

KeizerOpinion

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Sex reporting will do more harm than good

Salem-Keizer School District's decision to enforce a standing Oregon law is causing quite a stir. The law the district is instructing its teachers and staff to follow is Oregon statute 163.315, which says a person under the age of 18 is incapable of consenting to a sexual act.

The child abuse mandatory reporting guideline requires teachers and other school employees to report if they believe two students under the age of 18 are having sex, even if one of their own children is involved.

The renewed focus on this issue came after a member of the community asked for clarification of the statute.

Every story has two sides. The school district responded to a question and decided that the existing state law needed to be heeded. Teachers were informed by the school district that they would need to take additional mandatory reporting training.

The response from teachers and students alike was swift and generally opposed to the school district's focus.

Rightly, some teachers expressed that many students turn to them or school counselors to discuss intimate details of their lives including sex. That's because some households do not welcome discussions of sex, especially discussions of gender identification.

Teachers invite and welcome discussions with students because they understand how home life can be for some kids. Some parents think the schools should take the lead on sex education; others think that sex education should stay at home. The point is moot: what some think should happen is not happening and everyone needs to adjust accordingly.

Many students feel that their teachers, coaches or counselors are the only adults they can discuss topics such as sex with. That trust should not be shunted aside so the school district can tell the community they are following the letter of the law.

What would a reasonable person think? Kids shouldn't be having sex? That train left the station centuries ago—heck, even Romeo and Juliet were in their early teens, you can bet no medieval adult was

reporting them to the throne.

Underage people having sex with each other is not new. The parents of every generation dating back 75 years have lamented their children's lascivious ways. For a reasonable person who is concerned about teen pregnancy, statistics show that rates are down sharply over the past decade. Research also shows that the Millennial Generation is putting off many things that define a person as an adult, and includes sex.

Mandatory reporting laws are good when it concerns victims. An underage person having consensual or non-consensual sex with an adult is illegal and should be reported and prosecuted.

The truth is that in 2017 our kids are facing more deadly issues, especially the nation's current opioid/heroin problem. We can ask our teachers to report when they hear of kids having consensual sex, but we would rather our teachers report on drug use.

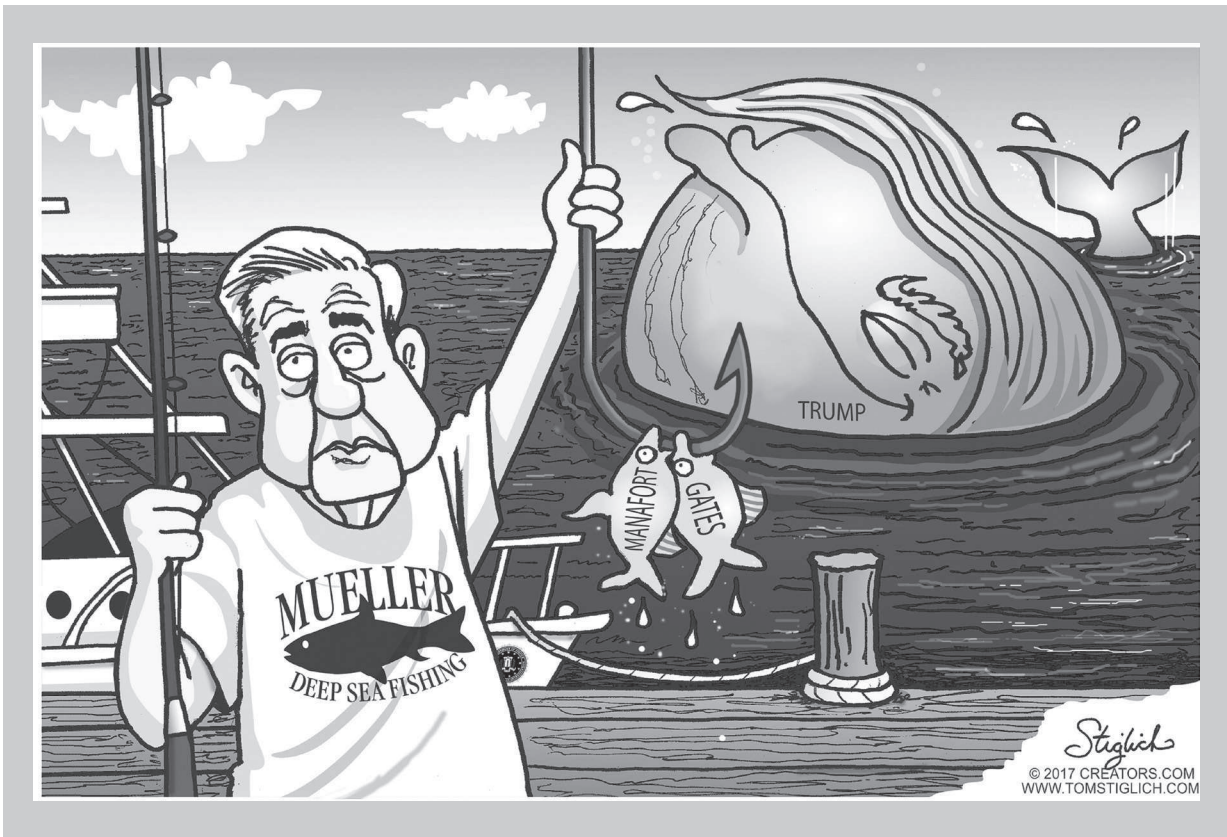
Oregonians may not be dying at the hands of heroin and opioids at the rate of some other hard hit states, but the danger is very real here. It is not just opioids and heroin on which we must remain vigilant—still, too many kids help themselves to prescriptive drugs they find in their home.

We don't think underage sex is harmless. There are sexually transmitted diseases to be concerned about. There is the shaming and bullying that girls are subject to when words gets around that they are active. There are gender identification issues as well as body issues that can be negative. Those can create long-term, low self-esteem issues that can last for years. No, underage sex is not harmless, but it needs to be put in perspective.

The message, like don't do drugs, is don't have sex. We should work very hard to keep our kids away from and off of drugs. Parents and our schools should work in tandem to talk to their kids and their students. That will work best if our kids feel comfortable talking to their parents or an adult, otherwise the whole issue is shoved underground where we can't get at it.

—LAZ

our opinion



Real news about a fake dossier

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

After months of going after “fake news,” President Donald Trump has found a story about a “fake dossier” that he clearly takes to be real news.

Speaking to reporters on the White House lawn this week, Trump said that a *Washington Post* story connecting Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign to a dossier that alleged his 2016 campaign had ties with Moscow was a “disgrace” and “a very sad commentary on politics in this country.”

The president has long maintained that stories linking Vladimir Putin's Russia with his campaign were “fake news” and that investigations into possible collusion between Moscow and his camp were part of a “witch hunt.”

On Tuesday, the *Post* tossed some fuel into that fire when it reported that the Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee had paid for opposition research by the firm Fusion GPS, which had commissioned a dossier that alleged Russian operatives had “been cultivating, supporting and assisting” Trump for at least five years.

The dossier—really a collection of memos that included unconfirmed salacious gossip about Trump—was written by former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele. According to news reports, the FBI has confirmed portions of the 35-page document, but information about a “clandestine meeting” between Kremlin representatives and a Trump lawyer in Prague has been discredited.

The *Post* story sent ripples

other views

through Washington. Shortly after the story went online, *New York Times* reporters Maggie Haberman and Kenneth P. Vogel took to Twitter to grouse about Democratic operatives lying to them.

“I do think it's weird that the DNC never ‘fessed up,’” observed Republican political consultant Mike Murphy.

DNC Communications Director Xochitl Hinojosa told the *Post* that Chairman “Tom Perez and the new leadership of the DNC were not involved in any decision-making regarding Fusion GPS, nor were they aware that Perkins Coie (a DNC and Clinton campaign law firm) was working with the organization.” Be it noted Perez did not become chairman until February 2017.

Former Clinton campaign spokesman Brian Fallon tweeted, “I regret I didn't know about Christopher Steele's hiring pre-election. If I had, I would have volunteered to go to Europe and try to help him.”

There's a mystery in the story—who is the Republican client who hired Fusion GPS to gather dirt on Trump during the contentious GOP primary? According to *The Washington Post*, the opposition research firm later passed the information on to Perkins Coie attorney Marc E. Elias.

Murphy, who ran a super PAC that supported former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush in the 2016 primary, said he does not believe rumors that a Bush supporter was the original contractor. “If it was JebWorld, I think I would have known about it.”

“How does something like that end up on the desk of the FBI?”

Is our democracy under threat?

By GENE H. McINTYRE

Ideally, if democracy in practice is the mainstay of a functioning government, the power must come from and remain with the people. Elections are held and citizens are able to vote for the candidate they feel will best represent their wants and needs. The central principle behind a democracy is that of representation. It was the foundation for the U.S. Constitution as that was the character of the nation they intended after a revolution that freed the people from venal and corrupt British monarchical rule, conditions the founding fathers did not want to re-establish in their new country.

Freedom is a large part of democracy. Freedom of thought, worship, speech and action (assuming action is peaceful and within the limits of established law) are the backbone around which our government is built. Freedoms in the American context have been those by which individuals can grow and develop and pursue their personal dreams and goals. A democracy seeks to foster growth in the arts, sciences, literature, invention and innovations of all kinds, believing that when people are free to work as they see fit they will have the opportunity to contribute to their community and the society-at-large.

Some of us, including this opinion writer, are inclined to see serious threats to our 200-plus year effort at establishing and sustaining a democracy. We see that the cen-

tral and state governments are being pushed and shoved around by the special interests that receive their marching orders from corporations and other special interests and it's the lobbyists from these and themselves that end up telling our representative what to do and actually writing far too many of our new laws and policies. Reforms in this area of operations are long overdue to preserve what's left of our threatened U.S. democracy. The worst of these abuses today can be seen in the industries of banking, energy, investment housing, defense and arms contracting, corporation agriculture and high-end real estate dealings.

What some of us see close to dominating all public life in these United States is called kleptocracy. Essentially, it is a term used to describe a form of government so corrupt and incompetent it's totally opaque. Although a pejorative term, kleptocracy denotes a government wherein the common people are burdened with heavy taxation so that those in charge, the rulers and their cronies, can amass more and more enormous amounts of money in their personal accounts.

A kleptocratic regime ends up with a major portion of government funds in the hands of a few corrupt officials with lip service or no service given to the needs of the state and its people. Creeping authoritarianism is allowed to happen when more and more citizens grant absolute and unquestioning authority and provide obedience to the ruling authority. Such a regime

asked Mark Corallo, a GOP communications strategist who briefly worked on Trump's private legal team. “It's a political document, please.”

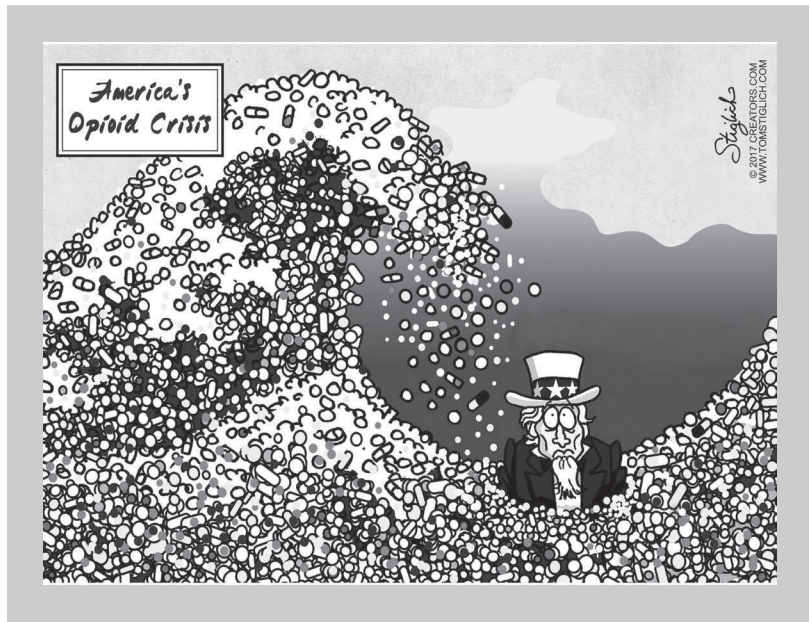
The FBI has some explaining to do. Former FBI Director James Comey, whom Trump later fired, took the dossier so seriously that he stayed behind after a Jan. 6 briefing to discuss it with then President-elect Trump. In addition, both *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* have reported that the FBI had agreed to pay Steele to continue gathering more information on Trump and Russia. The FBI ended the arrangement after news reports ousted Steele.

Tom Fitton of the government watchdog group Judicial Watch tweeted, “Hmm, Clinton campaign operatives talk to Russian officials to find dirt on @realDonaldTrump... is that collusion?”

While the *Post* article is based on anonymous sources and there has been no investigation, Trump seems to have already made up his mind about the story. “Well, I think it's very sad what they've done with this fake dossier,” Trump said.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, whose bid to discover who was paying Fusion GPS may have set into motion *The Washington Post* story, responded, “Now that we know who funded the Steele dossier, the next step is for the FBI and Department of Justice to comply, quickly, with the Intelligence Committee subpoenas for documents showing how intelligence agencies used information from the dossier and what steps they took to verify its veracity.”

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