

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## The shame of an Oregon education

The presidents of both Oregon and Oregon State aren't sure the residents of this state care about having excellent public universities.

"There's something wrong with a state willing to be 46th in funding, willing to be a backwater state," bemoaned University of Oregon President Michael Schill last week.

Can that really be so — this land of clear mountain streams — a backwater? Nationally, Oregon's reputation is of a green, progressive, well-run state. But dig a little deeper beneath clichés and you find a state that is locked in a struggle with Mississippi and Alabama at the bottom of many education rankings. It is no coincidence that those two other states are among the nation's poorest.

Schill, along with Oregon State University President Ed Ray and new Eastern Oregon University President Tom Insko, worry about the mechanisms that fund higher education in the state. They were pleased with the funding increase this biennium but worry about the decrease that they said is sure to come next time the economy dips.

That lack of long-term planning and long-term priority has them working at a disadvantage. And students suffer because of it.

Higher education seemingly did pretty well in the last legislative session, with its budget increased to nearly \$700 million for the biennium. So it is possible that the colleges can be seen as ungrateful — or just always wanting more dollars.

But Ray said the funding bump offered a glimpse into a "window of opportunity" and none of them want to see that window close.

"The everyday conversation hasn't changed," said Ray. "Everybody should be upset."

"And embarrassed," added Schill.

## Conservation fund in danger from inaction

The American people ought to be able to sue congressional members for political malpractice.

If we could, the fast-approaching end of the Land and Water Conservation Fund would result in a big payout of damages by the leadership of the House Natural Resources Committee.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) may be the most popular federal program you've never heard of. Relying on no taxes, it takes some of the proceeds from offshore oil and gas leases and reinvests those funds in outdoor recreation and conservation throughout America.

It is national self-improvement using assets that belong to all of us — a sort of savings account in the form of better state and local parks, as well as enhancements in national parks, wilderness areas, forests and wildlife refuges.

Started in 1964, it is key to the creation and maintenance of "thousands of local playgrounds, soccer fields and baseball diamonds," according to the Trust for Public Land. It was the creation of Washington's legendary Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson, at the request of President John Kennedy.

The fund will cease to exist unless action is taken by Sept. 30. Despite bipartisan backing for the fund's survival, House commit-

tee chairman Rob Bishop, R-Utah, won't allow an up-or-down vote. He and other conservative congressional Republicans are supposedly considering "reforms" of the LWCF. But these intentions remain unrealized, with lack of action having the result of LWCF dissolving.

The changes they have in mind include limiting the government's ability to use the LWCF to expand existing national parks. For most Americans, such a use of our money is perfectly acceptable, for example buffering iconic Civil War battlefields from commercial developments that would fundamentally degrade visitors' experience.

In our area, U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Ore. 1st Dist., and U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash. 3rd Dist., are both supportive of LWCF to varying degrees, as are all four Oregon and Washington state U.S. senators. They all should strongly urge Bishop and other House committee members to keep the LWCF alive. As a Republican, Herrera especially should make her voice heard by GOP colleagues.

This program clearly deserves continuing enthusiastic support by Congress. Generations of bipartisan support for this smart investment of national funds in local communities deserves to be honored and sustained.

Let's be clear that there is something wrong with our state universities. The graduation rate at two of our most popular schools is miserable. The number of Oregon students at both is in serious decline. At Oregon State alone, the number of in-state students has fallen from 85 percent to 73 percent, and Ray said he sees it falling further if the school continues to lose money to educate Oregonians when they can make money by importing students from out-of-state. Or even more money by importing from out-of-country.

And let's be even clearer: there's something wrong with K-12 education in Oregon, as well. We're down there with Mississippi in graduation rate, in classroom hours, in numerous other statistical categories.

We've been told that we need to rebuild our state education system from the ground up — starting with preschool through third grade. Of course, we only have one chance to get it right. But this state and this country have been bouncing through competing education priorities and testing systems and bureaucrats. The lack of coherent vision and follow-through makes it unlikely that students will stay on one track.

We should be embarrassed at the state of Oregon's education system. But funding isn't the only way to fix it. It's a help, for sure. But we need that total rebuild — a rebuild that must come from the ground up and — for the sake of this generation of college students — from the top down, too.

Legislators and policy makers can get into specifics later. The first step to recovery is to admit we have a problem.

# Walker's cocktail of ignorance

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

With the arrival of the pope, our spirits lift. With the departure of Scott Walker, they plummet.

There's so much we'll never know, such as how far he was willing to take his single issue. For Walker it was unions at dawn, unions at dusk, unions in his dreams. Having hobbled them in Wisconsin, he vowed to cripple them nationally, and who's to say it would have stopped there? I feel certain that he was mere weeks away from a big speech advocating the deployment of ground troops to stamp out collective bargaining among the Sherpas in Nepal.

I feel certain, too, that his best gaffes were still to come, though he gave us several gems. In an era lacking visionary leadership, he envisioned a great wall along our northern border to keep out the tides of Canadians fleeing the tyranny of free health insurance. And we learned that years back, he mangled an intended "mazel tov" in a letter to a Jewish constituent, instead writing: "Thank you again and Molotov."

I miss him already. And I wonder: Was it his shallowness that undid him? Just how little learning will Republican voters abide in a candidate? Did he test the limit?

One of his former aides, Liz Mair, suggested as much, firing off tweets on Monday about his errors, including "not educating himself fast enough" on national and world affairs.

Walker evaded foreign policy questions, apparently petrified of being tripped up. He bungled domestic policy questions, seemingly unable to cling to a sturdy position.

But whether that doomed him is impossible to say in a Republican primary season with mixed messages about the party's appetite for ignorance, at once prodigious and inconsistent.

Donald Trump has prospered, and he's utterly unapologetic about all the matters that he hasn't taken the trouble to bone up on and all the experts whom he hasn't bothered to consult.

## The (fake) meat revolution

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF

New York Times News Service

If only meat weren't so delicious! Sure, meat may pave the way to a heart attack.

Yes, factory farms torture animals. Indeed, producing a single hamburger patty requires more water than two weeks of showers. But for those of us who are weak willed, there's nothing like a juicy burger.

Ah, but that's changing.

A revolution is unfolding in the food world, resulting in the first alternatives to meat that taste like the real thing. Veggie burgers used to seem like a blend of tofu and cardboard, but in the last few years food scientists have come up with first-rate faux chicken strips and beef crumbles.

It will be awhile before we're fooled by a fake sirloin steak, but scientists think they'll eventually get there. And before long you'll walk down the meat aisle of your supermarket and see plant-based "meat," even leaking "blood."

These meat alternatives could end up being cheaper than real meat. Buyers won't just be vegans but also carnivores simply looking for healthy, sustainable, cheap food.

So look out. If the alternatives to meat are tasty, healthier, cheaper, better for the environment and pose fewer ethical challenges, the result may be a revolution in the human diet.

"The next couple of years will be exciting ones," says Joseph D. Puglisi, a Stanford University professor of structural biology who is working on meat alternatives. "We can use a broad range of plant protein sources and create a palette of textures and tastes — for example, jerky, cured meats, sausage, pork."

"The true challenge will be to rec-

### Where to write

• **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D):** 2338 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C., 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. Fax 202-225-9497. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005.



Isaac Brekken/AP Photo/File

Republican presidential candidate Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker speaks in Las Vegas Sept. 14.

### So do Republicans want finesse or fire?

When NBC's Chuck Todd asked him where he gets his military advice, he said: "I watch the shows." He presumably meant *Meet the Press* and *Face the Nation*, though I don't think we can rule out *Survivor* or *Game of Thrones*.

Time and again, Trump pledges to amass the proper information just before he needs it — no point in doing so now, before he finds out if he's hired — and he predicts that he'll shame everyone then with his abracadabra erudition. He's a procrastinating college freshman planning an all-nighter before the final exam.

But here comes Carly Fiorina, and her brand is aced-it-already and know-it-all. I've seen this firsthand.

For a magazine story in 2010, I followed her around and interviewed her over several days. Someone would mention a flower; she'd rattle off a factoid about it. I'd ask her about a foreign language that she'd studied; she'd make clear that she'd dabbled in two others as well. Her husband would tell a story; she'd rush to correct him and fill in the details.

Her fresh bounce in the polls reflects a debate performance last week that was all about policy fluency, and Marco Rubio, who flaunted similar chops that night, also seemed to benefit from his show of smarts.

So do Republicans want finesse or

fire? A cool intellect or a hothead?

Walker was no doubt as confused about this as he is about so much else, and no wonder. Well beyond the Republican primary and the Republican Party, we've exhibited a curious habit in this country of forgiving intellectual blind spots and refashioning a contempt for schooling as an embrace of common sense.

A whole subgenre of nonfiction is devoted to this. Don't sweat the brain work, because there's *Emotional Intelligence*. Don't think, *Blink*. Obtuseness in a leader can be redeemed by *The Wisdom of Crowds*.

I'm being somewhat loose in my description of those books. And I'm not rejecting the importance of instinct.

But I'm weary and wary of politicians whose ambitions precede and eclipse any serious, necessary preparation for the office they seek. Walker is a perfect example.

I kept hearing and reading — after he'd obviously decided to run for president — that he was being briefed by an emergency crew of wonks. Shouldn't that have happened first? Shouldn't he have been paying attention all along, out of a genuine interest in this sort of material rather than a pragmatic one?

He wasn't, and so this candidate — who had begun gaming out his political future all the way back in college, where he gave his classes short shrift — took an international trip during which he refused to discuss international relations, oddly claiming that it wouldn't be polite.

Etiquette prevailed.

He didn't.

Molotov, Gov. Walker.



Nicholas Kristof

reate more complex pieces of meat that are the pinnacle of the meat industry," he added. "I believe that plausible, good-tasting steaks and pork loins are only a matter of time."

Puglisi is advising Beyond Meat, a startup that is a leader in the field, with investments from Bill Gates and both Biz Stone and Ev Williams of Twitter fame, not to mention Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, the venture capital firm that backed Google and Amazon. Beyond Meat says its sales are doubling each year.

"We're really focused on the mainstream," said Ethan Brown, the founder of Beyond Meat, over a lunch of fake chili, meatballs and hamburgers. It was a banquet of the bogus.

Brown, 44, is deeply concerned by climate change and spent eight years in a company making hydrogen fuel cells. But he read that livestock cause more greenhouse gases than the entire transportation industry, and he wondered if he shouldn't focus more on food.

He came across two University of Missouri scientists who had figured out how to realign plant fibers into something more like meat, and began working with them. Brown founded Beyond Meat in 2009, and Whole Foods helped the company develop imitation chicken strips that were its first product.

At the beginning of 2013, its products were in 360 stores; now they are found in 7,500, and will soon be in Wal-Marts as well. Beyond Meat is aiming to get its products on pizzas and in fast-food restaurants and is targeting the average consumer.

"We want to create the next great American meat company," Brown

says. "That's the dream."

One advantage is health. Beyond Meat's best-selling product, the Beast Burger, is loaded with protein, vitamins, antioxidants and Omega-3s. The disadvantage, alas, is that it still tastes a bit too virtuous.

Mock chicken and beef crumbles are triumphs when mixed in other foods (Whole Foods once inadvertently swapped real curried chicken salad with fake curried chicken salad, and no one noticed for two days). But if I were a cow, I might be a bit embarrassed by Beyond Meat's meatballs and Beast Burger.

Moreover, prices are still a bit higher than real meat.

But both taste and price are likely to improve in the next few years, and other companies are also making great progress. One of Beyond Meat's rivals is Impossible Foods, founded by a Stanford University biochemist, Patrick O. Brown, and there is an explosion of research in this field today.

The mainstream food industry isn't saying much publicly. But recently released documents from the American Egg Board, a quasi-governmental body, show it regarded Hampton Creek's egg-free "Just Mayo" spread as a "major threat." In one internal email, an Egg Board executive jokingly suggests hiring a hit man to deal with Hampton Creek.

My take is that the optimal approach to food, for health and ethical reasons, may be vegetarianism. But the average American still consumes close to half a pound of meat a day, so a large-scale impact requires providing options for the ambivalent or weak willed among us who can't quite make the leap.

And if I can still enjoy a juicy burger now and then, while boosting my health, helping the environment and avoiding the brutalizing of farm animals, hey, I'm in!

3753. Web: www.merkley.senate.gov

• **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D):** 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Web: www.wyden.senate.gov

Phone: 503-469-6010. Fax 503-326-5066. Web: bonamici.house.gov/

• **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D):** 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-