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Can the Independent Party be a magnet?

Good candidates, like Betsy Johnson, are the rarest commodity

Last Thursday was the deadline to join the Independent Party of Oregon. Voters always have had the option to declare themselves Independent. But on Aug. 17, the Oregon Secretary of State granted major party status to the Independent Party. That party reached the threshold of having more than 108,000 registered voters.

One of last week's big deciders was state Sen. Betsy Johnson. Finding herself frequently at odds with the Democratic Party, Johnson mulled the shift, talking with an array of colleagues around Oregon. As 5 p.m. approached, she backed off and remains a registered Democrat.

Until now, the drawback of registering as an Independent in Oregon was not voting in the state primary election, except for ballot measures. Major party status will bring about an array of changes, including the ability to have an Independent slate of candidates for major offices.

While money and organization are important in political campaigns, a good candidate is the rarest commodity. Sen. Johnson is a good candidate.

The Independent Party's new status is part of a larger context in which many Oregonians see the Democratic and Republican parties as less relevant than they once were. As the share of Oregonians declaring themselves Independent has grown, the Republican Party has seen its fortunes diminish. Years of establishing religious litmus tests for candidates has created a GOP talent deficit. That is one reason why Oregon has trend-

ed toward becoming a one-party state.

For a Democrat like Johnson, that should be good news. But increasingly the Democratic power structure (House Speaker Tina Kotek, Senate President Peter Courtney) see things through a lens that is shaped in Portland and the Willamette Valley. And it is widely acknowledged that the public employees unions set a large part of the agenda in the statehouse.

While we have not always agreed with Sen. Johnson's perspective on some of these divisive issues, she nonetheless is genuine in her aspiration to understand and speak up for the interests of the Oregon beyond the densely populous midsection. Johnson tries to grasp the aspirations of communities that are well away from the mega-centers of Portland, Salem, Corvallis, Eugene and Medford.

It is a truism nationally, and no less in Oregon, that the two largest political parties are either more liberal or more conservative than the mass of public opinion that collects in the middle of the spectrum.

For the Independent Party to prosper, it needs to be more than a default option. To become a magnet, it must build a bench. It must have good candidates.

Can we be flexible on short-term rentals?

Nemlowill's anxiety is warranted, but conversion sometimes makes sense

Thanks to thriving websites like Airbnb and TripAdvisor, vacation rentals are one of our time's thorniest neighborhood issues for resort communities — increasingly including traditionally blue-collar river towns like Astoria and Ilwaco, Wash.

As we reported Sept. 9, the Astoria City Council came down solidly on the side of limiting new vacation rentals, reflecting broad concerns that a housing shortage would be worsened if more houses are consigned to tourists and second-home buyers. City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill said, "All over Oregon — Bend and Yachats, Cannon Beach — there are examples of nightmare scenarios where vacation rentals are destroying the character of those communities."

All these places, plus others including Ashland, might take issue with the assertion that they contain nightmare scenarios. But the City Council's cautionary approach is warranted. There certainly are many places around the world where entire towns have been converted into large, free-form hotels. This comes with significant downsides for permanent residents.

And yet, as is the case with the zoning change rejected by the council, there are other sides to some of

these stories. Clatsop Community College wanted this rezone in order to sell the property and manage its real estate in a manner of its own choosing. Planning staff found no reason to think that conversion into a bed and breakfast would result in downsides for neighbors, and might in fact result in the property being better maintained.

As house prices climb, some homeowners have found vacation renting to be a way of affording their mortgage, or covering the cost of a place near the coast until life circumstances permit them to move here full time.

Coastal towns in our region would all do well to thoroughly discuss these issues before they are confronted with many zoning requests and informal vacation rentals arranged without recourse to any legal process. Short-term rentals may make perfect sense in some neighborhoods, but not others, or in the summer months but not year-round. It might be acceptable to have one vacation rental on a certain block, but not six.

All these issues should be decided on a rational and objective basis, and rules must include an enforcement mechanism that communities can afford and homeowners can easily understand.

Does Trump really need ideas?

By ANDREW ROSENTHAL
New York Times News Service

Jeb Bush told CNN's Jake Tapper on Thursday that Donald Trump can't "insult his way to the presidency" or even the Republican Party's 2016 nomination. I certainly hope he is right.

Mr. Bush also said that Mr. Trump has to "share what his experiences are to be the president of the United States, what his ideas are."

Mr. Bush added that he must "say what his vision is for the future" and that as of now he is not a "serious candidate."

Ideally, yes, and Mr. Bush has shared a lot of policy ideas and prescriptions. I don't agree with many of them — including his idea that we can tax-cut our way to prosperity, a hoary Republican notion that has been proven false over and over again since 1981. But he has them.

I just think Mr. Bush may be ignoring the recent history of his own party when he says that a politician wins on big ideas.

Mr. Bush's father, George H.W., won the White House in 1988 by kicking off the Republican Party's use of the politics of fear and division. His campaign against Michael Dukakis was based largely on xenophobic messages about an American of immigrant Greek origins; baseless accusations that Mr. Dukakis was not patriotic and was anti-religious; and shameless exploitation of racist imagery (Willie Horton). He also reportedly responded to the suggestion that he develop a big-picture plan for



Andrew Rosenthal



Mark Humphrey/AP File Photo

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump answers questions from reporters at the National Federation of Republican Assemblies in Nashville, Tenn., in August. Lobbing rhetorical stink bombs at a large group of voters is not the normal way to get ahead in U.S. politics. Nor is alienating prominent figures of your own party. But Donald Trump has turned the do's and don'ts of campaigns on their head, prospering with tactics that could sink anyone else.

the nation with the retort, "Oh, the vision thing."

There were no huge ideas behind Mr. Bush's 1988 campaign, apart from his vow never to raise taxes, which he had to know he would never be able to keep. It was George H.W. Bush, after all, who famously called Ronald Reagan's low-tax supply-side policies "voodoo economics." Mr. Bush's re-election in 1992 was a carnival creep show of cultural warfare.

Another well-known Bush, George W., shamelessly waved the bloody shirt of 9/11 and preyed on fears of terrorism in general and intolerance of Muslims in particular to win his re-election in 2004. John McCain ran against Barack Obama as an angry old man in 2008. The Republicans spent most of their big-

idea time questioning Mr. Obama's citizenship and reminding Americans that he was black. If Mitt Romney had a big idea in 2012, other than that the less rich should quit whining about the more rich, I guess I missed it.

He is appealing to the dark, tormented soul of the far right.

Every time Mr. Trump opens his mouth, it is a shock to contemplate that he is still leading in the polls, even if those polls lack real meaning. He is — deliberately, I believe — appealing to the dark, tormented soul of the far right, where it is an article of faith that the advancement of women and minorities somehow harms white men, and where racial and religious intolerance are simply rampant.

It's cynical and dangerous and Mr. Bush is right when he says it betrays Mr. Trump's lack of seriousness. Is he right that it won't work?

The Iran charade on Capitol Hill

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — Congress is finally having its say on the Iran deal. It will be an elaborate charade, however, because, having first gone to the U.N., President Obama has largely drained congressional action of relevance.

At the Security Council, he pushed through a resolution ratifying the deal, thus officially committing the United States as a nation to its implementation — in advance of any congressional action.

The resolution abolishes the entire legal framework, built over a decade, underlying the international sanctions against Iran. A few months from now, they will be gone.

The script is already written: The International Atomic Energy Agency, relying on Iran's self-inspection (!) of its most sensitive nuclear facility, will declare Iran in compliance. The agreement then goes into effect and Iran's nuclear program is officially deemed peaceful.

Sanctions are lifted. The mullahs receive \$100 billion of frozen assets as a signing bonus. Iran begins reaping the economic bonanza, tripling its oil exports and welcoming a stampede of foreign companies back into the country.

It is all precooked. Last month, Britain's foreign secretary traveled to Tehran with an impressive delegation of British companies ready to deal. He was late, however. The Italian and French foreign ministers had already been there, accompanied by their own hungry businessmen and

oil companies. Iran is back in business.

As a matter of constitutional decency, the president should have submitted the deal to Congress first. And submitted it as a treaty. Which it obviously is. No international agreement in a generation matches this one in strategic significance and geopolitical gravity.

Obama did not submit it as a treaty because he knew he could never get the constitutionally required votes for ratification. He's not close to getting two-thirds of the Senate. He's not close to getting a simple majority. No wonder: in the latest Pew Research Center poll, the American people oppose the deal by a staggering 28-point margin.

To get around the Constitution, Obama negotiated a swindle that requires him to garner a mere one-third of one house of Congress. Indeed, on Thursday, with just 42 Senate supporters — remember, a treaty requires 67 — the Democrats filibustered and prevented, at least for now, the Senate from voting on the deal at all.

But Obama two months ago enshrined the deal as international law at the U.N. Why should we care about the congressional vote? In order to highlight the illegitimacy of Obama's constitutional runaround and thus make it easier for a future president to overturn the deal, especially if Iran is found to be cheating.

As of now, however, it is done. Iran will be both unleashed — sanctions lifted, economy booming, with no treaty provisions regarding its growing regional aggression and support for terrorists — and welcomed as a good international citizen possessing a peaceful nuclear program. An astonishing trick.



Charles Krauthammer

Iran's legitimization will not have to wait a decade, after which, as the Iranian foreign minister boasts, the U.N. file on the Iranian nuclear program will be closed, all restrictions will be dropped and, as Obama himself has admitted, the breakout time to an Iranian bomb will become essentially zero. On the contrary. The legitimization happens now. Early next year, Iran will be officially recognized as a peaceful nuclear nation.

This is a revolution in Iran's international standing, yet its consequences have been largely overlooked. The deal goes beyond merely leaving Iran's nuclear infrastructure intact. Because the deal legitimizes that nuclear program as peaceful (unless proven otherwise — don't hold your breath), it is entitled to international assistance. Hence the astonishing provision buried in Annex III, Section 10 committing Western experts to offering the Iranian program our nuclear expertise.

Specifically "training courses and workshops." On what? Among other things, on how to protect against "sabotage."

Imagine: We are now to protect Iran against, say, the very Stuxnet virus, developed by the NSA and Israel's Unit 8200, that for years disrupted and delayed an Iranian bomb.

Secretary of State John Kerry has darkly warned Israel to not even think about a military strike on the nuclear facilities of a regime whose leader said just Wednesday that Israel will be wiped out within 25 years. The Israelis are now being told additionally — Annex III, Section 10 — that if they attempt just a defensive, nonmilitary cyberattack (a Stuxnet II), the West will help Iran foil it.

Ask those 42 senators if they even know about this provision. And how they can sign on to such a deal without shame and revulsion.

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