OPINION

DAILY ASTORIAN Fraternity of failure



it's been home for 34 years.

that Courtney has kept secret from

his colleagues the true cost of the

project. That would be \$337 mil-

row \$161 million this year to begin

the project," wrote Jaquiss. "That

puts pressure on the state's bond-

ing capacity and could squeeze

out money for seismic upgrades

for other public buildings such as

doesn't like it that she would tell

her constituents there is no mon-

ey for seismic upgrades of their

schools while Courtney's plan

would suck up the state's ability to

Any building of the Oregon

fund such projects.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson

courthouses and hospitals."

"Courtney wants the state to bor-

lion.

4A

Founded in 1873

How much REALLY

for Capitol renewal

A monument to Oregon or to

Sen. Peter Courtney?

regon's Capitol is iconic — unique among state capitols for

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By PAUL KRUGMAN New York Times News Service

eb Bush wants to stop talking

about past controversies. And you can see why. He has a lot to stop talking about.

But let's not honor his wish. You can learn a lot by studying recent history, and you can learn even more by watching how politicians respond to that history.

The big "Let's move on" story of the past few days involved Bush's response when asked in an interview whether, knowing what he knows now, he would have supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He answered that yes, he would. No WMD? No stability after all the lives and money expended? No problem.

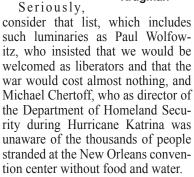
Then he tried to walk it back. He "interpreted the question wrong," and isn't interested in engaging "hypotheticals." Anyway, "going back in time" is a "disservice" to those who served in the war.

Take a moment to savor the cowardice and vileness of that last remark. And, no, that's not hyperbole.

Bush is trying to hide behind the troops, pretending that any criticism of political leaders especially, of course, his brother, the commander in chief — is an attack on the courage and patriotism of those who paid the price for their superiors' mistakes. That's sinking very low, and it tells us a lot more about candidate's character than any number of upclose-and-personal interviews.

of his chief advisers on forpolicy, eign and it was a who's-who of mistake-makers, people who played essential roles in the Iraq disaster and other debacles.

released a list



Paul

In Bushworld, in other words, playing a central role in catastrophic policy failure doesn't disqualify you from future influence. If anything, a record of being disastrously wrong on national security issues seems to be a required credential.

Voters, even Republican primary voters, may not share that view, and the past few days have probably taken a toll on Bush's presidential prospects. In a way, however, that's unfair. Iraq is a special problem for the Bush family, which has a history both of never admitting mistakes and of sticking with loyal family retainers no matter how badly they perform. But refusal to learn from experience, combined with a version of political correctness in which you're only

acceptable if you have been wrong about crucial issues, is pervasive in

Take my usual focus, econom-



presidential candidates, you find that nearly all of them agreed, back during the "Bush boom," that there was no housing bubble and the American economic future was bright; that nearly all of them predicted that the Federal Reserve's efforts to fight the economic crisis that developed when that nonexistent bubble popped would lead to severe inflation; and that nearly all of them predicted that Obamacare, which went fully into effect in 2014, would be a huge job-killer.

Given how badly these predictions turned out - we had the biggest housing bust in history, inflation paranoia has been wrong for six years and counting, and 2014 delivered the best job growth since 1999 — you might think that there would be some room in the GOP for economists who didn't get everything wrong. But there isn't. Having been completely wrong about the economy, like having been completely wrong about Iraq, seems to be a required credential.

What's going on here? My best explanation is that we're witnessing the effects of extreme tribalism. On the modern right, everything is a political litmus test. Anyone who tried to think through the pros and cons of the Iraq War was, by definition, an enemy of President George W. Bush and probably hated America; anyone who questioned whether the Federal Reserve was really debasing the currency was surely an enemy of capitalism and freedom.

It doesn't matter that the skeptics have been proved right. Simply raising questions about the orthodoxies of the moment leads to excommunication, from which there is no coming back. So the only "experts" left standing are those who made all the approved mistakes. It's kind of a fraternity of failure: men and women united by a shared history of getting everything wrong, and refusing to admit it. Will they get the chance to add more chapters to their reign of error?

its 1930s look and its rotunda murals that project the quasi-socialist neo-realism of that Depression era. Capitol's vintage undoubtedly It is a good bet that relatively small percentage of Oregonians needs an upgrade of some of its inhave been inside the building. But frastructure — such as plumbing, to the Legislature it is home. And electrical or heating. But as Jaquiss to Senate President Peter Courtney notes, this is much more than a re-

model. Courtney's plans include a 3,000-square-foot legislative Nigel Jaquiss of Willamette Week has delivered an alarming lounge, a 4,700-square-foot cafe investigation of Courtney's plan to and a 2,500-square-foot lounge for "renovate" the Capitol. The most lobbyists. salient aspect of Jaquiss' report is

appropriations choice that legislators make every day. Unless we're missing something, Courtney's plan is extravagant when placed next to other public works needs around Oregon.

Capitol plan, Jaquiss reported, Courtney regarded such questions

going on here. Courtney has spent an overly long time in the Legislature. He is a creature of the Legislature, for good or for ill. All politicians nurture myths about themselves (John Kitzhaber had one) and Courtney is confusing his personal pride and meaning with

Compared to what? That is the the

When challenged about his

as "an assault" on him. That comment betrays what's

the building he works in.

Wait, there's more: Incredibly, Bush resorted to the old passive-voice dodge, admitting only that the modern Republican Party. "mistakes were made." Indeed. By

whom? Well, earlier this year Bush ic policy. If you look at the list of

Republicans must step up on trad

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER Washington Post Writers Group

TASHINGTON — That free trade is advantageous to both sides is the rarest of political propositions — provable, indeed mathematically.

Obama wants a deal. But he has utterly failed to bring his party along. It's not just because for six years he's treated all of

opposition, this



agreement rests entirely with Congress.

As for the merits, the TPP is a boon for America. It reduces tariff barriers to vast Asian markets and strengthens protection for intellectual property, America's forte. To be sure, any trade deal, while a net plus overall, produces winners and losers But the TPP will be accompanied by so-called Trade Adjustment Assistance, training and subsidies to help those negatively affected. Moreover, the overall gain is more than just economic. In our deadly serious competition with China for influence in the region, the TPP would anchor our relations with Pacific Rim nations. If we walk away, they will inevitably gravitate to China's orbit. The question is (as Paul Ryan and Ted Cruz succinctly put it in The Wall Street Journal): Who is going to write the rules for the global economy — America or China? And one final consideration. Watching America's six-year retreat under Obama, the world wonders whether this is the product of one idiosyncratic presidency or of an inexorably declining America. Republicans have been telling the world that decline is not a condition but a choice, and that America's standing will be restored when U.S. policy is entrusted to geopolitically serious people. Here is the GOP's chance to show seriousness. The Democrats, inventors of the postwar free-trade regime, have now turned against it (and their own president). This is the Republicans' chance to demonstrate that they can think large by advancing an important strategic objective - giving substance to Obama's as yet stillborn "pivot to Asia." I wouldn't mind seeing Obama sunk by his own arrogance in intraparty fratricide over trade. But the issue is bigger than Obama. In 20 months, he will be gone. Asia will not. And it will get away from us if Republicans don't step up and step in where Obama and the Democrats have failed.

In **Bushworld** ... being disastrously wrong on national security issues seems to be a required credential.

Oil shipments no mere 'uptick'

press release announc-**H**ing Washington's and Oregon's plans to update their responses to oil spills on the lower Columbia River describes increasing rail shipments of crude oil in the area as an "uptick."

In fact, the volume of oil shipments by rail across both states has enormously expanded in recent years, going from essentially nothing at the start of this decade to tens of millions of gallons a year now. Even under the most optimistic of assumptions, derailments and spills are certain to occur. The U.S. rail industry has a good safety record, but there have been enough disasters that its record isn't anywhere close to perfect.

With proposals for new and expanded export terminals and refineries, there also are nearly certain to be ships carrying petroleum products up and down the Columbia, along with more oil flowing in pipelines. These, too, are subject to spills.

From being mostly just a recipient of fossil fuels, our two states will increasingly be integral parts of a national and international transportation and refining network. This is no mere "uptick," but potentially a multidecade increase in risk that policymakers must do their best to confront. As always in such matters, prevention must be the first priority, accompanied by making certain those who profit are appropriately insured and bonded to pay for the damage done by spills.

The particular aspect of planning that is being updated is precisely how to respond in the immediate aftermath of spills, to contain damage and clean them up. The existing plan was completed in 2003, long before the current crude-oil boom. Part of it is now more than 20 years old. Besides an intensely increased scale of risk, much has changed in these years. The old plan, ways to comment, and a link to a similar draft updated plan for the Chehalis River are all accessible at tinyurl.com/ NewOilSpillPlan

The revised plan will pay special attention to several wildlife refuges along the lower river, places where oil could be especially disastrous. It would make sense to include Willapa Bay in these plans, considering the hydrology of the Columbia River plume, which carries fish, nutrients and other things into the bay from the Columbia, at least during some months when the current flows northward.

Comments are due to June 30. This is an important matter that warrants careful attention by citizens who care about local riverine and maritime resources.

David Ricardo did so in 1817. The Law of Comparative Advantage has held up nicely for 198 years.

Nor is this abstract theory. We've lived it. The free-trade regime created after World War II precipitated the most astonishing advance of global welfare and prosperity the world has ever seen. And that regime was created, overseen, guaranteed and presided over by the United States.

That era might be coming to a close, however, as Democratic congressional opposition to free trade continues to grow. On Tuesday, every Democrat in the Senate (but one) voted to block trade promotion – aka fast-track — authority for President Obama, which would have

given him the power to conclude the Trans-Pa-Partnership cific (TPP), a trade deal being hammered out with 11 other countries, including such key allies as Japan, Australia and Singapore.

Fast-track authority allows an administration to negotiate the details of a trade agreement and then come to Congress for a nonamendable up-ordown vote. In various

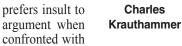
forms, that has been granted to every president since Franklin Roosevelt. For good reason. If the complex, detailed horse trading that is required to nail down an agreement is carried out in the open — especially with multiple parties — the deal never gets done.

Like all modern presidents,

Where to write

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Congress with disdain and



time from Democrats like Elizabeth Warren. It's also because he's expended practically no political capital on the issue. He says it's a top priority. Has he given even a single televised address?

The trade deal itself will likely pass the Senate eventually, there being eight or so Democrats (out of 46) who support the deal but wanted to extract certain guarantees before fast-tracking it. (They got the guarantees and on Thursday approved fast track.) The problem is the House. Very few House Democrats will vote yes. House passage will require Republican near-una-

nimity. And it's not there.

One group of GOP opponents are traditional protectionists of the Pat Buchanan paleoconservative school of autarky. The others are conservatives so reflexively anti-Obama that they oppose anything he proposes, especially anything that appears to give him more authority.

Having strong-

ly opposed Obama's constitutional usurpations on immigration, health care, criminal justice and environmental regulation, I'm deeply sympathetic to that concern. But in this case, there is no usurpation. There is no congressional forfeiture of power. Fast track has been the norm for 81 years. And the final say on any trade

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would relations with **Pacific** Rim nations.

The TPP anchor our