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Treat the cause, not the symptom

Here's a challenge: think of a pressing social problem that is being solved rather than having its symptoms treated by groups both public and private. A person would be hard pressed to think of any social problem whose origins are addressed and attacked frontally.

In America we collectively pat ourselves on the back for doing 'something' about domestic violence, about homelessness, about opioid use. But that 'something' is generally treating only the symptoms. Both the public and the private sectors should identify people with vision and leadership who will lead campaigns to address the underlying causes of our social ills. It is fine to set up a non-profit organization and establish shelters and programs, but the cycle will continue ad infinitum until the root causes of opioid abuse, homeless, domestic violence and others are addressed.

The challenge with the homeless issue is that there are as many reasons for homelessness as there are homeless persons. We must be clear about the difference between a person who is homeless and a person who is shelterless. Everyone should have a permanent home, the critical issue is those who sleep in vehicles, parks and doorways—the extremely vulnerable homeless population.

Among the many things that fuel our homeless population, mental health issues and financial insecurity are major. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20 to 25 percent of the homeless population in the United States suffers from some form of severe mental illness. In comparison, only 6 percent of Americans are severely mentally ill.

When combined with inadequate hygiene due to homelessness, this may lead to physical problems. Half of the mentally ill homeless population in the United States also suffer from substance abuse and dependence.

This combination of mental illness, substance abuse, and poor physical health makes it difficult for people to obtain employment and residential stability.

Better coordination with mental health service providers is one of the top three items needed to combat homelessness. Many homeless people

with severe mental illnesses are willing to accept treatment and services. Outreach programs are more successful when workers establish a trusting relationship through *continued* contact with the people they are trying to help.

Homeless people with mental illnesses are more likely to recover and achieve residential stability if they have access to supported housing programs.

We don't want to make people more comfortable in their homelessness, we want these people to find sustainable, permanent

housing.

Though experts say the American economy is humming along nicely there is still a large number of citizens who are underemployed or earning less than what is needed to properly house and feed themselves. Many times, through no fault of their own, people may find themselves without a roof over their head. Today's tight housing market makes it difficult for those wanting to enter the world of renting. A tight market means that rents are soaring ever higher.

New apartments are being built in the region but few of those are truly low-income (there is little incentive for a developer to build apartments in that category). There needs to be 'can't pass up' financial incentives offered by the city, the county and the state, for developers to create low-income housing. For every 10,000 square feet of market value housing built, there should be a huge tax and permit discount offered if a developer also built 2,500 square feet of low-income housing (think tiny houses) in the metropolitan area.

Oregon's annual budget is almost \$38 billion. The kicker is expected to return more than half a billion to taxpayers. That \$500 million would go a long way to alleviate homeless in Oregon's cities. A leader would stand up and say that money is needed to help solve a problem people complain about.

Do something, do anything, damn the consequences. Appropriate enough state and local monies to fund 24 hour health services where the homeless gather. The homeless issue needs something much different than an 8 to 5, Monday to Friday solution. Let's get serious and solve this issue.

—LAZ

our
opinion



Commencement season 2018

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

In 2014, commencement season stood out for the list of high-profile speakers pushed off the graduation stage at top-tier universities.

At the peak of academia's podium purges, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice backed out of her planned commencement address at Rutgers University amid protests over her support of the Iraq War. The free-speech Foundation for Individual Rights in Education took to calling the annual rituals the "disinvitation season."

Universities have gotten savvy since then. They've learned not to invite controversial conservatives so they can spare themselves the shame of graduates flaunting their intolerance in the name of diversity—blissfully unaware of how authoritarian they appear.

There's less mess in 2018. Academics smile and present their predictable politics in benevolent style, as your humble correspondent saw first hand last weekend when a university dean used an occasion meant to celebrate student achievement to criticize President Donald Trump's decision to downsize the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah.

The worst part: He got his facts wrong. The dean attributed the Bears Ears downsizing to Trump's Environmental Protection Agency—when it was the Department of Interior that recommended the change.

For the sake of family harmony, I shall not divulge the identity of the relative who walked away with an

advanced degree or the name of the university. But I will quote one of his statements: "Democracy depends on educated citizens."

That's right, the dean who warned students about the risk of unschooled boobs ruining sound public policy didn't get his facts straight.

When I emailed the good dean about his error, he responded, "Thanks so much for this important correction. Yes, it was the Interior Department. Still my main point is valid, I believe, namely that the federal government is supposed to protect public lands and other public goods."

Get it? Even when he's factually wrong, he's so right it doesn't matter.

And yet, facts do matter. President Barack Obama designated Bears Ears a national monument in December 2016. It was the sort of out-the-door move politicians love because there is no risk at the ballot box.

It's also the sort of Washington-knows-best thinking that Westerners have come to expect from beltway bureaucrats, who have no problem with locals having less say in how land in fly-over country is used.

"The larger overview is that this isn't a problem for most Easterners because the federal government owns very small fractions of the land in the East and most of the Midwest," noted Todd Gaziano, executive director of the pro-property rights Pacific Legal Foundation.

In both Nevada and Utah, however, the federal government owns more than half the states' acreage. Obama's

Bears Ears consumed 1.35 million acres, which is bigger than the size of Rhode Island.

Trump's downsized Bears Ears spans 201,876 acres—which makes for a pretty big spread, but not big enough for the dean.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke recommended that Bears Ears be downsized in keeping with the Antiquities Act of 1906. The act called for monuments to be "confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management" of land based on its value as an historic landmark, prehistoric structure or for its scientific interest. It makes sense to limit how much land can be put off limits by executive fiat.

Monument status, Gaziano noted, can mean less land for cattle grazing, mining and roads—endeavors that create jobs.

"What I don't think he understands," said Gaziano of the dean, "is the impact of legal monument designation on the individuals who aren't employed in Ivory Tower universities."

The only benefit Gaziano sees in monuments that consume more than one million acres is "environmental use for granola-crunching backpackers."

The dean's remarks were reminiscent of the opposition campaign to oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a cause dear to many who never have or never will set foot in the refuge. They throw out words like "public good" without seeming to weigh how their good intentions could shortchange people who actually live off the land. They mean well, and that's all that matters.

(Creators Syndicate)

the
opinion
of
others

It's a spending problem

As I write this, the Legislative Revenue Office has released its report on the forecast of Oregon's tax revenues. The new forecast shows a far better picture than an estimate released in March.

Between personal income taxes and corporate taxes, the forecast suggests revenues in the current biennium coming in at \$833 million higher than the earlier prediction. Thus as I've said in these pages and elsewhere for as long as I've been in office: Oregon doesn't have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem. Last month, Gov. Kate Brown signed Senate Bill 1528, which blocked a tax cut for some Oregon businesses.

The change meant an estimated \$245 million would reach state coffers this biennium—money not accounted for in the March forecast. This bill also infuriated my fellow Republicans and caused friction amongst the majority Democratic legislators when Gov. Brown called a special session earlier this week to pass a far smaller tax break. The state's latest revenue forecast, released recently, shows personal income tax revenues for the 2017-19 biennium stand to come in \$555 million above initial forecasts. That's more than enough to trigger Oregon's unique "kicker" provision, which doles money back to taxpayers when taxes come in at more than 2 percent above estimates. Paying out a kicker has become something of a tradition in Oregon, as tax revenues continually outpace state economist's projections.

In 2015, the state announced a \$402 million kicker. In 2017, it was \$464 million. Taxpayers might be in for a far larger refund next year. The new forecast also suggests Oregon might

be on pace to have a record amount of budgetary reserves on hand, nearly \$1.8 billion between the state's Rainy

Day Fund, Education Stability Fund and other unspent money. House Republican Leader Rep. Mike McLane of Powell Butte said: "In their haste to pass SB 1528 earlier this year, Governor Brown and legislative Democrats apparently failed to recognize that by requiring small business to pay \$245 million more in state income taxes, their actions could trigger the income tax kicker," McLane wrote. "That scenario now appears more likely than not.

If current projections hold, Oregonians are in line to receive \$555 million of their money back from their state government. The irony escapes no one." Indeed it is ironic.

As we ended the quarterly "Legislative Days" we were also informed that Gov. Brown and others in her party are looking to "fix" the property tax "inequality" in Oregon. If the majority party were to gain one seat in the House they could overturn Measures 5 and 50 which have held property taxes in check for 20 some years. What this state needs is real leadership from real leaders that understand how to budget properly. Our kids, schools, veterans and homeless all need to be properly cared for and that is not happening even with record amounts of revenue. Oregon can do better. As always, I am honored to serve as your State Representative in House District 25 and look forward to hearing from you anytime.

(Bill Post represents House District 25. He can be reached at 503-986-1425 or via email at rep. bil-post@oregonlegislature.gov.)



from the
capitol

By BILL POST

What's in a team's name? Plenty

News out of Albany recently announced that South Albany High School has decided to surrender its *Rebels* nickname for something more acceptable even though the old name has been quite difficult for some to give up. It's been used at South Albany for years. While its origin was the Confederacy, adopted as a battle cry in fighting the North, the objective being to preserve, protect and perpetuate the enslavement of their fellow African-American citizens.

Such a time from our past cannot be labeled anything other than grossly inhumane since it's indisputably known that African-Americans are just as human as all the other homo sapiens: the difference solely skin color with all other body parts identical. Nevertheless, a war was fought by Americans against other Americans, resulting in 1.5 million casualties. So, how many modern day Americans feel right about attending sports events where participants and spectators cheer for the *Rebels*?

Meanwhile, although the matter is not brand new to Oregon, a few moons ago one of its secondary schools, Cleveland High School, argued long and hard, with many a bitter feeling aroused, to preserve their *Indians* mascot. Now, we, the informed among us, know how the American Indians, and original dwellers of what became known as North America, were treated. The real American Indians, those same real natives who settled in North America—long before European explorers arrived—having their name taken to celebrate victory or defeat in sports events. Incidentally, at Cleveland High in Portland, *Indians*

has been replaced by *Warriors*.

Never wanting the dust to get entirely settled in mascot land, there now brews in Portland another mascot donnybrook. This time it's over *Quakers* as a mascot name for Franklin High School. Never mind that early and famous American patriot Benjamin Franklin was never a Quaker, the founders of Franklin High somehow decided that would be a better mascot name that, for arguments sake, "lightening," as old Ben had something to do with enlightening humankind vis-a-vis the fundamentals of electrical conduction.

A formal complaint was made with the Portland Public Schools Education Board over the use of Quakers at Franklin High and the complaint resulted in the PPS board devoting a year to choose a new name. The complaint was explained as Quakers is the name of an organized religion and, as such, is "inappropriate, offensive, and

unconstitutional" for use as a school's mascot name. Incidentally, the board, after receiving the complaint, has decided to review all its district naming policies and make changes accordingly.

Whether an issue is viewed as great or small often depends upon the beholder. The mascot debates are probably considered by many Americans as small issues. Nevertheless, no matter the degree of importance, these debates are symbolic of the American spirit since colonial times to try to serve the needs and concerns of all citizens rather than what's narrowly self-serving and self-centered, biased and prejudicial. It is the belief of this writer that we Americans should do everything possible to pull together: A prevailing condition of cooperation and sensitivity for all, hopefully enabling our nation to reunite as in some former times where every American sees this as a place to call home.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

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