

KeizerOpinion

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Pick your battles

Many people have found their political voice at every level of government in America. It is easy to express one's opinion, especially if it is anonymously on social media.

Conversations touching on everything from taxes to schools to the U.S. foreign policy is rife with angry words that leap off the computer screen: outraged, angry, unbelievable, treason and worse. Either side of any issue its supporters and its detractors. People on both sides of any subject cannot believe that anyone would think opposite of themselves, and therefore are deserving of invectives.

It is impossible to read through Facebook or Twitter on any day and not see the words that people use to show their displeasure on the opinions or actions of others. This poster is outraged, that poster is angry. To what end?

Most people know their rights when it comes to speech, religion and guns. Rights are one thing, societal responsibility is another. Even though we have the right to say and write that we are outraged over something, it doesn't foster understanding, it only hardens people into silos of righteousness.

It is our right to express anger at things we don't agree with; it should be our responsibility to attempt to be part of a solution to the problem at hand.

If neighbors disagree and throw verbal tantrums, disinterested spectators can be concerned about the level of the argument. The public should be even more concerned

our opinion

about the on-going social media battles undertaken by our political leaders.

There are two sides to every issue—both sides believe they are correct. The arguments take a toll when positions are hardened and compromise seems to be out of the question.

There are issues in Keizer that cause divisions: parking issues on Newburg Drive or new fees to support city parks. Everyone has an opinion on things happening in our city. To express outrage does not move the conversation along.

Social media has allowed millions of Americans to join the national or local political debate. It is important to remember that those millions of people had the ability to let their views be heard all along. It's called an election. If one doesn't like what their elected representative is doing they need only take the slight effort to vote in their party primary or a general election.

We are all for sharing opinions and views. We promote conversations that help reach solutions. Everything can't be worth a fight. There are too many problems and crises in the world to be riled up over a small kerfuffle. If one is to go to battle with words, be sure it's worth it.

There is power in words and when a social media poster expresses outrage, for example, we tune it out. Most people will respond better to a thoughtful, invective-free opinion.

We know we do.

—LAZ

Start of the holidays

Next Tuesday is Halloween, which has taken on a larger role in our modern-day culture. Most of the celebrating, especially by adults will presumably occur this weekend.

It is inescapable that Halloween is, for all intents and purposes, the beginning of holiday season. Yes, Halloween is a holiday to many people. From now until the Super Bowl, America and Keizer will be marking Thanksgiving, Channuka, Kwan-za, Christmas, New Year's Day and football's Super Bowl with parties, events, promotions and sales.

A meeting of the Keizer Festival Advisory Board, led by Councilor Marlene Parsons, shows that there is a wide variety of events to enjoy right here in the Iris Capital.

The Keizer Chamber of Com-

merce takes the lead of many events including the Holiday Parade in December and several runs, including the always-popular Turkey Dash early on Thanksgiving Day.

As we move into December, the sound of music will be constant as every school has a band/orchestra/choir concert not to mention the appearance at the State Capitol by Keizer school choirs.

There will no reason not to be in the holiday mood. A family-centric and kid-friendly city like Keizer will always provide plenty to do, see and enjoy.

For those who love holidays, you are in your time of bliss. For those who merely tolerate the holidays, you mark the season your own way and in your own tradition.

—LAZ

Three branches of government

To the Editor:

I have spent most of my long life in Oregon but I was born in England. Before I could become a U.S. citizen I had to learn about the American system of government. Three branches: Legislative, Executive and Judicial, each branch operating independently but also providing a "check and balance" to the other two.

letters

When did this system break down, allowing one man to use "executive orders" to bypass the other two? Is this not the way a dictatorship works?

Beryl MacDonald
Keizer

Share your opinion

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

Email to:
publisher@keizertimes.com



General shames briefing room

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Since retired Gen. John Kelly became White House chief of staff, news outlets have portrayed him as the disciplinarian sent to impose order over an unruly President Donald Trump. Kelly rejects that scenario—when it comes to taming, he has other fish to fry.

To wit, at last week's press briefing, Kelly tongue-lashed the usually feisty White House press corps so relentlessly that in 18 minutes he reduced the usually swaggering scribes and talking heads into shamed silence.

After Kelly slammed reporters for taking a "sacred" moment—the notification of family when a military member is killed in action—and turning it into a cable-news chew toy, after he pointed out the thankless toil of the 1 percent of Americans who serve in the military and after he directed members of the media to raise their hands if they knew any Gold Star families, Kelly offered one final salvo.

"We don't look down upon those of you who haven't served," Kelly closed. "In fact, in a way, we're a little bit sorry because you'll never have experienced the wonderful joy you get in your heart when you do the kind of things our servicemen and women do. Not for any other reason than they love this country."

Kelly's trip to the podium was a rescue mission of sorts designed to extri-

cate Trump from another media mud pit of his own making.

It started Monday when Trump strolled into the Rose Garden with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a key player in the GOP effort to pass a tax-cut bill. This summer Trump told the press he was "very disappointed" in McConnell. But Monday, Trump promoted McConnell to longtime friend with whom he is "closer than ever before."

When a reporter asked Trump why he had not commented on four U.S. soldiers recently killed in an ambush in Niger, the president's need to frame himself as better than his predecessors prompted a tortured response. Trump said he had written letters to the soldiers that would be mailed over the weekend, and that he would like to call the families even though "President Obama, and other presidents, most of them didn't make calls."

PolitiFact rated Trump's statement "misleading." Obama went to Dover Air Force Base to receive the bodies of 18 U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan and comfort their families in person.

Having backed himself in a corner, Trump phoned the widow of Sgt. La David Johnson, one of the four killed in Niger. Later, family friend Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Fla., who listened in on the call, told the media that Trump cavalierly told the widow

that Johnson "knew what he signed up for," but "it still hurts." Johnson's aunt added that Trump was disrespectful.

Trump denied that he said the words Wilson had repeated. At Thursday's briefing, Kelly essentially confirmed Wilson's quote—although Kelly took strong issue with the suggestion that Trump said anything that did not bestow deserved praise on the slain soldier. Kelly framed the controversy as a new low—with Wilson going after Trump when the president was trying to do the decent thing.

For the Trump voter base, the episode was a clear win. Kelly set the rules that determined which reporters had the right to ask him questions—only Gold Star parents or siblings. When no journalist could claim that painful honor, Kelly offered to take questions from reporters who at least knew a Gold Star family. Thus Kelly exposed the White House press corps as a pack of feckless East Coast elites.

Yes, they squirmed because no one could claim a child, brother or sister killed in action.

It doesn't matter that Trump could not raise his hand to that question either. Or that Trump was the beneficiary of five Vietnam-era draft deferments. Or that the controversy erupted because the insecure Trump felt he had to one-up his predecessors in every corner, including making phone calls to grieving families.

So John Kelly bailed him out.
(Creators Syndicate)

Rules on religious giving is a slippery slope

By GENE H. MCINTYRE

In a somewhat convoluted statement, media recently reported that the U.S. Justice Department has issued new guidance aimed at giving religious groups and individuals broad protections to express their beliefs when those beliefs come in conflict with government regulations.

Attorney General Jeffrey Sessions' directive, coming after President Trump's executive order, mainly targets a tax law provision that thereby allows churches direct involvement in political campaigns but really set the stage in future for allowing Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus and all others to ignore the nation's civil laws.

Long anticipated, Sessions' action, following Trump's announcement in May, also provides protections to America's religious orders in hiring decisions that could threaten those whose sexual orientation conflicts with the chosen faith of employers. Referring to his directive, Sessions has said that "except in the narrowest of circumstances, no one should be forced to choose between living out his or her faith and complying with the law" and that "to the extent practicable, religious observance and practice should be accommodated in government."

Now, there's much more to Sessions' mix of religion and government than the latest expression of his thinking on the subject. During Sessions' confirmation hearing early this year, he was pressed by his questioners to answer whether job security of a "secular attorney" would be respected in his Justice Department. Sessions answered citing his concern about truth nowadays not being respected in our nation and that "objective truth is impossible without a certain religious understanding" and that "a post-modern, relativistic, secular mind-set is di-

rectly contrary to the founding of our republic."

Not uncommon in our history have been some Americans who have expressed the belief that the writers of the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were devout Christians and view our origins as ultimately a 'second coming' where the United States of America will be ruled by fundamental Christian theology and beliefs. More than one historian of repute has taken issue with such a foundational understanding and argued that the views of the founding fathers were most poignantly expressed by them about religion in the Constitution's First Amendment as "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Sessions has often remarked on his distaste for and dislike of secularists. What's a secularist? A secularist is a person who advocates separation of the state from religious institutions. The secularist asserts the right to be free from religious rule and its teachings as well as separate from the imposition by government of religion or

religious practice upon its people. Our founding fathers were men of faith but also knew what religion had done for centuries to subjugate the peoples of Europe and did not want the same fate for U.S. citizens. Virtually all of them also had spoken in speeches and written in essays of a new government that embraced secularism.

When our Constitution, our laws and way of life can be ignored and replaced by the most powerful among the nation's political and/or religious forces we Americans should keep in mind an insightful message from another country in a time not long ago. That was the message written by German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller regarding the cowardice of German intellectuals following the Nazis' rise to power and subsequent purging of their chosen targets. "First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist; then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist; then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

guest column



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