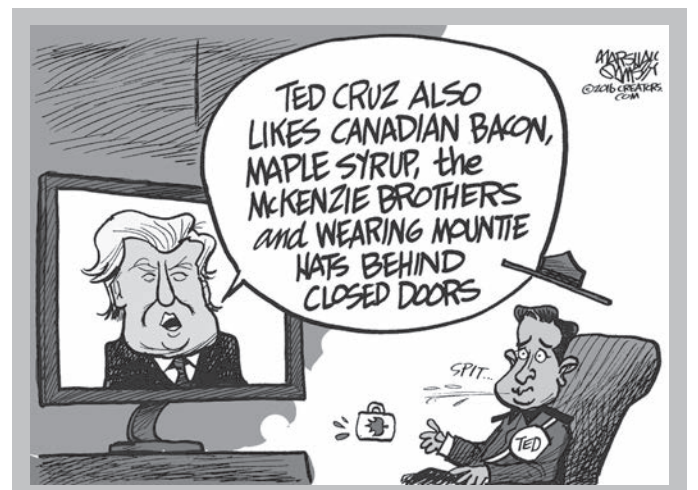
Another rule we could use is that if you dislike something one candidate is accused of then you ought to dislike all candidates accused of the same. We often hear

people say they could not support a liar like Hillary Clinton. How then could you support a liar like Donald Trump? Much is made of Clinton's

use of private email servers for government business. Nothing is mentioned of the thousands of emails never recovered from the Bush administration's use of private emails during the Alberto Gonzales troubles. Lastly, it's hard to see that Donald Trump has a healthier attitude toward women than Bill Clinton. The difference being that Bill Clinton is not running for president.

With no facts to support it, I keep thinking there is a broad section of the electorate between the left wing and right wing extremes. We must count on this majority to prevent the election of a candidate indebted to either of these extremes. The real worry is that a moderate candidate would be incapable of saying something outrageous enough to be heard in Campaign 2016. Truth is usually dressed plainly and has no need to shout.

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



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