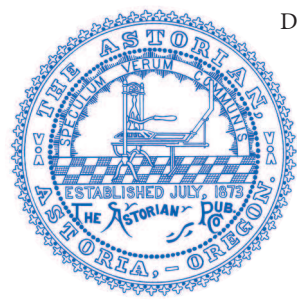


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OUR VIEW

Foster care is an urgent issue for Legislature

Across Oregon, foster care for children is considered in crisis and has urgent needs.

Troubling state and federal studies of Oregon's system, as recently reported by The Oregonian and others, show the basic cause of the crisis is capacity for children in need of foster care. Statewide, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting, 11,000 children spend at least one day a year in foster care. Some deeply disturbing reports show that across Oregon, on average, six children who need foster care per week end up spending the night at a human services office or a hotel.

In Clatsop County, the lack of capacity is also an issue. As The Daily Astorian reported last week, there is a current shortage of certified care providers for children authorities have removed from unsafe and dysfunctional households, and the local Child Welfare District office, which is part of the state Department of Human Services, has launched a campaign to recruit more foster parents.

Currently in the county there are 37 foster homes for children, and in 19 of those the foster parent is a relative and is only certified to care for that one child. Local child welfare officials hope to recruit at least 10 more foster providers to help ease the capacity crunch, and they know it will be a difficult task with challenges to overcome. They also know it can provide worthy and fulfilling results for those they recruit.

The process

Foster care is a complicated process where, as the state and federal reports show, the goals don't always equal the realities. One goal all child welfare officers have is to keep as much normalcy as they can for the foster children by keeping them in their same school districts. They also work hard to prevent siblings from being separated.

But because of the lack of capacity, it isn't always possible in either case because often times there isn't capacity in the area where the children are from, or the capacity for the siblings to be together in the same home. The problem is even more amplified when it comes to care for children with significant trauma and other intensive needs.

Recruiting foster care providers isn't easy because it requires that the care providers be certified, must pass a background check and home inspection, and must take a class through the Department of Human Services that covers a variety of foster care topics including how to take care for abused children. The certification is a vital and takes time.

Shortcuts, obviously, aren't acceptable when a child's welfare is at stake. Unfortunately, though, one of the most upsetting shortcomings of the system that the reports revealed is the state has sometimes compromised those standards, which led to disastrous results for some of the children the state sought to protect and had the duty to do so.

The Legislature's role

A year ago, Gov. Kate Brown commissioned an independent review of the state's child welfare system, and its preliminary findings released in August mirrored that of federal findings that documented the same long-standing problems that date back a decade.

Clearly the system is broken and needs to be fixed. If it isn't, it may also put federal children's welfare funding for Oregon at risk.

According to state Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, a longtime advocate for child welfare reforms, the Department of Human Service's current budget only allows it to employ 83 percent of the caseworkers the agency says it needs. That is a shameful shortcoming and certainly isn't in the best interest of the children. It creates unacceptable caseloads that lead to burnout and even further aggravates staffing problems.

Correcting the funding will be a necessary start, but money isn't the only problem. The Legislature must also address the capacity issue and the agency's processes for reporting, investigating and tracking abuse claims. Additionally, it must require accountability of those in leadership positions to ensure the corrections are made.

Across the state, residents should let their legislators know that whether to fix the system or not isn't an option, it's a requirement. It demands the Legislature's attention in its next session.

Clearly the system is broken and needs to be fixed.



For the first time, homeless in America

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

I began election night writing a column that started with words from an immigrant, my friend Lesley Goldwasser, who came to America from Zimbabwe in the 1980s. Surveying our political scene a few years ago, Lesley remarked to me: "You Americans kick around your country like it's a football. But it's not a football. It's a Fabergé egg. You can break it."

With Donald Trump now elected president, I have more fear than I've ever had in my 63 years that we could do just that — break our country, that we could become so irreparably divided that our national government will not function.

From the moment Trump emerged as a candidate, I've taken seriously the possibility that he could win; this column never predicted otherwise, although it certainly wished for it. That doesn't mean the reality of it is not shockingly to me.

As much as I knew that it was a possibility, the stark fact that a majority of Americans wanted radical, disruptive change so badly and simply did not care who the change agent was, what sort of role model he could be for our children, whether he really had any ability to execute on his plan — or even really had a plan to execute on — is profoundly disturbing.

Silver lining?

Before I lay out all my fears, is there any silver lining to be found in this vote? I've been searching for hours, and the only one I can find is this: I don't think Trump was truly committed to a single word or policy he offered during the campaign, except one phrase: "I want to win."

But Donald Trump cannot be a winner unless he undergoes a radical change in personality and politics and becomes everything he

was not in this campaign. He has to become a healer instead of a divider; a compulsive truth-teller rather than a compulsive liar; someone ready to study problems and make decisions based on evidence, not someone who just shoots from the hip; someone who tells people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear; and someone who appreciates that an interdependent world can thrive only on win-win relationships, not zero-sum ones.

I can only hope that he does. Because if he doesn't, all of you who voted for him — overlooking all of his obvious flaws — because you wanted radical, disruptive change, well, you're going to get it.

I assume that Trump will not want to go down as the worst president in history, let alone the one who presided over the deepest fracturing of our country since the Civil War. It would shake the whole world. Therefore, I can only hope that he will, as president, seek to surround himself with the best people he can, which surely doesn't include the likes of Rudy Giuliani or Newt Gingrich, let alone the altright extremists who energized his campaign.

Zero-sum game

But there is also a deeply worrying side to Trump's obsession with "winning." For him, life is always a zero-sum game: I win, you lose. But when you're running the United States of America, everything can't be a zero-sum game.

"The world only stays stable when countries are embedded in win-win relationships, in healthy interdependencies," observed Dov Seidman, the CEO of LRN, which advises companies on leadership, and the author of the book "How."

For instance, America undertook the Marshall Plan after World War II — giving millions of dollars to Europe — to build it up into a trading partner and into a relationship that turned out to be of great mutual benefit. Does Trump understand that? Do those who voted for him understand how many of their jobs

depend on America being embedded in healthy interdependencies around the world?

Homelessness

How do I explain Trump's victory? Way too soon to say for sure, but my gut tells me that it has much less to do with trade or income gaps and much more to do with culture and many Americans' feeling of "homelessness."

There is nothing that can make people more angry or disoriented than feeling they have lost their home. For some it is because America is becoming a minority-majority country and this has threatened the sense of community of many middle-class whites, particularly those living outside the more cosmopolitan urban areas.

For others it is the dizzying whirlwind of technological change we're now caught up in. It has either wiped out their job or transformed their workplace in ways they find disorienting — or has put stressful demands on them for lifelong learning. When the two most important things in your life are upended — the workplace and community that anchor you and give you identity — it's not surprising that people are disoriented and reach for the simplistic solutions touted by a would-be strongman.

What I do know for certain is this: The Republican Party and Donald Trump will have control of all the levers of government, from the courts to the Congress to the White House. That is an awesome responsibility, and it is all going to be on them. Do they understand that?

Personally, I will not wish them ill. Too much is at stake for my country and my children. Unlike the Republican Party for the last eight years, I am not going to try to make my president fail. If he fails, we all fail. So yes, I will hope that a better man emerges than we saw in this campaign.

But at the moment I am in anguish, frightened for my country and for our unity. And for the first time, I feel homeless in America.

What should be the next step?

By DAVID LEONHARDT
New York Times News Service

Many Americans felt sick Wednesday. The country they thought they knew doesn't seem to exist. Many of them are worried in a way they never have been before. I share a lot of those worries.

But what now? Here's my immediate answer: No task has become more important than persuading a much larger number of Republicans that the health of the planet matters for their children and grandchildren too.

Yes, of course, there are other vital issues, especially the constitutional and civil rights that Donald Trump has at times disdained. And, yes, Democrats need to begin plotting their comeback for 2018 and beyond. Yet we also need to recognize that the climate is like nothing else.

Most issues are part of the historical push-and-pull of politics.

One side makes gains; the other can reverse them later.

The state of the planet is different. We can't unmelt the Arctic or magically remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. We make decisions today that future generations must live with. Already, we're beginning to live with the consequences of climate change: Coastal flooding, heat waves and droughts have all become more frequent and damaging.

The potential future consequences — the likely future consequences — are awesomely frightening.

To take Trump and the Republican majorities in Congress at their word, they don't care. But here's the thing: Eventually, they or their successors will care. The damage from climate change will not spare Republicans. It won't spare anyone.

Nothing matters more than finding ways to accelerate the arrival of the day when more Republicans do care.

For legal scholars, it means looking for the arguments and precedents to persuade Justice Anthony

Kennedy that the government's recent steps to reduce pollution are indeed constitutional (as scholars have so successfully done on other issues). Once Trump fills the Supreme Court's open seat, presumably with a hard-core conservative, Kennedy becomes the swing vote on the climate.

For Democrats and climate activists, it means looking for other versions of Kennedy: Republicans, at the national and state level, who have a healthy fear for the planet's future or who can plausibly be won over.

And for the rest of us, it means trying to understand many Americans' skepticism about climate change. It is misplaced but honest. Most Americans are not skills for energy companies and their short-term profits. Yelling ever more loudly, or swamping them with ever more scientific detail, seems unlikely to do the trick.

Figuring out what can work — and what the rest of us can do about the planet in the meantime — is the most productive way to channel the heartsickness and anger that so many people feel.