

KeizerOpinion

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Parks? Cops?

Parks and cops? Parks or cops? One little word can make a huge difference in the near future of Keizer. Both are paid for from the city's general fund budget. Both are important to the livability of the city. But only one—parks—is the subject of a survey that will, in part, ask homeowners if (and how much) of a new fee they would support.

editorial

The members of the Keizer Parks and Recreation Advisory Board have worked hard over the past year to fashion a survey about parks that is just now being sent to Keizer homeowners.

The comprehensive survey is included with Keizer water bills; half of homeowners are receiving the survey this month; the other half will receive it in February. The survey dives deep with questions about how people use city parks and the future of them. The survey also asks respondents if they would support a new park fee added to their bi-monthly water bills; there are five options, ranging from zero to \$8 per month.

An extra \$8 a month is a small price to pay to vastly improve Keizer's parks. Some households claim that their budgets cannot handle the addition of another nickel let alone eight dollars. Even at half that rate—\$4 a month—Keizer parks would receive the maintenance desperately needed. However, any new fee could create a burden for some households.

The results from the parks survey will be tabulated, processed and formed into a report for the Parks Board which will then make a recommendation to the city council whether or not to add a fee to water bills and how much, if any.

This is all good for Keizer parks. But what about cops? Presumably, if asked to choose between money for cops or money for parks, most would opt for public safety. City leaders would rather it not come down to a choice between the two. Again, both are important aspects of a livable city. But what if a choice has to be made?

Citizens want their government to live within its means. Health care and PERS take an ever-larger bite out of municipal budgets—two expenditures that must be fully funded. Most of the property tax revenues that will start to come into the city's coffers late this year will mostly be eaten up by increased PERS obligations. It is hard to live within your means when your costs keep rising by double digits each year.

Unless the city leaders make some tough, undesirable choices—such as shedding jobs, or reducing salaries—Keizer's budget writers will have to figure out how to al-

locate limited funds to parks and the police department. The police department accounts for about 75 percent of the general fund.

Last year approximately \$336,000 was earmarked for Keizer's parks—all 19 of them.

The mayor and the councilors make city policy in the name of their constituents. If there was a time to make their voices heard, this is the time for

Keizer residents to express their opinions; the results of the survey will go a long way to chart the future of our parks.

Should Keizer citizens wonder if the effort to fund parks should not also be expended on the police department? According to standards Keizer should have four to six more officers for the population, currently there are 36 officers.

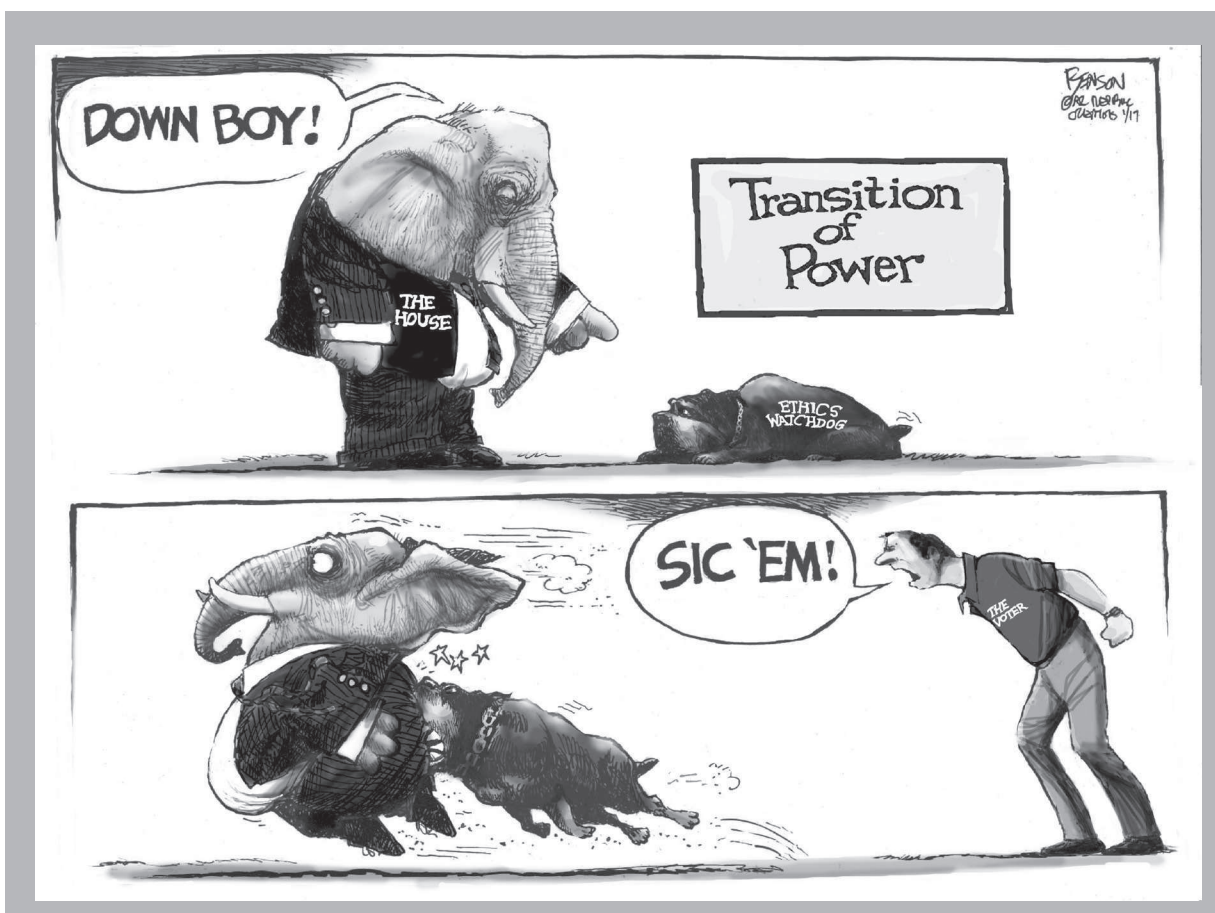
Keizer operates under the constraints of 1990's Measure 5, which capped Keizer's property tax at \$2.09 per \$1,000 valuation (the lowest of any full-service city in the state). When expenditures—such as PERS and insurance—exceed revenues, something has to give. In its early days Keizer relied on voter-approved levies for revenue; that is not attractive these days. Without the benefit of an increased tax rate the only option is fees, thus the idea to add a parks fee to the water bill.

Funding a police department the same way is not optimal. Our hearts tell us we need more officers—do our heads follow? Running a city or any of its departments is a multi-layered job. Chief of Police John Teague must run his department's many parts with what he has—regardless if some people think we have enough staffing or not. Public Works Director Bill Lawyer and the head of the parks department must use spit and bandages to maintain the parks we have.

Keizer's budget is more than a matter of cops and parks. This year honest and deep discussions need to be held about what is needed versus what we want. We have elected a mayor and six city councilors to address these hard questions. The public can offer its opinions all it can but in the end it is the policy makers of the city who will have to devise a plan, then sell it to the public.

It's called leadership.

—LAZ



Death of Obamacare threatens real Americans

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

Let's try to get this straight. Donald Trump campaigned as the champion of lower-paid working people who deserve better than they have.

Republicans have spent the Obama presidency complaining about high deficits and promising to cut them.

And whenever liberals put forward major reforms, conservatives say: No, no, you can't make radical changes on the basis of narrow partisan majorities. Let's take it slow and be very careful. They love to cite Thomas Jefferson's dictum, "Great innovations should not be forced on slender majorities."

In moving with reckless speed to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Republicans are violating every one of these supposed principles. That's because the principle that really matters to them is the one they try to shroud behind happy talk about efficiency and compassion: They want to spend a whole lot less money helping Americans get health coverage.

This needs to be made very clear as their throw-people-over-the-side juggernaut rolls forward. Any vote to repeal Obamacare before there is a comprehensive alternative on the table that all can study, understand and debate is a vote to deprive many of their health insurance. It is a vote to make the lives of millions of Americans demonstrably worse.

And a bunch of politicians who regularly accuse their progressive opponents of being "out of touch" with the "real America" need to be exposed

for what they are: a comfortable, affluent and privileged coterie that does not need to spend a single second worrying about whether their kids can see a doctor or whether they will get the care they need if a health disaster strikes.

So let's see what Republican senators from states whose constituents particularly benefited from Obamacare decide to do.

That means you, Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Penn.).

The Urban Institute studied the impact of the partial repeal of the ACA through the budget reconciliation process—precisely what Republicans are proposing to do. By 2019, the study found, this would increase the number of uninsured in Pennsylvania by 956,000 over what it would be if we simply kept the law.

That also means you, Sens. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker. In Tennessee, 526,000 more people would be uninsured. (Corker, it should be said, acknowledged last Friday that "repeal and replacement should take place simultaneously.") Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is threatening to hike the uninsured figure in Kentucky by 200 percent, or 486,000 people.

Now Republicans will dispute data of this sort and claim that their "replacement" of Obamacare will take care of these folks. It will be, Trump has said, "something terrific." OK, if it's so terrific, let's see it and discuss it before we threaten the insurance coverage of so many of our fellow citi-

zens. But they don't want to do this because they have no plan to replace it with, only fragments of partial solutions and a lot of empty words. Their un-Jeffersonian haste is part of a cover-up, a con game in which voters are told to give up something concrete in exchange for—well, we'll tell you later, maybe.

Oh, yes, and as for the deficit, the very bill McConnell is putting forward would swell it to \$1 trillion—that's with a "tr"—by the end of the decade. This is quite an achievement. In one vote, the Republican Congress would deprive millions of lower-income Americans of their health care while saddling the next generation with a whole new debt load. At least Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., has been willing to do some elementary math on the matter of deficits. He's one of four Republican Senators, including Corker, who have questioned the party's current path.

If Democrats don't see the fight against this truly monstrous way of legislating as both a moral battle and a political gift, they should just pack up and find themselves another country.

But what the nation needs most right now are Republicans willing to face up to how devious and manipulative this process is and how damaging their votes could be to some of their most faithful supporters. These GOP loyalists believed them when they promised to replace Obamacare. Show them the "terrific" replacement first. (Washington Post Writers Group)

other views

gene h. mcintyre

Dem or GOP? Doesn't matter, just fix it

It would be a reassuring development if Oregon legislators could collectively announce the truth about the amount available in the treasury for state use in the upcoming biennium.

Additionally, instead of once again casting aspersions and more blame on Democrats by Republicans and vice versa that, after announcing what's available for state programs, they let us taxpayers know what each party wants to do with what money is available, of the amounts each will try to get allocated here and there, invite feedback from their respective constituents, and provide all to the media for circulation.

Instead, we receive mixed signals from the media sources that reports on the grouching or cheering of those going to Salem. Meanwhile, there are plenty of mixed signals to go around. Just two of them follow here.

The Oregonian, in discussing money available to support public education and referencing what Governor Kate Brown has announced, reported in its Dec. 25 edition "It's unclear how much money will go to either proposed (education funding) plan with a \$1.7 billion deficit bearing down on the state and threatening to devastate educational funding."

Two days before *The Oregonian's* piece on the subject, District 25 Rep. Bill Post, wrote in the *Keizertimes*, that "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)."

Governor Brown, a Democrat, and Representative Bill Post, a Republican, are obviously operating from two different worlds on the same planet. Yet, they are both players at the Capitol and should be working together—with some give and take—to the benefit of all Oregonians. So it comes across as just asking the same old question: Who am I to believe?

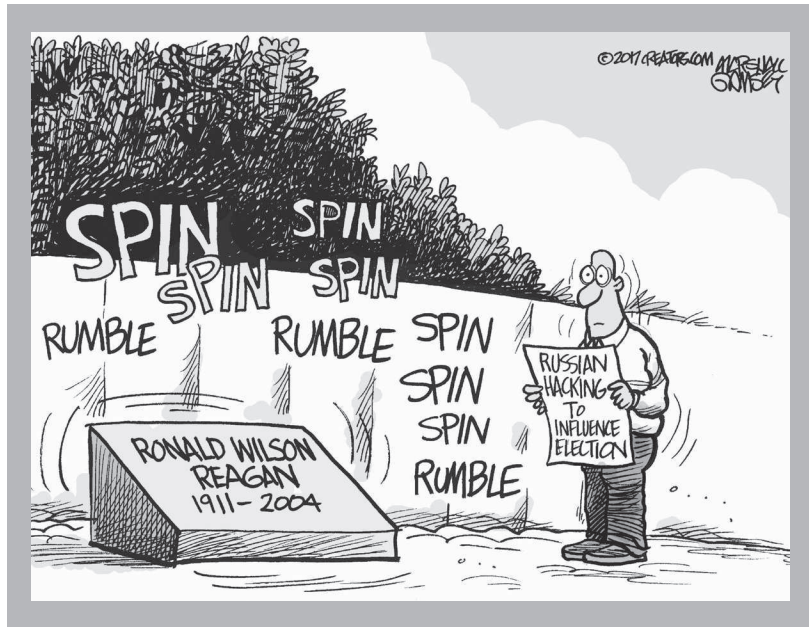
Reality is that the rhetoric goes on with fighting over the "true" numbers and "the truth is" kind of statements made by self-proclaimed masters of the universe in each party.

It all adds up to a population of too often discouraged and disillusioned—primarily Main Street citizens—who look seldom to our elected officials for much of anything except, maybe, the "entertainment" of political pugilistics. Those among them who can lie the best, it would seem, get sent back to the Capitol year-after-year to repeat the same dance dictated mainly by the

special interests who arrive with bags of campaign chest money and private perks, demanding personal favors in return. Unfortunately, with many pressing state issues to address and resolve, we run-of-the-mill types on the receiving end get little to nothing back for the many tax bucks we are forced to pay.

When Measure 97 failed in the November election, Oregon media widely urged the legislature to "Do something!" It is expected here that since our state leaders would rather fight than do something together in statesmanship fashion, there will continue to be a major shortfall in funds with absolutely no way, other than the futility of going after PERS' retirees again, to do something about it. As Oregon legislators a few years back were so fond of repeating, all the while giggling in their inimitable childish delight, when cooperation was called for, that will happen "When pigs fly!"

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



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