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Raise trial court judges' salaries

Of the many differences between Oregon and our neighbor Washington, the gap in judicial salaries is the most puzzling and galling. The three judges in the Clatsop County Courthouse have salaries of about \$124,000 per year. Cross the river and Pacific County judges earn about \$156,000.

That is only a hint of how behind we are. Oregon ranks 45th in the nation for its compensation of trial court judges.

The Oregon Circuit Court Judges Association is asking the Oregon Legislature to increase trial court judge salaries to the range of \$150,000 and \$155,000. That would bring Oregon to the median of state trial judge compensation.

When Dawn McIntosh recently filed for the open Clatsop County judicial position, she effectively made a decision to cut her pay significantly. But across Oregon, many qualified lawyers choose not to compete for a judgeship, because of low compensation.

The consequence is that the judge is often the lowest-paid lawyer in a courtroom. "If you want people who value their work, follow the dollars," says Judge Jodie Mooney of Lane County. "You see other public

sector attorneys who make more than the judge. It has an impact on the dynamic in the courtroom — the lines of authority and the levels of respect."

We invest judges with enormous authority and expectations. Our democracy depends on an independent, competent judiciary. An element of that competence is the life experience that a judge brings to the bench. The danger of low compensation is the inability to recruit judge candidates from a broad legal spectrum.

Says Judge Mooney: "We're trained not to be political. I hate asking for money. But we've reached a point that for the third branch of government to work well we have to get the salary up to the median level."

Mooney and her colleague, Judge Paula Brownhill of Astoria, are right. It is essential to bring Oregon trial court judges' compensation to the median of all states.

Oregon lights a fire under coal power

Most Oregonians get it: The age of coal is over. Nations, states and companies that don't immediately begin a serious transition to non-coal electricity will face a steep upward curve in costs, which will be passed along to consumers and future generations.

Though details will doubtless be refined during the legislative process, utilities, conservationists and consumer groups make a good case for Oregon House Bill 4036. Weaning Pacific Power and Portland General Electric off coal in 14 years, this bill is designed to satisfy state voters would otherwise be tempted to pass a ballot initiative this year that might be more clumsy in achieving the same goal and cost \$600 million more.

As the cost of wind, solar and other clean energy comes down, regulations aim to keep fossil fuel-related greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and ocean. By starting to lock in predictable costs for alternative energy, the big private utilities and society as a whole give themselves a path that avoids future price shocks.

Oregon already is planning on the end of its one coal-fired power plant by 2020, PGE's facility in Boardman. HB 4036

would mean Oregon would cease buying coal-generated electricity produced out of state in places like Wyoming. With vast reserves of coal and other fossil fuels, the interior Western states will doubtless search for other customers for dirty power. But in the long run, it's likely other states and the federal government will join with Oregon in developing new ways to provide electricity.

HB 4036 will double Oregon's alternative energy usage by 2040. This ambitious push toward a sustainable future will provide an additional impetus for clean-power inventors and investors — improving the technology and bringing costs down. Pacific Power's analysis of the legislation finds it will increase costs by less than 1 percent a year through 2030. Oregon-related carbon emissions through 2040 will be 35 million tons less than they would be without this bill.

It's rare to build such a broad coalition of support as HB 4036 has achieved. It won't please climate-change deniers, whose mantra is still "Burn baby, burn." A strong majority of Oregonians prefer the sane approach exemplified by the legislation.

What Republicans should say

By DAVID BROOKS
New York Times News Service

For a few decades, American and British conservatism marched in tandem.

Thatcher was philosophically akin to Reagan. John Major was akin to George Bush.

But now the two conservatisms have split. The key divide is over what to do about the slow-motion devastation being felt by the less educated, the working class and the poor.



David Brooks

Ted Cruz and Donald Trump have appealed to working-class voters mostly by blaming outsiders. If we could kick out all the immigrants there wouldn't be lawbreakers driving down wages. If we could dismantle the Washington cartel the economy would rise.

In Britain David Cameron is going down another path. This month he gave a speech called "Life Chances." Not to give away the ending or anything, but I'd give a lung to have a Republican politician give a speech like that in this country.

First, he defined the role of government: basic security. In a world full of risks, government can help furnish a secure base from which people can work, dream and rise.

Cameron argued that both sides in the debate over poverty suffered real limitations because they still used 20th-century thinking. The left has traditionally wanted to use the state to redistribute money downward. The right has traditionally relied on the market to generate the growth that lifts all boats.

The welfare state and the market are important, but, he argues, "talk to a single mum on a poverty-stricken estate, someone who suffers from chronic depression, someone who perhaps drinks all day to numb the pain of the sexual abuse she suffered as a child. Tell her that because her benefits have risen by a couple of pounds a week, she and her children have been magically lifted out of poverty. Or on the other hand, if you told her about the great opportunities created by our market economy, I expect she'll ask you what planet you're actually on."

Cameron called for a more social approach. He believes government can play a role in rebuilding social capital and in healing some of the



Matt Dunham/AP Photo

British Prime Minister David Cameron listens as Ireland's Prime Minister Enda Kenny speaks at the start of their meeting at 10 Downing Street in London, Jan. 25.

Cameron defined the role of government: basic security.

traumas fueled by scarcity and family breakdown.

He laid out a broad agenda: Strengthen family bonds with shared parental leave and a tax code that rewards marriage. Widen opportunities for free marital counseling. Speed up the adoption process. Create a voucher program for parenting classes. Expand the Troubled Families program by 400,000 slots. This program spends 4,000 pounds (about \$5,700) per family over three years and uses family coaches to help heal the most disrupted households.

Cameron would also create "character modules" for schools, so that there are intentional programs that teach resilience, curiosity, honesty and service. He would expand the National Citizen Service so that by 2021 60 percent of the nation's 16-year-olds are performing national service, and meeting others from across society. He wants to create a program to recruit 25,000 mentors to work with young teenagers.

To address concentrated poverty, he would replace or revamp 100 public housing projects across the country. He would invest big sums in mental health programs and create a social impact fund to unlock millions for new drug and alcohol treatment.

It's an agenda that covers the entire life cycle, aiming to give people the strength and social resources to stand on their own. In the U.S. we could use exactly this

sort of agenda. There is an epidemic of isolation, addiction and trauma.

According to an AARP survey, one-third of adults over 45 report being chronically lonely. Drug overdose deaths of people ages 45 to 64 increased elevenfold between 1990 and 2010. More than half the American births to women under 30 are outside marriage. Poorer parents are too strained and stressed to spend as much quality time raising their kids. According to the sociologist Robert Putnam, college-educated parents spend 50 percent more *Good-night Moon* time with their kids than less-educated parents.

Meanwhile social support systems are fraying, especially for those without a college degree. Religious affiliation is plummeting. Since 1990 the number of people who declare no religious preference has tripled. Social trust is declining. Only 18 percent of high school seniors say that most people can be trusted.

There are two natural approaches to help those who are falling behind. The first we'll call the Bernie Sanders approach. Focus on economics. Provide people with money and jobs and their lifestyles will become more stable. Marriage rates will rise. Depression rates will drop.

The second should be the conservative approach. Focus on social norms, community bonds and a nurturing civic fabric. People need relationships and basic security before they can respond to economic incentives.

But Republicans have walked away from their traditional Burkean turf. The two leading Republican presidential candidates offer little more than nativism and demagoguery.

David Cameron has offered an agenda for a nation that is coming apart. There desperately needs to be an American version.

Plutocrats and prejudice and ugliness

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

Every time you think that our political discourse can't get any worse, it does.

The Republican primary fight has devolved into a race to the bottom, achieving something you might have thought impossible: making George W. Bush look like a beacon of tolerance and statesmanship.

But where is all the nastiness coming from?

Well, there's a debate about that — and it's a debate that is at the heart of the Democratic contest.

Like many people, I've described the competition between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders as an argument between competing theories of change, which it is. But underlying that argument is a deeper dispute about what's wrong with America, what brought us to the state we're in.

To oversimplify a bit — but only, I think, a bit — the Sanders view is that money is the root of all evil. Or more specifically, the corrupting influence of big money, of the 1 percent and the corporate elite, is the overarching source of the political ugliness we see all around us.

The Clinton view, on the other hand, seems to be that money is the root of some evil, maybe a lot of evil, but it isn't the whole story. Instead, racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice are powerful forces in their own right. This may not seem like a very big difference — both candidates oppose prejudice, both want to reduce economic inequality. But it matters for political strategy.

As you might guess, I'm on the many-evils side of this debate. Oligarchy is a very real issue, and I was writing about the damaging

rise of the 1 percent back when many of today's Sanders supporters were in elementary school. But it's important to understand how America's oligarchs got so powerful.

For they didn't get there just by buying influence (which is not to deny that there's a lot of influence-buying out there). Crucially, the rise of the American hard right was the rise of a coalition, an alliance between an elite seeking low taxes and deregulation and a base of voters motivated by fears of social change and, above all, by hostility toward you-know-who.

Yes, there was a concerted, successful effort by billionaires to push America to the right. That's not conspiracy theorizing; it's just history, documented at length in Jane Mayer's eye-opening new book *Dark Money*. But that effort wouldn't have gotten nearly as far as it has without the political aftermath of the Civil Rights Act, and the resulting flip of Southern white voters to the GOP.

Until recently you could argue that whatever the motivations of conservative voters, the oligarchs remained firmly in control. Racial dog whistles, demagoguery on abortion and so on would be rolled out during election years, then put back into storage while the Republican Party focused on its real business of enabling shadow banking and cutting top tax rates.

But in this age of Trump, not so much. The 1 percent has no problems with immigration that brings in cheap labor; it doesn't want a confrontation over Planned Parenthood; but the base isn't taking guidance the way it used to.

In any case, however, the question for progressives is what all of



Paul Krugman

this says about political strategy.

If the ugliness in American politics is all, or almost all, about the influence of big money, then working-class voters who support the right are victims of false consciousness. And it might — might — be possible for a candidate preaching economic populism to break through this false consciousness, thereby achieving a revolutionary restructuring of the political landscape, by making a sufficiently strong case that he's on their side. Some activists go further and call on Democrats to stop talking about social issues other than income inequality, although Sanders hasn't gone there.

On the other hand, if the divisions in American politics aren't just about money, if they reflect deep-seated prejudices that progressives simply can't appease, such visions of radical change are naive. And I believe that they are.

That doesn't say that movement toward progressive goals is impossible — America is becoming both more diverse and more tolerant over time. Look, for example, at how quickly opposition to gay marriage has gone from a reliable vote-getter for the right to a Republican liability.

But there's still a lot of real prejudice out there, and probably enough so that political revolution from the left is off the table. Instead, it's going to be a hard slog at best.

Is this an unacceptably downbeat vision? Not to my eyes. After all, one reason the right has gone so berserk is that the Obama years have in fact been marked by significant if incomplete progressive victories, on health policy, taxes, financial reform and the environment. And isn't there something noble, even inspiring, about fighting the good fight, year after year, and gradually making things better?

Where is all the nastiness coming from?