

KeizerOpinion

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Eclipse can be good for Keizer

There has been news from across Oregon about how communities are preparing for this summer's total solar eclipse on Aug. 21.

Reports have included news about hotels cancelling reservations (some made years ago) and re-booking rooms at many times their current rates. A thousand extra camping spaces are being made available after every site in the eclipse's path between the Oregon coast and the Snake River had been reserved months in advance. There is a gigantic festival slated for Madras—Oregon Solarfest, just a few miles from another festival—Moonshadow.

All around Keizer communities and organizations have been planning and seen their hotels and campgrounds get completely booked. Those who planned ahead were able to secure a spot at the coast, in the mountains, on a lake or a river. Eclipse-viewing fans who did not plan ahead will be able to experience the solar event here in Keizer.

A handful of volunteers and civic leaders are working feverishly

to prepare Keizer for the expected onslaught of visitors who can't find space anywhere else along the eclipse path.

We don't mind if Keizer is not the first choice for visitors from outside the area, but as the choices become limited Keizer can take full advantage of the situation.

More than 150 RV and tent camping sites will be prepared for the event. The city, the Keizer Parks Foundation and KRA—which operates the Keizer Rotary Amphitheatre—are planning events and concerts for visitors to enjoy.

Keizer's business community—especially those that sell food and daily needs items—should also be planning on how they will attract a captive audience. Organizers of Keizer's solar eclipse event will bring them here, it's up to the rest of us to turn it into a positive for our bottom lines.

—LAZ

our
opinion

Regarding Rep. Post criticism

To the Editor:

I highly recommend that if Mr. McCall or anyone in this district has concerns regarding Representative Post, there are plenty of ways to reach out to him (his phone and email are printed in this paper once a month) and address whatever questions they may have directly with him. I firmly believe, however, that most voters in HD 25 would echo the sentiment that Rep. Post is doing a fine job and encourage him to keep up the fight for small government in a Capitol where the prevailing philosophy seems to be 'the bigger the better.'

David Cheney
Keizer

Costs for our traveling president

To the Editor:

No one alive today can verify or deny that French King Louis XVI's wife, Marie Antoinette, said "Let them eat cake." This alleged comment of hers was inspired by the belief that she and her royal family cared not at all what happened to starving Parisians.

In the U.S. these days, we know for a fact that millions among us do not have enough to eat and are without safe shelter. The problem is further compounded and distress-causing by the huge number of American children going hungry and homeless.

Meanwhile, our "royal" family lives as though they care not at all what happens to American adults and children who find life to be a daily challenge by the absence of food and housing.

Apparently paying little heed to these needs, President Trump and family travel at taxpayer expense to his Florida golf club, Mar-a-Lago, almost every weekend at taxpayer expense, closing in on his first 100 days at a whopping cost of \$50 million.

This information about the way Trump, in what's viewed as business-as-usual-form, is conducting his presidency, including alleged violations of the U.S. Constitution's Emoluments Clause or, in layman

letters

language, using one's office to make money, has resulted in ever more disquiet among the American citizenry quite like that reported to have been the prevailing French sentiments before they took action.

Unfortunate for most Americans, any criticism of 45 is greeted by his typical reply: "I'm president and you're not."

Gene H. McIntyre
Keizer

Harder for school board position

To the Editor:

I have known Dr. Kathleen Harder and her family for many years. She's down-to-earth, easy to talk to, and genuinely concerned with those around her. Her compassion is matched only by her willingness to work hard. That makes her a great doctor, and it will also make her a very effective member of the Salem-Keizer School Board.

Kathleen is a dedicated mom who, alongside her husband Rob, has raised a bright and talented young man who graduated from the Salem-Keizer public school system and is headed off to college. She is passionate about our public school system. I know she will work hard to ensure our students, teachers, and administrators have everything they need to be successful.

I'm proud to endorse Kathleen, and I join more than 50 other endorsements, including the Salem-Keizer Education Association, Stand for Children, and many others throughout our community.

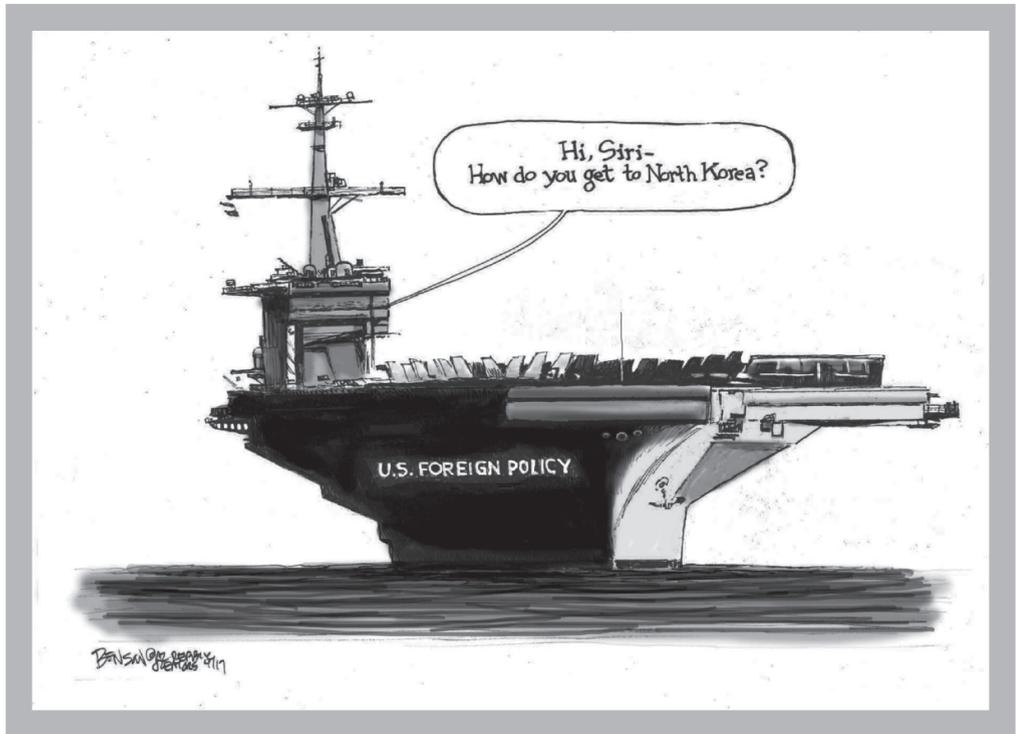
Please join me in voting for Dr. Kathleen Harder for Salem-Keizer School Board.

Randall Sutton
Salem

Share your opinion

Email a guest opinion (550 words) or a letter to the editor (300 words) by noon Tuesday.

Email to:
publisher@keizertimes.com



Can our political bubbles be popped?

By MICHAEL GERSON

In the category of argument by irresistible anecdote, David Wasserman of *The Cook Political Report* tells of meeting with a group of young Democrats in wealthy, suburban northern Virginia. In the course of his presentation, he made reference to "Cracker Barrel voters"—those in counties with Cracker Barrel restaurants (Donald Trump won about 75 percent of such counties). "Excuse me," interrupted one of the young liberals. "Do you mean Crate and Barrel?"

This is an extreme form of a cultural bubble—a life arranged by fate and choice so that other ways of life are unimaginable. Technology makes such isolation easier, through flows of information we shape and algorithms that shape news to us. It is possible to consume news and entertainment in such a way that our backgrounds and biases are never challenged. And a variety of media outlets, particularly cable news channels and internet sites, seek profit in the incitement of bias rather than through the provision of information.

Assuming that a democracy benefits from commonly recognized facts and mutual sympathy among citizens, how are these bubbles popped?

Even the way this question is posed contains a bias of sorts. Most Americans do not live in ideological bubbles, because they take little interest in politics at all. According to polling by the Pew Research Center, only about 13 percent of Americans say they talk about politics daily, making me and most people reading this column a minority smaller (much smaller than

gun owners. Americans at the ends of the political spectrum on left and right—about 20 percent total—are more engaged politically than those in the center, at least when it comes to making donations and determining the outcome of primaries.

The dedicated 10th on both sides have a vastly disproportionate influence on the public affairs of a great nation. And here is where media bubbles matter most. Pew found that Fox News dominates on the right—cited by 47 percent of conservatives as their main source of information. (Many must feel adrift as the Fox model buckles.) Liberals consume more diverse news sources, but are more likely to de-friend someone on social media for political reasons.

The reputation of all news media sources has taken a beating. Every time that two or more journalists are gathered, they should recall: In 1997, 53 percent of Americans expressed trust in the media. Now it is 32 percent, and down to 14 percent among Republicans. Conservatives tend to view all non-conservative sources as suspect, putting *The Washington Post* and the *Huffington Post*, for example, in the same category of untrustworthiness (by any serious standard an absurdity).

At the seedy crossroads of political polarization and declining trust in media is where fake news loiters. Without a belief in professional, vetted, reliable sources of truth, truth may be determined by loyalty to an ideological team. In a 2006 survey, a majority of Democrats agreed that it was likely or somewhat likely that George W. Bush was complicit in the 9/11

attacks. A 2015 poll found that 43 percent of Republicans believed that Barack Obama was a Muslim. One gets the impression, in both cases, that partisans would have agreed with any polling description perceived as negative—that Bush was a closet thespian or Obama a notorious masticator. Call it the "any stick" epistemology.

It was Donald Trump who saw the golden potential in this trend, not just presenting a vision, but creating a world in which Trump is always the answer, the highest and best. But the inhabitants of Crate and Barrel America can be just as isolated in their sympathies.

What is the answer? It is obviously complicated to rebuild ties of institutional trust and individual empathy. But one response must be: a journalism of rebuilt standing. A journalism that enforces the highest standards of accuracy and professional conduct. A journalism that refuses the temptation to join the ideological battle as a combatant. A journalism that describes worlds that are not our own, and invites us to enter them. Without this, there is no common basis of fact to inform public decisions, and no invitation to empathy.

This cause is not hopeless because the power of words to shape the human spirit is undeniable. These can be words that belittle, diminish and deceive. Or they can ring down the ages about human dignity. They can also allow us, for a moment, to enter the experiences of others and widen, just a bit, the aperture of our understanding. On the success of this calling much else depends.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Moving bills is a lesson in politics

This has been a crazy week here in the Oregon legislature. Two thousand-seven hundred eighty four bills have been introduced so far this session, and April 18 was one of the biggest deadlines. To remain viable, all bills (besides those in the Rules and Ways and Means committees) had to have a work session and be moved out to the House (or Senate) Floor.

Most of my bills didn't make it out of committee and are thus "dead." I do have a few still kicking in Ways and Means, which I am excited about. House Bill 2570 and House Bill 2961 are both bills to try and help solve the housing affordability crisis we are in.

This month I've had several groups of constituents come and meet with me. From business leaders to citizens to St. Paul school kids, no matter who, I love introducing people to their Capitol. One of the questions that these visitors often ask is "How does a bill die?" So let me explain:

As mentioned above, to survive this last deadline, the bill had to be "worked" or moved out of the committee to the chamber floor for a vote. The person who appears to make that decision is the committee chairperson. They are the ones who schedule the bills in the committees. Sometimes though, the chair of a committee will refuse to work a bill that the leadership wants to move—so that chair might be removed from the committee for the day, or removed from the chairmanship altogether. That is a big threat that can be used against the chair. If they like the position more than they care about the policy that is passed, that can be a real threat.

During one of my committee meetings on the deadline day, the committee hearing was interrupted multiple times. The door would crack open and a hand would poke through, beckoning to the chair/vice chair. They would stop the committee, go

out into the hall and meet with the staff of the majority party caucus. They would then come back in and either kill the bill or work it, depending on how they were instructed. This is only my third session so I don't have a lot to compare to, but I've asked some of the senior members and they've never seen anything quite like this.

This is the kind of thing that the average voter has no idea actually happens.

Instead of the 11 people on that com-

mittee discussing the issue, listening to testimony and coming to a decision, a few people in a back room make the decision and run the proceedings.

I don't want to sound like I am blaming a particular party here—either party is capable of bending the rules and hijacking the true deliberative process we were sent to the capitol to conduct. In the Oregon House, 60 representatives are each elected by about the same number of Oregonians. Should one of those representatives squelch the voice of the other 59? This is why elections are so important—again, not to elect a specific party, but to elect people who have solid principles and are committed to letting every voice be heard in the democratic process.

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from the
capitol
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