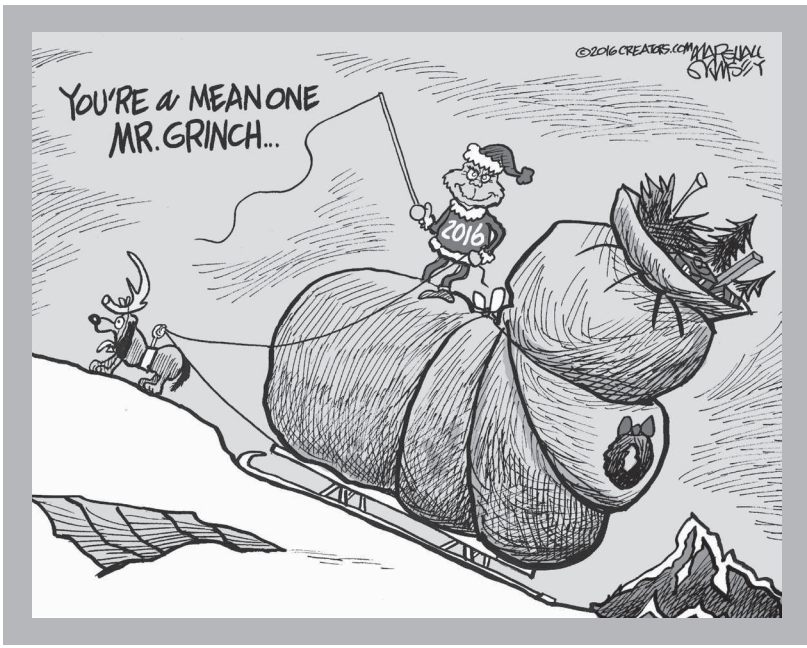


# KeizerOpinion

KEIZERTIMES.COM



## 2016 is almost over. Whew.

What's that big sound? It is a collective, national exhaling at the relief that we are at the final week of the year. Most would agree that 2016 was annus horribilis.

The holidays will be a much needed distraction from the woes and worries of the world. This year brought too much suffering, anger, fighting, terrorism. All topped off with fake news that too many people take for truth without question.

Can a time period such as a year really be horrible? This year had 12 months, 52 weeks and 366 days like any other year. A year can be great or bad depending on how our individual lives are going. It's not a bad year for someone who received a big raise or found a living wage job after a period of unemployment. It might be called a bad year if a couple was going through a marital break-up or if a loved one passed before their time.

The American people are a good people. We cheer when others win; we cry when others lose, but gener-

ally we are on the side of our fellow citizens. Two thousand sixteen gave us plenty of things to cry about, but that should not define us as a nation.

Our nation and our world is too mature for us to look at it through rose-colored glasses, yet, believing in the spirit and the goodness of people should be our default position.

Life is either something that we let happen to us, or we help shape our life. People in general are not powerless, unless they accept the belief that they are.

Like all things precious, it takes struggle, dedication and perseverance to make life what we wish it to be.

Many may say 2016 was a horrible year and be depressed about what may come in 2017. We can accept what happens without comment or action, or we can, as we Americans always do, rise to the occasion.

They say that life is what you make it; it's also true that life is what you believe it is. —LAZ

editorial

## Real news and real local

By DON VOWELL

Merry Christmas, *Keizertimes*. As a community we are lucky to have such a healthy and civic-minded weekly paper as a vital organ. Our family has lived in Keizer for a little over 30 years. By a sort of contented default we've slowly learned to believe this is home. And *Keizertimes* is our hometown newspaper.

I'm only familiar with Salem and Portland newspapers but if they are representative of how other towns are served by their local papers it only emphasizes how uniquely fortunate we are.

We are trained to believe that shareholder profit is the be-all/end-all of every corporate endeavor. That is turning the Salem paper into a pale imitation of its former self. The editorial page now appears only sporadically. Maybe that matters only to a few, but it is the only means of conversation that includes both the people that produce the paper and those that read it. Editorial statements and opinions also give you some insight into those who have the privilege of choosing what news you get to see each day.

A major portion of column-inches in the Salem paper is given over to USA Today, a Gannett insert. It seems like reliable reporting but also seems like removing the local editors' choices as to what story might be relevant to local readers. And the deadline pressure of being printed off-site means local sports stories are historical in nature.

When I moved to Keizer I used to brag to out-of-town family and friends about how wonderful Port-

land's major paper was. Compared to Seattle, Spokane, and Alaska dailies I had known it was the best. It is silly to weep over the decline of printed daily newspapers—they must answer to financial reality. Still, the Portland paper has devolved from banquet to thin gruel. I admire the remaining staff for soldiering on, knowing they are being done in by the American attention span.

Our most recent presidential campaign is the perfect example of damage done by abandoning printed media as source for news. Many of the people I know and love supported or despised either candidate for reasons unsupported by fact. Newspapers are held accountable for what they print. Facebook is not. Twitter is not. Being buried alive in mud makes it impossible to examine each speck of dirt.

Yet the *Keizertimes* prospers. My children went to local schools. We shop at local stores. We are safe in the protection of local services and utilities. This paper is knowingly assembled by people who live here and like it. *Keizertimes* always covers things that are happening in the town where I live, and generously offers space to local citizens to speak up.

So, speak up I shall. Merry Christmas, *Keizertimes* and thanks for staying true to the cause. And a Merry Christmas to all local readers who make it possible. With your support we can do this again next year.

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

a box of soap

## Honoring human dignity

By MICHAEL GERSON

It is one of fate's cruel jokes that conservatism should be at its modern nadir just as the Republican Party is at its zenith—if conservatism is defined as embracing limited government, displaying a rational, skeptical and moderate temperament and believing in the priority of the moral order.

All these principles are related, and under attack.

Conservatives believe that human beings are fallible and prone to ambition, passion and selfishness. They (actually, we) tend to become swaggering dictators in realms where we can act with impunity—a DMV office, a hostile traffic stop, a country under personal rule. It is the particular genius of the American system to balance ambition against ambition through a divided government (executive, legislative and judicial). The American system employs human nature to limit the power of the state—assuming that every branch of government is both dedicated to the common good and jealous of its own power.

Conservatives believe that finite and fallen creatures are often wrong. We know that many of our attitudes and beliefs are the brain's justification for pre-rational tendencies and desires. This does not make perception of truth impossible, or truth itself relative, but it should encourage healthy self-examination and a suspicion of all forms of fanaticism. All of us have things to learn, even from our political opponents. The truth is out there, but it is generally broken into pieces and scattered across the human experience. We only reassemble it through

listening and civil communication.

And conservatives believe that a just society depends on the moral striving of finite and fallen creatures, who treat each other with a respect and decency that laws can encourage but not enforce. Such virtues, often

other views

rooted in faith, are what turn families and communities into the nurseries of citizenship. These institutions not only shape good people, they inculcate the belief that human beings have a dignity that, while often dishonored, can never be effaced. In the

midst of all our justified skepticism, we can never be skeptical of this: that the reason for politics is to honor the equal value of every life, beginning with the weakest and most vulnerable. No bad goal—say, racial purity or communist ideology—outweighs this commitment. And no good goal—the efficiency of markets or the pursuit of greater equality—does either.

So how do we get this set of beliefs and commitments when they seem in short supply? It is hopeless to demand results from an organic process—to order the grass to grow faster. But this type of conservatism—a conservatism of intellectual humility and moral aspiration—also has the advantage of being an organic process. It grows with tenacity in hidden places, eventually breaking down the cement and asphalt of our modern life. It appeals to people who would never call themselves conservatives—who probably wouldn't use words like "nadir" and "zenith"—who provide examples of hard work, personal responsibility, unfailing decency, family commitment, quiet faith, inspiring compassion and

resilience in adversity. They are the potential recruits of a humane political conservatism.

This is not the political force that has recently taken over the Republican Party—with a plurality in the presidential primaries and a narrow victory in November. That has been the result of extreme polarization, not a turn toward enduring values. The movement is authoritarian in theory, apocalyptic in mood, prone to conspiracy theories and personal abuse, and dismissive of ethical standards. The president-elect seems to offer equal chances of constitutional crisis and utter, debilitating incompetence.

The plausible case that Russian espionage materially contributed to the election of an American president has been an additional invitation to anger. Now, not only the quality but also the legitimacy of our democracy is at stake. This extreme threat would seem to require a commensurately radical response—some way to change the outcome.

But what is the proper conservative response? It is to live within the boundaries of law and reality. There is no certain way to determine if Russian influence was decisive. And no serious constitutional recourse seems to remain. While open to other options, I see none. It will now fall to citizens and institutions to (1) defend the legislature and judiciary from any encroachment, (2) defend every group of people from organized oppression, including Muslims and refugees, (3) expand and defend the institutions—from think tanks to civil liberty organizations—that make the case for a politics that honors human dignity. And pray for the grass to grow.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

## Enough revenue, not enough backbone

As we come to Christmas, I greatly hesitate to write about politics in this column but feel I must address an important item with the upcoming 2017 legislative session.

First of all, when it comes to the governor's budget we need to remember it's not a budget but rather a wish list. On her wish list Governor Kate Brown writes that we will have a \$1.7 billion shortfall in the next biennium. The truth is, we have a windfall of state revenues, to the tune of an 8.5 percent increase over the last biennium (and that's after a 14 percent increase in revenue in the previous biennium, making a total of 22.5 percent increase in revenue since 2013).

The problem is she "wishes" she could fund all of the items in her budget which is what has led to anxiety for many over the cuts she has proposed which include education, health care and some psychiatric and corrections facilities.

The reality is we have more than

enough revenue. We just don't seem to have a control on where to spend it. There will be cries for more revenue in the form of cutting interest deductions, raising taxes on what you eat, drink, smoke, wear and more. On top of that, a transportation package will require a gas tax.

from the capitol

Rep. BILL POST



member, the legislature is the branch charged with crafting and passing

a balanced budget, not the governor, and you overwhelmingly chose a certain state representative from Keizer who believes that we, as a state, don't have a revenue problem but instead have a spending problem. Therefore I intend to do all that I can to hold the legislature accountable for every dollar. (You can read more about the governor's budget and the rev-

enue numbers here: <http://billpost.us/2016/12/09/its-not-a-budget-shortfall-its-really-a-windfall/>).

But here is the bottom line: the people of Keizer are some of the most giving people I've ever met. We are a city of volunteers and we care about each other. Our churches do incredible humanitarian work. Our Chamber of Commerce is one of the best there is evidenced by the recent Christmas parade, the food drives and other activities. We have one of the most livable cities in Oregon and one of the most caring; yet none of that is derived from government, it's derived from *we the people*.

On this Christmas week, I want to wish you and your family all of the best not just for this season but for all time. I work for you and I am eager to get back into the legislature in January and do all that I can to help Keizer and Oregon succeed.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from my home to yours.

(Bill Post represents House District 25. He can be reached at 503-986-1425 or via email at [rep.billpost@state.or.us](mailto:rep.billpost@state.or.us).)

## Christmas story: A child and a movie

Cute stories about American children and Christmas are seemingly endless. One to add has come to the attention of my wife and myself during the past week.

It is planned that a certain granddaughter will spend Christmas Eve with grandma and grampa. That's the night, of course, during which tradition promises that Santa Claus will visit each child's home with presents, leaving them to open on Christmas morning.

We have a gas fireplace that would be difficult to traverse for even a mouse, much less a bag of presents. Granddaughter is not to be deterred in her belief of a visit by Santa. She has already explained to her mother—in no uncertain terms—that she does not want to sleep in that room. Why? Because she does not want to get in Santa's way or startle him by waking up when he's in the middle of a special delivery.

She says she must sleep in a room with a door that shuts tightly. She simply does not want to disturb Santa at work and also does not want to see or hear anything among the presents that would spoil a total surprise at day break. This little girl, this pre-school child, has mastered the particulars for making certain Santa and presents from his North Pole workshop will get to her and a chuckle for us.

When granddaughter's wishes were passed along to me, I thought of her mother and our other daughter's childhood fantasies about Santa and the Easter Bunny. Meanwhile, when children and Christmas come to mind, I think again about my favorite and most endearing Christmas movie, *A Christmas Story*. When I was a

child, my family and I always watched *It's a Wonderful Life*, but it was kind of "dark" and scary in places, much like Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Imagining there is an American adult who has never viewed *A Christmas Story*, is a stretch beyond my grasp. Nevertheless, if there is such an American, it's hoped that they will see it this December. Disappointment in the movie is unlikely as its 93 minutes will keep any newcomer viewing it from beginning to end.

In the movie, the couple's oldest son desires to receive a BB gun drives the plot of the film. The father wins a "major award" in a contest but does not know what it is until it's delivered; meanwhile, it causes "the battle

of the lamp" between the movie mom and dad. Another howler is the dad's never-ending struggle with the family's ancient furnace. Then there's the neighbor's dog, the flat tire scene and the final confrontation with the neighborhood bully. Lots of laughs and good family flick fun can be enjoyed in this G-rated movie that can be seen more than once to absorb every last tickle.

A Merry Christmas is passed along from this writer to all *Keizertimes* readers. May you and yours bask in the warmth and good cheer of a traditional American family gathering, regardless of how cold it gets outside. And, keep in mind, as the new year gets underway, longer days and warming temperatures are a mere five months away.

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



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