

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## Mayor Kujala flirts with self-dealing

The public's business should be done in public. And our elected leaders should be open and transparent about potential or actual conflicts of interest.

That is the best guidance for public bodies, such as city councils and school boards, and our elected officials.

Oregon statute recognizes an elected body's occasional need to have private conversations. It is called executive session. Statute lays out the topics that qualify for executive session. Those include real estate transactions, personnel matters and others. The media may attend such sessions, but not report what was said.

State law also instructs elected leaders to publicly disclose potential or actual conflicts of interest before participating in debates or taking action.

Mayor Mark Kujala skirted that instruction by participating in an executive session at a City Commission meeting last Tuesday night. The topic was the Eighth Street Dam, in which Kujala and his family have a conflict of interest. Kujala has acknowledged this conflict, and he has recused himself from debate and votes on the topic.

But during the June 14 executive session, whose topic was the Eighth Street Dam, Kujala contributed to the discussion.

The powerful Nygaard family and the Kujala family have aligned their interests against removal of the Eighth Street Dam.

The Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce and the Skipanon Water Control District favor the dam's removal. Reported Derrick DePledge: "The water district, which owns the dam, considers the aging structure a hazard and of no use for flood control. CREST has sought to use federal Bonneville Power Administration money to help the water district remove the dam and improve fish passage and water quality on the Skipanon River."

In his self-dealing, Mayor Kujala is ignoring the larger good. By doing that, Kujala defines himself not as the town's leader, but as yet another lobbyist for his and the Nygaards' private interests.

## Carbon choices are climate choices

While many economists and energy regulators remain convinced that the best approach to controlling greenhouse gases is to tax carbon emissions, it nevertheless is good to see that Oregon is continuing to closely examine an alternative approach: an economy-wide carbon cap-and-trade system in partnership with other governments around North America.

Under cap-and-trade, agencies assign individual carbon emitters a "cap" based on emissions history and future targets. Emitters can then use, buy and sell their rights to produce carbon dioxide pollution. By providing a monetary incentive to emit less — either to preserve emission rights to use or sell for a profit or to avoid having to buy those rights from someone else — advocates believe CO2 will cease to be so easily discharged into the atmosphere, where it becomes everyone's problem.

Detractors of cap-and-trade believe it is needlessly complicated, essentially creating a new profit center for corporations that will require an unwieldy private/public bureaucracy to maintain. In contrast, a direct

tax could be crafted to specifically discourage emissions, with the revenues going to offset impacts on needy residents, to conduct research and for other purposes.

These are, however, early days in what will surely be a long process of figuring out how best to wean industrial society off its addiction to fossil fuels, a dependency that permits carbon dioxide to warp our climate. Just this year, CO2 levels are stuck above 400 parts per million in the atmosphere, after starting out at 280 ppm before the industrial era. Levels will continue going up, possibly for decades. We probably will need to explore an array of regulatory and technological solutions before we arrive at a satisfactory set of answers.

Climatewire, a publication of Environment & Energy Publishing ([www.eenews.net](http://www.eenews.net)), recently reported a helpful summary of Oregon's cap-and-trade steps. Read it at [www.tinyurl.com/OR-cap-and-trade](http://www.tinyurl.com/OR-cap-and-trade).

Decisions on these matters will have a pervasive impact on citizens and society. It is worthwhile for all of us to try to understand our options and participate in deciding what to do.

## Trump is running as Trump. Surprise!

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — When in his 1964 GOP acceptance speech Barry Goldwater declared that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," a reporter sitting near journalist/historian Theodore White famously exclaimed: "My God, he's going to run as Barry Goldwater!"

Six weeks into Donald Trump's general election campaign, Republicans are discovering that he indeed intends to run as Donald Trump.

He has boasted that he could turn "presidential" — respectful, respectable, reticent, reserved bordering on boring — at will. Apparently, he can't.

GOP leaders who fell in line behind Trump after he clinched the nomination expected, or at least hoped, that he would prove malleable, willing to adjust his more extreme positions and tactics to suit a broader electorate.

Two problems. First, impulse control: Trump says what he actually feels, whatever comes into his head at any moment. Second, a certain logic: Trump won the primaries Sinatra-style, his way — against the odds, the experts and the conventional rules. So why change now? "You win the pennant," Trump explained, "and now you're in the World Series — you gonna change?"

Hence his response to the Orlando terror attack. Events like these generally benefit the challenger politically because any misfortune that befalls the nation gets attributed, fairly or not, directly or indirectly, to the incumbent party (e.g., the 2008 financial collapse). And Hillary Clinton is running as the quasi-incumbent.

The textbook response for the challenger, therefore, is to offer sympathy, give a general statement or two about the failure of the incumbent's national security policy, then step back to let the resulting national fear and loathing, amplified by the media, take effect.

Instead, Trump made himself the (political) story. First, he offered himself unseemly congratulations for his prescience about terrorism. (He'd predicted more would be coming. What a visionary.) Then he went beyond blaming the president for lack of will or wisdom in fighting terrorism, and darkly implied



AP Photo/Eric Gay

A demonstrator holds a sign during a rally to protest Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as he attends a private fundraising event Friday in San Antonio.

presidential sympathy for the enemy. "There's something going on," he charged. He then reiterated his ban on Muslim immigration.

Why? Because that's what Trump does. And because it worked before. It was after last December's San Bernardino massacre that Trump first called for a Muslim ban. It earned him lots of opprobrium from GOP leaders and lots of support from GOP voters. He shot up in the polls, never to descend until he clinched. So why not do it again?

Because the general election is a different game. Trump assumes that the Republican electorate is representative of the national electorate. It's not. Take the Muslim ban. Sixty-eight percent of GOP voters support it. Only 38 percent of Democrats do. And there are approximately 7 million more Democrats in the country. (Independents are split 51-40 in favor.)

The other major example of doing what's always worked is the ad hominem attack on big-dog opponents. It worked in the primaries. Trump went after one leading challenger after another, knocking them out sequentially.

Hillary Clinton is a lousy campaigner but her machine is infinitely larger and more skilled than any of Trump's 16 GOP competitors. More riskily, Trump is now going toe-to-toe with a sitting president.

Barack Obama is no Jeb Bush. He's not low energy. He's a skilled campaigner who clearly despises Trump and relishes the fight. And



Charles Krauthammer

**Trump made himself the (political) story.**

he carries the inestimable advantage of the gravitas automatically conferred by 7 1/2 years of incumbency. Moreover, he now enjoys an unusually high approval rating of around 53 percent. Trump's latest favorability is 29 percent (*Washington Post-ABC News*).

It's no accident that Trump's poll numbers are sliding. A month ago, when crowned as presumptive nominee, he jumped into a virtual tie with Clinton. The polls now have him losing by an average of six points, with some showing a nine- and 12-point deficit (Reuters/Ipsos and Bloomberg).

This may turn out to be temporary, but it is a clear reflection of Trump's disastrous general election kickoff. His two-week expedition into racism in attacking the Indiana-born "Mexican" judge. His dabbling in conspiracy, from Ted Cruz's father's supposed involvement in the Kennedy assassination to Vince Foster's ("very fishy") suicide. All of which suggests, and cements, the image of a man who shoots from the hip and is prone to both wild theories and extreme policies.

Reagan biographer Lou Cannon thinks that the Goldwater anecdote is apocryphal. How could anyone (even a journalist) have thought that Goldwater, who later admitted he always knew he would lose, was going to run as anything but his vintage, hard-core self?

Same for Trump. Give him points for authenticity. Take away for electability.

## World's fear, loathing and Brexit

By PAUL KRUGMAN

New York Times News Service

There are still 4 1/2 months to go before the presidential election. But there's a vote next week that could matter as much for the world's future as what happens here: Britain's referendum on whether to stay in the European Union.

Unfortunately, this vote is a choice between bad and worse — and the question is which is which.

Not to be coy: I would vote Remain. I'd do it in full awareness that the EU is deeply dysfunctional and shows few signs of reforming. But British exit — Brexit — would probably make things worse, not just for Britain, but for Europe as a whole.

The straight economics is clear: Brexit would make Britain poorer. It wouldn't necessarily lead to a trade war, but it would definitely hurt British trade with the rest of Europe, reducing productivity and incomes. My rough calculations, which are in line with other estimates, suggest that Britain would end up about 2 percent poorer than it would otherwise be, essentially forever. That's a big hit.

There's also a harder to quantify risk that Brexit would undermine the City of London — Britain's counterpart of Wall Street — which is a big source of exports and income. So the costs could be substantially bigger.

What about warnings that a Leave vote would provoke a financial crisis? That's a fear too far. Britain isn't Greece: It has its own currency and borrows in that currency, so it's not at risk of a run that creates monetary chaos. In recent weeks the odds of a Leave vote have clearly risen, but British interest rates have gone down, not up, tracking the global decline in yields.

Still, as an economic matter Brexit looks like a bad idea.

True, some Brexit advocates claim

that leaving the EU would free Britain to do wonderful things — to deregulate and unleash the magic of markets, leading to explosive growth. Sorry, but that's just voodoo wrapped in a Union Jack; it's the same free-market fantasy that has always and everywhere proved delusional.

No, the economic case is as solid as such cases ever get. Why, then, my downbeat tone about Remain?

Part of the answer is that the impacts of Brexit would be uneven: London and southeast England would be hit hard, but Brexit would probably mean a weaker pound, which might actually help some of the old manufacturing regions of the north.

More important, however, is the sad reality of the EU that Britain might leave.

The so-called European project began more than 60 years ago, and for many years it was a tremendous force for good. It didn't only promote trade and help economic growth; it was also a bulwark of peace and democracy in a continent with a terrible history.

But today's EU is the land of the euro, a major mistake compounded by Germany's insistence on turning the crisis the single currency wrought into a morality play of sins (by other people, of course) that must be paid for with crippling budget cuts. Britain had the good sense to keep its pound, but it's not insulated from other problems of European overreach, notably the establishment of free migration without a shared government.

You can argue that the problems caused by, say, Romanians using the National Health Service are exaggerated, and that the benefits of immigra-



Paul Krugman

**This vote is a choice between bad and worse — and the question is which is which.**

tion greatly outweigh these costs. But that's a hard argument to make to a public frustrated by cuts in public services — especially when the credibility of pro-EU experts is so low.

For that is the most frustrating thing about the EU: Nobody ever seems to acknowledge or learn from mistakes. If there's any soul-searching in Brussels or Berlin about Europe's terrible economic performance since 2008, it's very hard to find. And I feel some sympathy with Britons who just don't want to be tied to a system that offers so little accountability, even if leaving is economically costly.

The question, however, is whether a British vote to leave would make anything better.

It could serve as a salutary shock that finally jolts European elites out of their complacency and leads to reform. But I fear that it would actually make things worse. The EU's failures have produced a frightening rise in reactionary, racist nationalism — but Brexit would, all too probably, empower those forces even more, both in Britain and all across the Continent.

Obviously I could be wrong about these political consequences. But it's also possible that my despair over European reform is exaggerated. And here's the thing: As Oxford's Simon Wren-Lewis points out, Britain will still have the option to leave the EU someday if it votes Remain now, but Leave will be effectively irreversible. You have to be really, really sure that Europe is unfixable to support Brexit.

So I'd vote Remain. There would be no joy in that vote. But a choice must be made, and that's where I'd come down.