

KeizerOpinion

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Budgetary frustrations

Keizer's government is getting ready for budget committee meetings that will commence next month. The budget committee, comprised of all seven city councilors and seven citizens, will discuss and debate the budget as presented by the city manager and the finance director. After a series of public meetings the committee will vote on the budget recommendations they will forward to the city council for final approval in June.

Every year in recent times, the city's budget has resulted in frustration all around from committee members to councilors to residents. By its very nature a budget will disappoint people—pet projects won't be funded. For years now, additional and needed police officers have not been funded because the city's PERS and health insurance financial obligations take precedence.

The same is true for the city's 19 parks. Keizer's parks receive a mere \$300,000 out of the city's budget each year. Park supporters are doing something about it; they just finished a citizen survey to see if homeowners would get behind a surcharge to their water/sewer bills to be used solely for parks. The results were released earlier this month; the council will schedule a special meeting to look at what the next steps might be. No decision will be made on adding a surcharge without lots of input from residents via public hearings.

Is this a route police supporters can travel as well? We think it would be heavy lifting to ask homeowners to be enthusiastic about adding a second surcharge to water bills to augment

current budget levels for the Keizer Police Department.

We can all be frustrated that there is not enough money to pay for the things we want. Any serious, civic-minded government will always fund what is needed first before funding what is wanted.

It is no longer a matter of living within one's means. The city's means are constantly chipped away with yearly increases in PERS and health insurance expenses.

The decision was made decades ago to change the tax system in Oregon, that included freezing city tax rates where they were. Our city of 37,000 operates on \$2.08 per every \$1,000 of property valuation. It used to be a right of bragging that Keizer had the lowest tax rate of any full service in Oregon. No one's bragging now.

No one likes taxes. But, at the same time no one likes potholes or overgrown parks or high crime. Our taxes pay for the services we depend upon. The city of Ontario, at the far eastern end of the state, has its own financial problems. Leaders there are taking the extraordinary step of considering adding a sales tax. Desperate times call for desperate measures. A sales tax may be a bridge too far, but we must get creative.

It would be unfortunate if the only choice left to us was to lay off city employees or close city parks or raise fees the city charges. Barring a change in the ability to raise the city's tax rate, we'll have to finance city operations the old fashioned way—levies and bonds.

—LAZ

our opinion

Support for Mark Bateman

To the Editor:

Mark Bateman is an excellent candidate for the Salem-Keizer School Board. I have observed him in public meetings which had complex issues, emotional overtones and multiple points of view.

He is respectful, a great listener and asks questions that go to the heart of the matter. Further, he is analytical and clearly looks at the "big picture."

I cannot think of a more important issue than the education of our children and grandchildren.

As the S-K School Board makes policy decisions, it needs members like Mark Bateman.

Dave Smedema
Keizer

To the Editor:

I write to encourage persons in the Keizer area to support Mark Bateman for the Salem-Keizer School Board.

Mark is one of the most percep-

letters

tive individuals I have ever known. His education, his life experience, his knowledge of the Salem-Keizer schools, his faith, his commitment as a parent with children in the school district—all qualify him as a person to bring insight, wisdom and character to major decisions facing our educational system in the upcoming decade. A man of vision, he also has a clear understanding of fiscal issues and will seek ways to creatively fund the vital programs needed by our children in this global economy.

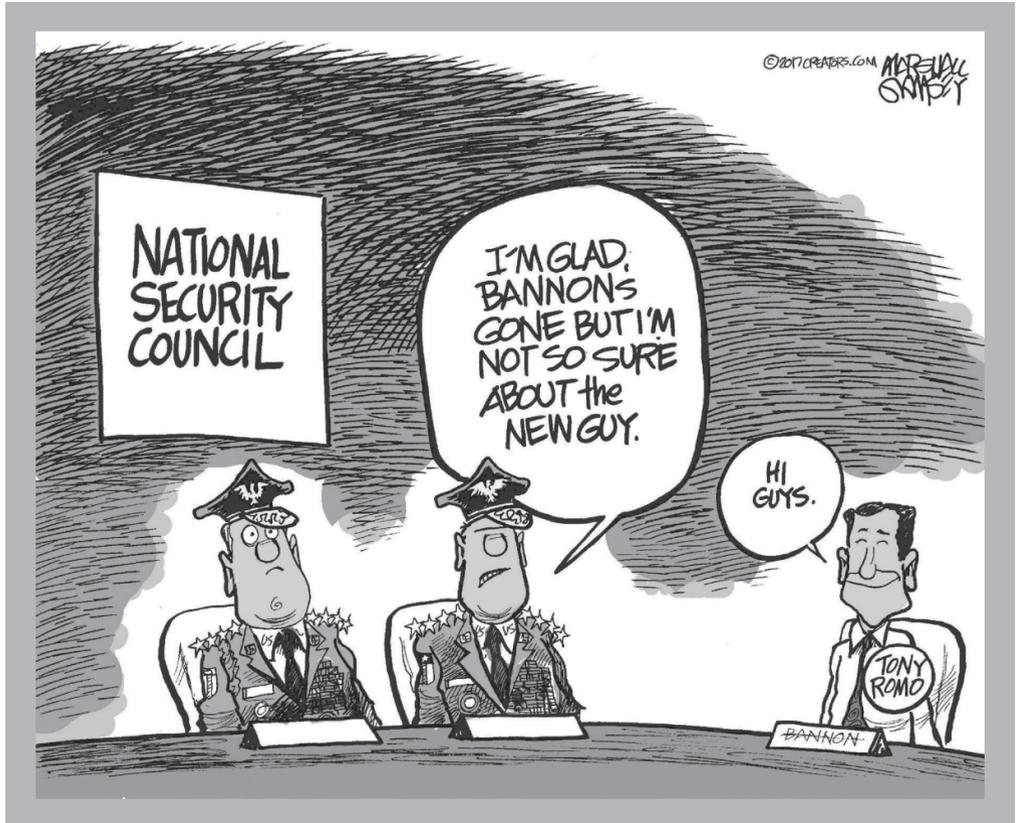
Persons with such a background often shun public service, but Mark is offering himself to serve and we need to see that he has that opportunity. Vote for Mark Bateman!

Joe Scahill
Keizer

Share your opinion

Email a letter to the editor (300 words) by noon Tuesday.

Email to:
publisher@keizertimes.com



Advisers who have military ties

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Before he was elected president, Donald Trump told biographer Michael D'Antonio that his attendance at a military boarding school gave him "more training militarily than a lot of guys that go into the military."

As president, he has stacked his top echelon with guys who went into the military -- and they are among those who advised the new president before he ordered 59 cruise missiles be launched into a Syrian air base.

When Trump compared his years at New York Military Academy to military service, some veterans were quick to point out that Trump received multiple draft deferments during the Vietnam War -- as did former Vice Presidents Joe Biden and Dick Cheney. And yet Trump has an ardor for surrounding himself with former military men and appointing a considerable number of veterans to his Cabinet. One-third -- or eight out of 24 -- of Trump's Cabinet-level picks have served in the military.

The list includes departments -- Defense, Homeland Security, National Intelligence and CIA -- where defense expertise would be expected. But Trump also has found veterans to head other agencies.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke was a Navy SEAL. Energy Secretary Rick Perry flew C-130 cargo planes in the Air Force. Attorney General Jeff Sessions served in the Army Reserves. Trump's would-be Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue -- who along with Trump's picks as labor secretary and U.S. trade representative has not been confirmed -- was an Air Force captain.

"It's huge," said Veterans of Foreign Wars spokesman Joe Davis, who figures that 7 percent of the U.S.

population -- a fraction of Trump's Cabinet -- has worn the uniform. He added that four top-level advisers have close family members with strong ties to the service. The brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos was a Navy SEAL. Small Business Association head Linda McMahon grew up on a military base. So did Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin -- who happens to be the first

VA secretary not to have served in the military. "My father was an Army psychiatrist, both grandfathers were Army veterans, and my paternal grandfather served as chief pharmacist at the VA hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. As a young doctor, I trained in VA hospitals," Shulkin said in a statement.

"One thing we have found is that you don't have to be a veteran to love veterans," said Davis, "and that's Dr. Shulkin."

Vice President Mike Pence is not a veteran, but he is a Blue Star father; his son Michael is a Marine.

The ratio of veterans in the Trump administration represents a big bump from President Barack Obama's first Cabinet, which included only two veterans -- Defense Secretary Robert Gates and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. Obama's first Cabinet members were three times more likely to have graduated from law school than boot camp.

Veteran Legal Institute CEO Dwight Stirling believes demographics play a role. Obama is 55; Trump is 70. "I think the reason there were so few veterans in the Obama administration was largely generational. Between the end of the Vietnam War and the Gulf War in the '90s, very few white-collar professionals decided to serve in the military."

other views

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Don't let Washington cut Medicare

By GENE H. McINTYRE

Any U.S. "senior" who's been on Medicare long enough to use it, already knows how vital to saving one's personal solvency it truly is. What amazes is that there are actually persons elected to represent the American people in their respective districts who plan now to change Medicare so that it will increase its cost in premiums thousands of dollars per year, rendering its coverage unaffordable to many Americans who have already paid for it throughout their working lives.

House Speaker Paul Ryan's plan would jeopardize the current guaranteed level of Medicare coverage. In its place would be "vouchers" or "premium supports" which seniors could try to buy from the private sector, meaning from profit seekers who are known to care little to none about ability to pay. Further, Ryan and GOP leadership in Washington, D.C. argue -- on behalf of that Medicare is "going broke."

Meanwhile, according to a Congressional Budget Office report, Medicare's not going broke; in fact, the CBO report discloses that Medicare's fiscal strength has improved in recent years while the Part A trust fund is fully funded for at least an-

other eleven years. Then, too, immediate revenues are projected to pay 87 percent of costs, declining to 79 percent by 2040.

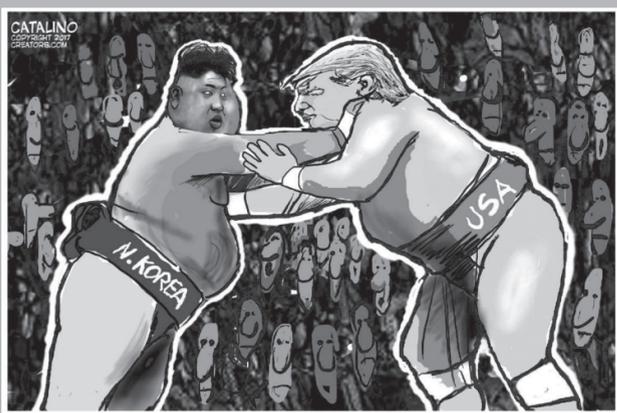
President Trump campaigned on a promise not to "touch" the benefits seniors have earned, saying "I am going to protect and save your Social Security and Medicare" as "you made a deal a long time ago." Trump has not always stood by his statements while this one, if not observed, will direly, even devastatingly, impact millions of older Americans should he take back his promise and proceed

to stand with Ryan and others.

As a "Blue Dog" or conservative Democrat, I don't know where Kurt Schrader, our 5th District Congressman, stands on Medicare. Handy to us, Congress is on a current two-week break and he's got an office in Salem. If Schrader votes with the Republicans against Medicare and those members of Congress have their way, every Medicare recipient in need of medical services will soon find himself in a world of financial hurt. Readers who want Medicare preserved as is, may want to find the time to contact Schrader.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

guest opinion



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