

Opinion



Serious crimes are not 'mistakes'

To the Editor:

I find it necessary to become more engaged in the debate as to Senate Bill 1008, which eliminates the application of Measure 11 to persons aged 15, 16, and 17 who commit highly violent crimes.

I take issue with a Senate Majority Office news release dated April 16 which characterizes the Oregon Youth Authority as part of "adult prisons" and which refers to violent youth crimes as "mistakes."

Let us be clear: the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) was created in 1995 in SB1 as a new and unique institution designed to focus on rehabilitation of youth offenders. I helped pass this bill, as a state representative. More than 95 percent of Measure 11 youth offenders will serve their entire custody in the OYA (up to age 25). It is not an "adult" prison.

Let us also be clear about crimes: Measure 11 only applies to:

- Murder
 - Manslaughter in the First Degree
 - Manslaughter in the Second Degree
 - Assault in the First Degree
 - Assault in the Second Degree
 - Kidnapping in the First Degree
 - Kidnapping in the Second Degree
 - Rape in the First Degree
 - Rape in the Second Degree
 - Sodomy in the First Degree
 - Sodomy in the Second Degree
 - Unlawful Sexual Penetration in the First Degree
 - Unlawful Sexual Penetration in the Second Degree
 - Sexual Abuse in the First Degree
 - Robbery in the First Degree
 - Robbery in the Second Degree
- I am amazed that anyone would call these "mistakes."

Kevin L. Mannix
Salem

Jared Virtue for Electric board

To the Editor:

Those of us on the Salem Electric

letters

co-op are fortunate to have some of the lowest rates in the state. As a board member I've been impressed with the efficiency and the dedication of our employees and the board.

In this next election by May 6 the co-op has an opportunity to elect a man who is invested in the co-op philosophy and the Salem Electric history.

I encourage you to vote for Jared Virtue for Salem Electric position #4.

Joe Van Meter
Keizer

It is Safe Digging Month

To the Editor:

April is National Safe Digging Month and it is also the time when NW Natural reminds you to call 811 before you dig.

Spring brings planting and the start outdoor projects—before starting a task that involves digging 12 inches or lower, call 811 to have underground utilities located.

Contacting 811 is free and easy. At least two days before the start of a project, call 811 or go online to make the request at digsafelyoregon.com. You can also use NW Natural's new safety app.

When you contact 811, a local one-call center representative collects details and notifies the local utility companies of the intent to dig. Then, a professional locator visits the site to mark the location of underground utility lines with paint. Once the site is marked, it is safe to dig carefully around the marked areas.

If while you're digging, you accidentally hit a gas line, report it immediately by calling 911 or NW Natural's emergency line at 800-882-3377. No damage is too small to report to NW Natural, and even a small dent could weaken a natural gas line.

Enjoy the season, and remember to call 811.

Bruce Anderson
NW Natural Community Affairs
Salem

The heroes of the Mueller Report

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Now that special counsel Robert Mueller's report is out, it is time to salute the heroes.

Mueller is not among them. He was a hero when he served in Vietnam. During his career as a prosecutor, he won the respect of colleagues who still talk of him as a godlike figure. But in this role, Mueller became living proof that there is such a thing as too much rectitude.

Mueller prolonged this investigation when the trail to collusion between the Trump campaign and Russians trying to undermine the 2016 presidential election had grown cold and opaque. Of course he did: He's a federal prosecutor.

Mueller saw a surer path for charging President Donald Trump based on alleged acts of obstruction of justice—a path that opened because Trump fired FBI Director James Comey. Thus, the enterprise always had a whiff of payback—of the law enforcement empire striking back at the executive who thought he ran the show.

The document noted there are many legal issues that make obstruction a murky field. Rather than list the few areas where Trump overstepped, the report presented a laundry list of possible obstruction, starting with the 2016 campaign. Campaign swells suspected WikiLeaks had dirt on rival Democrat Hillary Clinton, and that was OK with them—and somehow that might constitute a crime. And Trump pooh-poohed the notion that Russia was working for his victory—which in the free world shows the exercise of free speech at work.

As for former FBI Director Comey, whose firing by Trump provided the pretext for naming Robert Mueller as special counsel, he bears a dubious role in this time suck of a story.

If Comey had been transparent, there would have been no special

prosecutor. Can you blame Trump for smelling a setup?

Critics complain the report did not explore the shady smear-campaign origins of the "dossier" funded by the Democratic National Committee and

Clinton campaign and used to justify now discredited theories on Russian collusion. The Justice Department's inspector general should chime in on that mess in short order.

So, who are the heroes? A lot of them are lawyers such as Don McGahn, the White House counsel who refused Trump's demand that he fire Mueller. To the contrary, McGahn let it be known that he would resign rather than comply with a foolhardy order that eventually could have cost Trump the White House and ruined the reputations of any minions who caved under pressure.

Attorneys John Dowd and Ty Cobb pushed for a full-cooperation strategy that, based on Trump's now-confirmed belief there was no collusion, persuaded the president to hand over documents to investigators rather than claim executive privilege.

Trump never forgave his first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, for recusing himself from the probe in March 2017, as Democrats demanded his resignation because Sessions had met twice with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak without disclosing the meetings during his confirmation hearing.

Trump pushed Sessions to resign repeatedly. In May 2017, Sessions complied with a letter tendering his resignation. Trump then decided to keep Sessions on board, and he held onto the letter.

According to the report, Trump's first chief of staff, Reince Priebus, saw Trump's retention of the letter as unwise in that it could "function as a kind of 'shock collar' that the President could use any time he wanted; Priebus said the President had 'DOJ by the

throat."

This was as strong a case for obstruction as exists in the report. Fortunately for Trump, Priebus and then-chief strategist Stephen Bannon prodded Trump to return the letter with a notation that Sessions' resignation was not accepted.

In the summer of 2017, Trump again pressured Sessions to "recuse" himself with the risible argument that if he complied, Sessions would be hailed as a "hero." But it's Sessions' refusal to buckle that makes this much-maligned former senator and prosecutor stand out for having the courage of his convictions.

As Mueller wrote, "The President's efforts to influence the investigation were mostly unsuccessful, but that is largely because the persons who surrounded the President declined to carry out orders or accede to his requests."

In September, *The New York Times* ran an anonymous opinion piece. It came from a member of the administration's insider "resistance" of beleaguered staffers who support many of Trump's initiatives and want the administration to succeed but nonetheless "are working to insulate their operations from his whims," as Trump's "impulsiveness results in half-baked, ill-informed and occasionally reckless decisions that have to be walked back."

The torrent of abuse directed at the no-name author was bloated with umbrage. He or she was a coward who should have resigned openly and in public, scolds proclaimed. Even though it took true grit to withstand Trump's abusive behavior in service to the country.

McGahn was too self-serving. Sessions was spineless. John Dowd and Ty Cobb were clueless. Priebus represented the dreaded establishment. Bannon was dangerous. And the impulsive Trump likely would not have remained in office without them.

(Creators Syndicate)

Candidates have good. They have bad.

The 2020 presidential election is underway already. These campaigns become tiresome and repetitious before it finishes. The election is 19 months off, already it is tempting earplugs. U.S. citizenship does not by law require one to participate; nevertheless, due to our nation's viability at stake, we get sucked into the maelstrom. Escapes are possible but only by extreme measures: live at the South Pole, boat the upper Amazon or explore Mars.

A first for me, the 1960 contest fairly early narrowed to Dick Nixon versus John F. Kennedy. I recall a debate between the two of them wherein Nixon appeared nervous while John Kennedy's relaxed manner turned it in his favor. Other contests every four years since have usually pitted a Republican against a Democrat, although there have been serious third party efforts led at various times by Libertarian Gary Johnson, Green Party Ralph Nader, Independent Ross Perot and American Independent George Wallace.

For the 2016 contest, an unusual large number of Republicans announced their interest, including the most controversial of them, a self-proclaimed New York City tycoon, Donald Trump. Also, there just had to be Bush and Clinton "royals." One female Republican entered, Carly Fiorina, and the one believed here best

qualified and most fit for President of the United States among the GOP contenders, John Kasich. Among those running, the huge number dwindled to Donald J. Trump, who promised the most but has delivered the least, his "victory" being the deficit-raising tax cuts mainly benefiting America's wealthiest one percent.

The 2020 election finds President Trump seeking re-election, this time as a Trump Party candidate. Meanwhile, the Democrat aspirants number in double figures, most of whom have declared their intention. There are several among the "declared" collection in the 'big splash' group by contributions in the most millions of dollars, the top five being Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, Beto O'Rourke and Elizabeth Warren.

Back when, in recent presidential runs, some aspirants appeared unlikely prospects. Because he was infamous for female relationships outside his marriage, Bill Clinton was viewed as unacceptable. George W. Bush was seen as weak in every way save name recognition. Barack Obama was a POTUS want-to-be whose heritage was African American, a no-go for prejudiced Americans. Then there was Trump's ego. All proved me wrong.

Now, perceived reservations due to

societal norms, racial bias and gender misgivings apply to several leading Democrats who've shown their interest in becoming president. Bernie Sanders will be 79 next year. Kamala Harris, who is black, was a prosecutor who was hard on other blacks. Pete Buttigieg is openly gay and married to another man. Beto O'Rourke gestures wildly and appears to be a safety risk to anyone nearby. Elizabeth Warren, duty bound by her oath of office to protect and defend the U.S. Constitution, is confident enough to call for Trump's impeachment. Joe Biden hauls around a virtual freight train full of regrets, gaffs, faux pas and unwanted touching. Meanwhile, there's good and bad in all of them.

Because in modern times the United States has so seldom elected a president who in office demonstrated good sense and a steady hand, if change were possible it's suggested a modified U.S. Constitution for the executive branch: Elect three persons to the executive head position wherein thereafter all decisions coming out of the Oval Office would require unanimity for sane decisions that serve all Americans. Also there's now at least one wild card in the person of former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld, a Republican politician of considerable renown who will attract disaffected GOP voters.

(Gene H. McIntyre shares his opinion regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)

Secure school budget before anything

By BILL POST

The Capitol building was in a fury the first couple weeks of this month, because April 9 was the last day to hold a work session for a bill in the chamber of origin.

For example, if a House bill did not have a work session in a House committee by April 9, the bill most likely died, as the bill did not meet the deadlines and will not be moving forward. The exception to this rule is the fact that there are a handful of committees this deadline does not apply to. For example, the joint committees—Rules and Revenue—do not have this deadline. Now that this deadline has passed, there is a bit of calm to the building. That is, until the next deadline which is May 10.

The legislature has to constitutionally Sine Die (end session) by June 30. Unfortunately, we haven't passed any budget bills of significance which is the entire point for session. One of my greatest frustrations in now my third full legislative

session, is that the K-12 budget is not done first up in the session. There are hundreds of policy bills for all sorts of things but to me there truly are only three things that the legislature is constitutionally bound to do: education, public safety and transportation. I have consistently asked why we don't do

K-12 budget first? Now that I am on a Ways and Means subcommittee (Joint Committee on Transportation and Economic Development) I am starting to understand more.

In the subcommittees, state agencies present their budgets. That means we get to ask the tough questions of agency directors. We will determine their budget for the next two years. I'm finding this to be a very interesting and rewarding part of this job. Recently, we had the chance to talk to the Oregon Department of Transportation director about ODOT's budget. In that, I was able to ask about "safety corridors" specifically out north of Keizer on Hwy 219 and

the McKay Road area where recently a headline declared it was "Death Road." I pushed for more funding for the Newberg-Dundee Bypass. That's not a huge Keizer issue but it greatly affects the Newberg area and more importantly, it's finished product will help end "Death Road" in the North Marion County area I serve. That's why I believe I am here: education, public safety and transportation.

A quick note about my Sudafed bill, HB 2303. It passed out of the House 33-22 on April 11 and is now set for the Senate Judiciary Committee. It was greatly amended in the House so that if it passed it would allow Oregonians to choose to get a doctor's prescription for pseudoephedrine products or they could go straight to the pharmacy, show a government issued ID and purchase it themselves. I have high hopes that we can pass this and give Oregonians more affordable and accessible health care.

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