

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Raise smoking age from 18 to 21

Some in Washington state are trying to raise the legal smoking age from 18 to 21, a step that should be adopted by Oregon and throughout the nation.

It will be a challenge to get all the pieces in place during the remainder of Washington's short legislative session this winter. A bill to increase the tobacco possession age has passed a House committee, but the *Everett Herald* reported this Tuesday that the overall legislation has run into opposition based on concerns about tax revenue and fairness. The age increase is supported by 65 percent of Washington residents, according to polling, and has a strong advocate in state Attorney General Bob Ferguson.

Desire for the change is driven by modern awareness that teenage tobacco addictions are difficult to kick and lead to lifetimes of adverse health consequences.

By the time they reach age 21, evidence suggests young people are less likely to take up smoking. At the same time, 18- to 20-year-olds cur-

rently are major sources of illegal tobacco for younger teens.

Butting-up against the obvious benefits of raising the tobacco age is the crass estimate that Washington would miss out on \$10.4 million in taxes in its current cycle and \$21.9 million in the 2017-19 budget period.

A few legislators also cite the unfairness of restricting tobacco use for an age group that serves in the military. This is about like saying they shouldn't have to wear motorcycle helmets or fasten their seatbelts. Keeping young people off tobacco is one of the kindest steps legislators can take, irrespective of whether they are in the armed services.

So far, only Hawaii has enacted this smart and benevolent 21 tobacco age. Oregon, Washington and the rest of the nation should all get on board.

## Do Republicans want to govern?

The latest gambit of Republican lawmakers and presidential candidates raises the most basic question in the race for the White House and control of the U.S. Senate. Do Republicans want to govern?

The assertion that a sitting president must not nominate a candidate to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court is the latest iteration of a political ideology that goes nowhere. Republican presidential candidates and the GOP blogosphere encourage belief in the concept of total victory, instead of compromise. A Democratic African-American president only fuels that illusion of the demand for total victory.

Hillary Clinton was on target when she told a Harlem audience that, "Some (Republicans) are even saying he doesn't have the right to nominate anyone, as if somehow he's not the real president."

Clinton added that, "They demonize President Obama

and encourage the ugliest impulses of the paranoid fringe. This kind of hatred and bigotry has no place in our politics or our country."

The sad thing is that many Republicans would dispute Clinton's last assertion. Hatred and bigotry are at the heart of the Republican presidential campaign — in the words of Donald Trump. And thus far, audiences love it when Trump spreads a gospel that is right out of the pre-civil rights South.

Republicans' preference for 12 months of a vacated Supreme Court position is only one aspect of a reluctance to govern. One sees it in shutting down the federal government. It was also apparent in the economically scary notion of defaulting on the federal debt.

In the deepest sense, Republican lawmakers and presidential candidates are turning their back on the party's birthright. The Grand Old Party is becoming Hateful Old Party.

## The eternal sunshine of the spotless Trump

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Donald Trump has been recognized for his mastery of the media, his fascination with guilt and his bold advocacy for baffling hair.

But I think his greatest distinction is as a surrealist. Not since Salvador Dalí has someone so ambitiously jumbled reality and hallucination.

I'm thinking of his news conference in South Carolina on Monday and of one assertion in particular, although with Trump it's always hard to pick and choose.

In an appeal to African-American voters, he charged that Barack Obama had done nothing for them, and drew a contrast between himself and the president by saying: "I'm a unifier. Obama is not a unifier."

The second of those sentences is debatable. The first is just a joke. Trump sneeringly divides the world into winners and losers, savagely mocks those who challenge him, dabbles in sexism, marinates in racism, and on and on.

To call that unification is laughable under any circumstances. To make that claim to blacks is perverse. Not long ago, he insistently questioned the legitimacy of Obama's presidency by latching onto the popular right-wing conspiracy theory that Obama had been born in Kenya and couldn't produce a proper U.S. birth certificate.

Has he forgotten that? Or is he simply betting that Americans have?

Every campaign is a painstaking manipulation of memory, an attempt to get voters to focus on only certain parts of the past and disregard the rest.

Candidates say that they're eager to run on their records, but what they want from voters isn't total recall. It's selective amnesia.

Hillary Clinton would have us dwell on her fight for civil rights in the 1960s. She'd prefer that we edit out bits of the 1990s, when she

supported the crime bill and welfare reform.



Frank Bruni

Bernie Sanders would have us luxuriate in his vision of economic justice. He'd rather us not glance backward and note how little headway he's made to date.

But Trump is in a different category altogether. He doesn't so much recast his yesterdays as utterly reinvent them, confident that the brio of his proclamations will mask their bogusness.

Lately he's been trumpeting his prescience in having urged the Bush administration not to invade Iraq back in 2003, but there's no such urging on record.

The website PolitiFact went in search of it, combing through newspapers and television transcripts, and came up empty-handed.

"Trump makes it sound like he stood on a railroad to try to stop the Iraq war train in its tracks," PolitiFact reported. "In reality, by the time he got around to forcefully criticizing the war, that train had already left the station."

His greatest trick, though, isn't to toy with memory but to overwhelm it, rendering insults and provocations at such a hectic pace that the new ones eclipse and then expunge the old ones. It's as if the DVR of the electorate and the media can store only so many episodes before it starts erasing earlier indignities.

His flamboyant present overwrites his distressing past. It's the eternal sunshine of the spotless Trump.

His proposed ban on Muslims coming into the country exited the discussion much more quickly than it should have. So did his false claims that Muslims in Jersey City celebrated by the thousands on 9/11.

At the Republican debate Saturday night, when Jeb Bush brought up Trump's galling dismissal of John McCain's ordeal as a prisoner



Matt Rourke/AP Photo  
 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump smiles during a campaign stop, Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2016, in Bluffton, S.C.

of war, he was like a D.J. dusting off a golden oldie from the vault. We hadn't heard that song in a while.

We seldom read much anymore about Trump the birther (unless it's in relation to Ted Cruz and Canada). And while that's partly because his Republican rivals see no profit in an attack on him that could be taken as a defense of Obama, it's also because there's been so much other, fresher fodder since.

**His greatest trick isn't to toy with memory but to overwhelm it.**

The sheer volume of his offenses minimizes each affront, and as his shock tactics become predictable, they inevitably grow less menacing, too.

I hear it in the conversations around me; I see it in media coverage that increasingly treats him as a normal candidate. Familiarity breeds surrender, even rationalizations: He doesn't actually mean what he says. He doesn't ultimately believe in anything. It's all strategy, all spectacle. Sit back and enjoy the show.

"It's so fun to watch," Ezra Klein of *Vox* recently wrote, "it's easy to lose sight of how terrifying it really is."

I might quibble with "fun," but not with the notion that Trump has used a kind of sensory overload to numb us to the fictions he spins, the indecency he indulges.

We can't lose track. We must keep score. The sum of them is the essence of him, a picture worth a thousand slurs.

## What do we hold most dear now?

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

I find this election bizarre for many reasons but none more than this: If I were given a blank sheet of paper and told to write down America's three greatest sources of strength, they would be "a culture of entrepreneurship," "an ethic of pluralism" and the "quality of our governing institutions."

And yet I look at the campaign so far and I hear leading candidates trashing all of them.

Donald Trump is running against pluralism. Bernie Sanders shows zero interest in entrepreneurship and says the Wall Street banks that provide capital to risk-takers are involved in "fraud," and Ted Cruz speaks of our government in the same way as the anti-tax zealot Grover Norquist, who says we should shrink government "to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." (Am I a bad person if I hope that when Norquist slips in that bathtub and has to call 911, no one answers?)

I don't remember an election when the pillars of America's strength were so under attack — and winning applause, often from young people!

Trump's famous hat says "Make America great again." You can't do that if your message to Hispanics and Muslims is: Get out or stay away. We have an immigration problem. It's an outrage that we can't control our border, but both parties have been complicit — Democrats because they saw new voters coming across and Republicans because they saw cheap labor coming across. But we can fix the border without turning every Hispanic into a rapist or Muslim into a terrorist.

Trump seized on immigration as an emotional wedge to rally his base against "the other" and to blame

"the other" for lost jobs, even though more jobs, particularly low-skilled jobs, are lost to micro-chips, not Mexicans.

What we have in America is so amazing — a pluralistic society with pluralism. Syria and Iraq are pluralistic societies without pluralism. They can only be governed by an iron fist.

Just to remind again: We have twice elected a black man whose grandfather was a Muslim and who defeated a woman to run against a Mormon! Who does that? That is such a source of strength, such a magnet for the best talent in the world. Yet Trump, starting with his "birther" crusade, has sought to undermine that uniqueness rather than celebrate it.

Sanders seems to me like someone with a good soul, and he is right that Wall Street excesses helped tank the economy in 2008. But thanks to the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, that can't easily happen again.

I'd take Sanders more seriously if he would stop bleating about breaking up the big banks and instead breathed life into what really matters for jobs: nurturing more entrepreneurs and start-uppers. I never hear Sanders talk about where employees come from. They come from employers — risk-takers, people ready to take a second mortgage to start a business. If you want more employees, you need more employers, not just government stimulus.

I have just the plan for him: The 2015 "Milstein Commission on Entrepreneurship and Middle-Class Jobs" report produced by the University of Virginia, which notes: "The identity of America is intrinsically entrepreneurial (enshrined) by the founders, popularized by Horatio Alger, embodied by Henry Ford. ... With enough hard work anyone can use entrepreneurship to pave their own way to prosperity and strengthen their communities by creating jobs and growing



Thomas L. Friedman

their local economy."

In short, we're not socialists.

The report outlines many steps government can take — from deregulation to education to finance — to unlock more entrepreneurship in America, and not just in Silicon Valley, but anywhere, like Louisville, where "a vibrant startup

community has developed. ... Today, the city boasts five accelerators, a vibrant angel investor community and partnerships with large companies to support startup enterprises like the GE FirstBuild center, which brings together micro-manufacturing and the maker movement." We can do this! We are doing it. "Roughly half of private-sector employees work in small businesses, and 65 percent of new jobs created since 1995 have come from small enterprises."

Unlike Sanders, Ted Cruz does not have a good soul. He brims with hate, and his trashing of Washington, D.C., is despicable. I can't defend every government regulation. But I know this: As the world gets faster and more interdependent, the quality of your governing institutions will matter more than ever, and ours are still pretty good. I wonder how much the average Russian would pay to have our FBI or Justice Department for a day, or how much a Chinese city dweller would pay for a day of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission or Environmental Protection Agency? Cruz wraps himself in an American flag and spits on all the institutions that it represents.

America didn't become the richest country in the world by practicing socialism, or the strongest country by denigrating its governing institutions, or the most talent-filled country by stoking fear of immigrants. It got here via the motto "E Pluribus Unum" — Out of Many, One.

Our forefathers so cherished that motto they didn't put it on a hat. They put it on coins and then on the dollar bill. For a guy with so many of those, Trump should have noticed by now.

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