

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, *Editor & Publisher*
 LAURA SELLERS, *Managing Editor*
 BETTY SMITH, *Advertising Manager*
 CARL EARL, *Systems Manager*
 JOHN D. BRUIJN, *Production Manager*
 DEBRA BLOOM, *Business Manager*
 HEATHER RAMSDELL, *Circulation Manager*

Time to OK banking for legal marijuana

Key federal legislators from Oregon are making a renewed push to normalize banking services for the legal marijuana industry. This is a much-needed and overdue reform.

Oregon is in the process of joining other states including neighboring Washington in outright legalization of marijuana, with sales set to start Oct. 1. Medicinal marijuana has been legal here since 1998 and the Legislature legalized medical marijuana dispensaries during its 2013 session. Nationwide, many legitimate marijuana businesses continue to struggle with a lack of access to the normal channels for handling financial transactions.

Currently, marijuana businesses operating under state laws that have legalized medicinal or adult-use marijuana are mostly denied access to the banking system because financial institutions that provide them services can be prosecuted under federal law, according to Oregon U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, all Democrats. In Washington state, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray is also a supporter of reform. Without the ability to access bank accounts, accept credit cards, or write checks, businesses must operate using large amounts of cash.

"There's a reason most of us don't walk around with thousands of dollars of cash stuffed in our backpacks. It's an invitation to crime and malfeasance," Merkley said. "But that's what we are forcing legal Oregon businesses to do because financial institutions are prohibited from providing services. That must change."

Marijuana businesses are heavily regulated and monitored at the state level. This keeps drug cartels out of the legal industry, insures compliance with rules designed to keep marijuana away from underage residents, and helps avoid federal inter-

vention in legalization.

But by denying these enterprises the ability to handle money in a modern and transparent way, federal law places them at greater risk of robbery, while essentially maintaining undesirable traits associated with the outlaw past. Legalization is a fact of life and is certain to spread to additional states. It's time to dispense with the remaining vestiges of the unlamented past that saw millions of lives disrupted or destroyed in a failed effort at prohibition.

The new law proposed by Oregon's federal lawmakers would prevent federal banking regulators from:

- Prohibiting, penalizing or discouraging a bank from providing financial services to a legitimate state-sanctioned and regulated marijuana business;

- Terminating or limiting a bank's federal deposit insurance solely because the financial institution is providing services to a state-sanctioned marijuana business;

- Recommending or incentivizing a financial institution to halt or downgrade providing any kind of banking services to these businesses; or

- Taking any action on a loan to an owner or operator of a marijuana-related business.

The bill, as described in a congressional press release, also creates a safe harbor from criminal prosecution and liability and asset forfeiture for financial institutions and their officers and employees who provide financial services to legitimate, state-sanctioned marijuana businesses, while maintaining financial institutions' right to choose not to offer those services.

These moves all make sense and should be enacted as soon as possible.

Democratic chiefs cast off old idols

Democratic Party leaders in four states are disavowing the names of two of their party founders, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. *The New York Times* reported Tuesday that a staple of annual Democratic fund raising — the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner — is being eliminated in Iowa, Georgia, Missouri and Connecticut.

To party leaders in those states, Jefferson's hypocrisy was his slave holding. Jackson exiled the Cherokees and other tribes from their homelands in a forced migration called the Trail of Tears.

Political parties are not human beings. So that analogy is highly imperfect. But what these party leaders are doing is akin to a person who rejects the existence of an embarrassing ancestor.

For different reasons, Jefferson and Jackson are icons of American history, and they were progenitors of the Democratic Party. But some Democratic leaders would offer the rejoinder: They are not icons of my American history or my Democratic Party.

The Times report noted that this represents a shift toward racial and gender issues as an organizing principle and away from those of income. It is true that in reckoning with racial and gender issues in a way that a Jeffersonian or Jacksonian could not have imagined, our era is startlingly

different. But it is always a mistake to believe that we moved beyond the reach of history.

In the movie *Dr. Zhivago*, an older Russian is skeptical of whether Bolsheviks will change Russia. "Ah," responds a young Bolshevik. "After the revolution, people will be different."

Picking one American president over another for beatification is dicey business. The party leaders who are dismissing Jefferson and Jackson might well invoke the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt. But it is widely acknowledged that FDR's internment of American citizens who were Japanese was an enormous injustice.

Even Barack Obama could present problems for the party guardians of values. While it's true that Obama will leave office with major accomplishments to his credit, he has fostered a culture of government secrecy that Richard Nixon would envy.

In other words, politics has its limits. Political parties — which are not mentioned in the Constitution — are more about winning elections than about meaning.

Politics and elections are about allocating power. Election to public office does not convey righteousness on the victor. It is only an opportunity to exercise power. Any American over the age of 25 has been disillusioned by at least one hero or heroine.

So good luck to Democratic organizers who are casting off old idols.

GUEST COLUMN

Ignoring the reality of America's history

By DON ANDERSON

In his *Writer's Notebook* ("The six things wrong with the America I love," Aug. 7), Patrick Webb, former managing editor of *The Daily Astorian*, literally said that "America is going to the dogs." His six reasons why the USA is on a downward spiral reveal a pessimism that is commonplace today. Usually such cynicism in America's prospects are reserved for the far right, but Webb shows that even the more progressively minded can give in to despair.

What he fails to comprehend is that, since its inception, America has been dealing with the issues of "civility, violence, (lack of) leadership, taxes, religion and protest" that he brings up. These are nothing new. America has always had these difficulties hounding it, and its journey as a country has been a constant battle against these and other demons.

This, "young, clever, experiment in democracy," Webb writes about is actually the oldest democracy in the world. From its inception, the USA has been a brash country that flouted some European mores and embraced others. While it is right to bring attention to the issues Webb does, such a gloomy view of our country is not warranted. We have overcome, and we will overcome.

Webb says that the current "shrill cacophony of (verbal) abuse in modern America is simply sickening." Has he read about the appalling things that were said to and written about Abraham Lincoln in the election of 1860, or the vicious vitriol flung against the abolitionists? Our current Congress is an example of kindness and decorum compared to those of the 1800s, when members not infrequently got in fist-fights or openly swore at one another. American has always had its uncivil elements; it isn't anything new.

Webb claims the British are somehow immune from incivility, saying, "... my background, as a white, privileged Englishman, gives me a reputation for avoiding rudeness. We are a polite tribe ..." This too, isn't true. The English are, and have always been, as rude as their Yankee cousins. One wonders if he has ever viewed a session of Parliament, or read about the uncivil —

even murderous — comments that were leveled against Churchill, or the things said against the Puritans, the Jews, the Catholics, etc. England is no nonpareil of civility.

Webb rightly asserts that America is currently a violent milieu and he asks the question, "Why do we allow improper people ... unbridled access to lethal weapons?" However, he ignores recent statistics like the Criminal Victimization Survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2011 that shows violent crime has actually gone down significantly in the U.S. since the 1960s. Despite Webb's assertion, it is not all bad news.

Webb wonders when "politician" has become a dirty word in America. The answer is since 1776, or to be more accurate, a few years prior to that, when the colonies were squabbling amongst each other over whether or not they should separate from England. If you want to read the lowest kind of political vitriol — much stronger than the tepid stuff today — read some of the diatribes the founding fathers wrote about each other, mother England and fellow colonies. The shared hatred between then President John Adams and Vice President Thomas Jefferson is legendary, with Jefferson calling Adams a weak-willed hermaphrodite and Adams calling Jefferson a half-breed, criminal, fool and tyrant.

In his second term as President, Barack Obama has had unprecedented success in such areas as instigating a national health system, fostering marriage equality, renewing our relationship with Cuba, reinvigorating our economy, showing that diplomacy works better than war and bringing a sense of dignity to the presidency. Webb complains of a lack of leadership, saying, "I look at the burgeoning field of Democratic and Republican suits wanting to lead us into the next disaster, and I see little difference between them." Looking at the 17 Republican candidates running for president, one wonders if he can say that with a straight face. Yet for all the comments like Webb's "Just about all have sold out to monied special interests,"



Don Anderson

our Congress does get an amazing amount done when compared to other countries. In fact, last year *The Washington Post* called the 113th Congress the "Did-Something Congress" that passed 297 laws in 2014.

Webb's comments on religion are old, tired, and just plain wrong. He claims our first government was a "religion-free zone." Hello! Has he read the Declaration of Independence? Has he read the First Amendment? In a 1794 letter to the Massachusetts Legislature, Samuel Adams wrote, "In the supposed state of nature, all men are equally bound by the laws of nature, or to speak more properly, the laws of the Creator." America has always been a deeply religious country. Yes, we need to find ways to celebrate our differences in religions, but to think that somehow America has fundamentally changed its religious values in the last 250 years is to deny history.

Finally, Webb waxes nostalgic when he longs for the good ol' days of protest in this country. A child of the '60s and '70s, Webb reveals the years of his upbringing more than his knowledge of history. America has been a country of protest since the day of its inception. When I was 15, my grandfather gave me *An Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States* by William Winterbotham, published in 1790. In the book's introduction, Winterbotham, an Englishman, bemoans the desire of the Americans to constantly protest and demand their rights. What was true then, was true in the 1800s, the 1900s and today.

We are and always have been a country that demands its rights and freely protests when those rights are threatened. Webb must be ignoring all the environmental, Black Lives Matter, anti-gun, anti-war, anti-Wall Street, anti-tax, etc., protests that occur every day on our college campuses, in our city streets and at our corporate headquarters.

We don't need to "take back our country" as Webb asserts. We have our country. Let us celebrate it in its infinite diversity. Go out and do something positive.

Don Anderson is an English and journalism teacher at Jewell School and an occasional correspondent for The Daily Astorian.

Can we interest you in teaching?

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

Teaching can't compete.

When the economy improves and job prospects multiply, college students turn their attention elsewhere, to professions that promise more money, more independence, more respect.

That was one takeaway from a widely discussed story in *The Times* on Sunday by Motoko Rich, who charted teacher shortages so severe in certain areas of the country that teachers are being rushed into classrooms with dubious qualifications and before they've earned their teaching credentials.

It's a sad, alarming state of affairs, and it proves that for all our lip service about improving the education of America's children, we've failed to make teaching the draw that it should be, the honor that it must be. Nationally, enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped by 30 percent between 2010 and 2014, as Rich reported.

To make matters worse, more than 40 percent of the people who do go into teaching exit the profession within five years.

How do we make teaching more rewarding, so that it beckons to not only enough college graduates but to a robust share of the very best of them?

Better pay is a must. There's no getting around that. Many teachers in many areas can't hope to buy a house and support a family on their incomes, and college students contemplating careers know that. If those students are taking on debt, teaching isn't likely to provide a timely way to pay it off. The average salary nationally for public school teachers, including those with decades in the classroom, is under \$57,000; starting salaries in some states barely crest \$30,000.

There's also the issue of autonomy.

"The No. 1 thing is giving teachers a voice, a real voice," Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, said to me this week.

Education leaders disagree over how much of a voice and in what. Weingarten emphasizes teacher involvement in policy, and a survey of some 30,000 teachers and other school workers done by the AFT and the Bass Teachers Association in late April showed that one large source of stress was being left out of such decisions.

Others focus on primarily letting teachers chart the day-by-day path to the goals laid out for them, so that they're not just obedient vessels for a one-size-fits-all script. Hold them accountable, but give them discretion.

The political battles over education, along with the shifting vogues about what's best, have left many teachers feeling like pawns and punching bags. And while that's no reason not to implement promising new approaches or to shrink from experimentation, it puts an onus on policymakers and administrators to bring generous measures of training, support and patience to the task.

Teachers crave better opportunities for career growth. Evan Stone, one of the chief executives of Educators 4 Excellence, which represents about 17,000 teachers nationwide, called for "career ladders for teachers to move into specialist roles, master-teacher roles."

"They're worried that they're going to be doing the same thing on day one as they'll be doing 30 years in," he told me.

He also questioned licensing laws that prevented the easy movement of an exemplary teacher from one state to



Frank Bruni

another. Minnesota recently relaxed such requirements; if other states followed suit, it might build a desirable new flexibility into the profession.

Teaching also needs to be endowed with greater prestige. One intriguing line of thought about how to do this is to make the requirements for becoming a teacher more difficult, so that a teaching credential has luster. In the book *The Smartest Kids in the World*, Amanda Ripley noted that Finland's teachers are revered in part because they're the survivors of selective screening and rigorous training.

Kate Walsh, the president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, told me that in this country, "It's pretty firmly rooted in college students that education is a fairly easy major." Too often, it's also "a major of last resort," she said.

Dan Brown, a co-director of Educators Rising, which encourages teenagers to contemplate careers in the classroom, said that teaching might be ready for its own Flexner Report, an early 1900s document that revolutionized medical schools and raised the bar for American medicine, contributing to the aura that surrounds physicians today.

He also asked why, in the intensifying political discussions about making college more affordable, there's not more talk of methods "to recognize and incentivize future public servants," foremost among them teachers.

There should be. The health of our democracy and the perpetuation of our prosperity depend on teaching no less than they do on Wall Street's machinations or Silicon Valley's innovations. So let's make the classroom a destination as sensible, exciting and fulfilling as any other.

Where to write

• **State Rep. Brad Witt (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court Street N.E., H-373, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/witt/ Email: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

• **State Rep. Deborah Boone (D):** 900 Court St. N.E., H-481, Salem, OR

97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.deborah.boone@state.or.us District office: P.O. Box 928, Cannon Beach, OR 97110. Phone: 503-986-1432. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/boone/

• **State Sen. Betsy Johnson (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., S-314,

Salem, OR 97301. Telephone: 503-986-1716. Email: sen.betsy.johnson@state.or.us Web: www.betsyjohnson.com District Office: P.O. Box R, Scappoose, OR 97056. Phone: 503-543-4046. Fax: 503-543-5296. Astoria office phone: 503-338-1280.