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OUR VIEW

Others step in where governor abdicates role

Durant offers sensible ideas to address PERS deficit

Addressing Oregon's annual Leadership Summit a year ago, Gov. Kate Brown made no mention of the biggest financial crisis facing state government: PERS, the underfunded, bloated retirement system for public employees.

Nada. Zilch.

A year later and a month after being elected governor in her own right, Brown spoke again to 1,200 leaders from business, government and academia gathered in Portland. She mentioned PERS once. She used the rest of her seven-minute speech to lecture Oregon's business community about its responsibilities to the state.

Gov. Brown continues to proclaim that the courts have left her no constitutional options for reducing the pension program's \$22 billion deficit. That's nonsense, of course. State Sens. Betsy Johnson and Tim Knopp have put forth several ideas, most of which passed scrutiny from the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Counsel.

Now, another state leader, has weighed in.

Katy Durant served for 11 years on the Oregon Investment Council, a panel of citizens that sets investment policy for the state's \$69 billion public trust fund portfolio, which includes PERS, the Common School Fund and the State Accident Insurance Fund.

Durant retired from the board last week, but not before she offered a warning and a list of sensible solutions to the PERS crisis. According to the Oregonian newspaper, Durant wrote the governor, challenging her to show "bold leadership" on PERS. Without that, Durant wrote: "This house of cards will quickly collapse, leaving Oregon in a fiscal crisis."

"Failure to act quickly and decisively will result in a severe imbalance" between the pension fund's growing liability and the state's ability to meet it, Durant wrote. She then offered several proposals. Among them:

- Increase the full retirement age for public employees from 58 to 67 to match Social Security.
- Move elected officials out of PERS and into a 401(k) type system to eliminate the conflict of interest in voting for their own benefits.
- Reduce the assumed rate of return on fund investments to a more realistic level.
- Require public employees to contribute to their pension plan.
- Make annual debt payments of about \$1 billion.

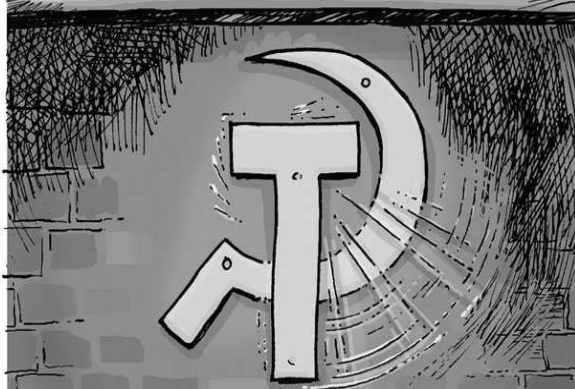
Durant's proposals — along with those by Johnson and Knopp — deserve thorough consideration by the governor and Legislature. These reforms would help ensure the long-term sustainability of PERS and allow our schools and local governments to better address current needs.

Doing nothing — Gov. Brown's default position — is unacceptable and would amount to an abdication of her responsibility as our state's chief executive.

THERE'S NO PROOF THAT WE TRIED TO SWING THE ELECTION TO FAVOR TRUMP!



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Fresh start or crazy reckless?

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

Maybe it will all turn out OK. If it does, put me down as promising to applaud.

But my fellow Americans, whatever mix of motives led us to create an Electoral College majority for Donald Trump to become president — and overlook his lack of preparation, his

record of indecent personal behavior, his madcap midnight tweeting, his casual lying about issues like "millions" of people casting illegal votes in this election, the purveying of fake news by his national security adviser, his readiness to appoint climate change deniers without even getting a single briefing from the world's greatest climate scientists in the government he'll soon lead, and his cavalier dismissal of the CIA's conclusions about Russian hacking of our election — have no doubt about one thing: We as a country have just done something incredibly reckless.

'Prehistoric'

There is actually something "pre-historic" about the Cabinet that Trump is putting together. It is totally dominated by people who have spent their adult lives drilling for, or advocating for, fossil fuels — oil, gas and coal.

You would never know that what has actually made America great is our ability to attract the world's smartest and most energetic immigrants and our ability "to develop technology and to nurture our human capital" — not just drill for coal and oil, remarked Edward Goldberg, who teaches at NYU's Center for Global Affairs and is the author of "The Joint Ventured Nation: Why America Needs a New Foreign Policy."

Don't misunderstand me: It is excusable to raise questions about climate change. But it is inexcusable not to sit down with our own government experts at NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for a briefing before you appoint flagrant climate deniers with no scientific background to

every senior environmental position.

It is excusable to question if Russia really hacked our election. But it is inexcusable to dismiss the possibility without first getting a briefing from the CIA, some of whose agents risked their lives for that intelligence.

Unbecoming

That is reckless behavior — totally unbecoming a president, a professional or just a serious adult.

It's not that all of Trump's goals are wrongheaded or crazy. If he can unlock barriers to innovation, infrastructure investment and entrepreneurship, that will be a very good thing. And I am not against working more closely with Russia on global issues or getting more tough-minded on trade with China.

Putin is out to erode democracy wherever he can. Trump needs to send Putin a blunt message today: 'I am not your chump.'

But growth that is heedless of environmental impacts, collaboration with Russia that is heedless of Vladimir Putin's malevolence, and greater aggressiveness toward China that is heedless of the carefully crafted security balance among the U.S., China and Taiwan — which has produced prosperity and stability in Asia for over four decades — is reckless.

For an administration that lost the popular vote by such a large margin to suddenly take the country to such extreme positions on energy, environment and foreign policy — unbalanced inside by any moderate voices — is asking for trouble, and it will produce a backlash.

Already, some Republican law-

makers who love our country more than they fear Trump's tweets — like Sens. Lindsey Graham and John McCain — are insisting that Russia's apparent cyberhacking to help Trump win election be investigated by Congress.

If Congress affirms what the intelligence community believes — that Russia intervened in our democratic process — that is an act of war. And it calls for the severest economic sanctions.

At the same time, Trump's readiness to dismiss the entire intelligence community because its conclusions contradict his instincts and interests could really haunt him down the road.

Let's imagine that in six months the CIA concludes that North Korea is about to perfect a nuclear missile that can reach our West Coast and President Trump orders a pre-emptive strike, one that unleashes a lot of instability in Asia. And then the next day Trump and his national security adviser, Mike Flynn, the purveyor of fake news about Hillary Clinton, defend themselves by saying, "We acted on the 'high confidence' assessment of the CIA." Who's going to believe them after they just trashed the CIA?

Naiveté

Finally, Trump has demonstrated a breathtaking naiveté toward Putin. Putin wanted Trump to win because he thinks that he'll be a chaos president, who will weaken America's influence in the world by weakening its commitment to liberal values and will weaken America's ability to lead a Western coalition to confront Putin's aggression in Europe. Putin is out to erode democracy wherever he can. Trump needs to send Putin a blunt message today: "I am not your chump."

As Stanford University democracy expert Larry Diamond noted in an essay on Atlantic.com last week: "The most urgent foreign-policy question now is how America will respond to the mounting threat that Putin's Russia poses to freedom and its most important anchor, the Western alliance. Nothing will more profoundly shape the kind of world we live in than how the Trump administration responds to that challenge."

Make colleges diverse and look more like America

By DAVID LEONHARDT
New York Times News Service

Many college campuses have reacted to Donald Trump's election with shock and angst. Professors and students are wondering how the rest of the country could be so different from them. The more introspective are asking: What can we do?

Michael Bloomberg has an answer.

It's an answer that should appeal to both liberals and conservatives — an answer that isn't about Trump per se but instead about the alienation that help him win. Bloomberg wants to make leading colleges more open to the working class. He wants to make them fairer places that look more like America.

Top colleges are already diverse in some ways, of course. They enroll students of every ethnicity, from around the world. Yet those otherwise diverse student bodies remain distressingly affluent. Worst of all, they remain affluent even though many

poor and middle-class students could thrive at top colleges.

Local collages

A landmark recent study found that most highly qualified low-income students don't attend one of the country's roughly 250 top colleges. Many instead enroll in local colleges with relatively few resources and high dropout rates.

Think about what an injustice this is. Thousands of students each year overcome long odds — tough neighborhoods, weak schools, chaotic families — and excel. Then society lets them down once again. They are robbed of the opportunities they have earned, to borrow a phrase from David Coleman of the College Board.

On Tuesday, Bloomberg's foundation is starting an ambitious response, the American Talent Initiative. As some readers may know, this issue is a passion of mine, and I consider the project very promising.

It has a clear goal: The number of Pell Grant recipients (who tend to come from the bottom two-fifths of the income distribution) attending the 270 colleges with the highest graduation rates should rise 50,000 within 10 years. That would be an increase of more than 10 percent.

To get there, Bloomberg is creating a coalition of colleges that publicly commit to become more diverse. The initial 30 members include public universities (Berkeley, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio State, Texas) and private (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Rice, Duke). Dan Porterfield, the president of Franklin and Marshall and a Bloomberg adviser, says that the coalition will welcome any college with at least a 70 percent graduation rate. I hope many more join.

Porterfield emphasizes the benefits that colleges will get from working together — like learning how to find students or find budget savings to pay for scholarships. No doubt, this collaboration will help. But I think the public commitment matters more.

The truth is that colleges have long had the ability to enroll more middle-class and poor students. They've chosen other priorities: sports teams; new buildings; ethnic and geographic diversity; admitting alumni children.

Now, to their credit, college leaders have acknowledged that their stu-

dent bodies are too affluent. Students, professors and the media should hold them to their commitment.

Expense

Often, recruiting lower-income teenagers starts by simply letting them know their options. Jeffrey Valdespino Leal initially assumed that colleges outside of his home state, Arizona, would be too expensive. But after receiving a flier in the mail, he attended a workshop where he learned how much financial aid Stanford offers.

Thanks to his PSAT score, he was also invited to receive college counseling through a Bloomberg-financed program. Over FaceTime and Skype, a student at Williams College advised Valdespino on his essays — the sort of advice affluent students take for granted.

Today, Valdespino, whose parents didn't graduate high school, is a Stanford freshman, finishing first-semester exams and living in the same dorm as the children of a Cabinet secretary, a tech company co-founder and other millionaires. "If there could be more lower-income students here, it would be great," he says, "because we've

shown we can do just as well as the other students."

Diversifying the country's Stanfords and Ohio States is obviously only one small step toward addressing alienation. But it matters. The top 270 colleges educate 2.1 million students and produce most of society's leaders.

When I sat down with Bloomberg, he made an economic argument for the project: "America needs to have as big a pool of talented, hard-working, well-educated people as it can possibly get." He also harkened back to the work he did as New York's mayor to make the police force more racially diverse: "The country needs to have people in government and business that understand all of the different constituencies."

It may sound surprising to compare a class-based diversity effort, which will benefit many white students, to a racial-diversity push. Yet it makes sense, because diversity, in its best, revolves around fairness.

Making top colleges more diverse is not about replacing students of one race with students of another. It's about enrolling more working-class students of all races. It's about getting colleges to live up to their ideals.