Do your job

I hear people argue the Electoral College is obsolete and should be done away with. I tend to agree, but the other side of the coin is that the Electoral College may never have been as important as it is at this moment. In fact, it may be the only thing left that can restore the United States' image, both at home and abroad.

The Electoral College's representatives have the authority to protect the people by voting to not allow someone to become president who:

• Did not win the majority of votes

• Does not represent the U.S. by acting presidential (Hint: no four-letter words on national television)

• Does not seem to understand the meaning of the term "conflict of interest"

Why would a president-elect choose someone who has been a major critic of the Environmental Protection Agency to head it? Is it possible big changes are in store? Please don't say you don't believe in climate change, because I believe most people will admit the rivers and forests around their houses are worth saving — not to forget all the clean drinking water being contaminated in our country by fracking.

And, do the majority of Americans really think the minimum wage is too high, or shouldn't be raised?

Nicknames are often earned. The father of our country, George Washington. Honest Abe, Abraham Lincoln. Considering the number of countries with nuclear weapons (U.S., Russia, China, Israel and Pakistan — and North Korea is very close), why would a president-elect want someone known as "mad dog" to be his top advisor on the use of such weapons?

The question is, do the Electoral College voters have the courage to stand up and do their job of protecting America? Let's hope so. It's never happened before, and it would be an unusual, unprecedented and courageous act, but when you think about it, isn't that how the country was founded in the first place?

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria

Hero no more

A sports hero of mine, Richard Sherman, lowered himself in my esteem, when he stated on his Facebook page that the statements Donald Trump has made about Muslims and other immigrants are terrible, and that he does not know how he is going to explain them to his kids as they grow up.

I do not understand why he feels that Donald Trump wanting to keep the country safe and law abiding by vetting those who immigrate here is such a sin. However, having children out of wedlock, as he has done, is totally acceptable, and not something that any Christian would have to explain to the offspring.

It is more likely that Sherman is simply one of those individuals who would like the Utopian dream of a world society with no countries, no borders and no specific government — just let all the people be free — and Donald Trump's views fly in the face of that.

It has always been proven, throughout history, that there are those who attempt to dictate what they think is best for the masses when there is a leadership void, and this will always cause conflict and power struggles. A world without borders is, in reality, only a wonderful dream.

The only thing that the U.S. can do to protect the people of our country is to unite for the common good of our citizens, and not attempt to sway the world with our opinions or systems of government. But more than that, we need to be careful about accepting immigrants to this country who will seek to fundamentally change our beliefs and laws to those that they prefer.

Perhaps Sherman, when waving his pen of judgment, should heed the words of the Bible where it says, "Let he who is without sin, cast the first stone," or perhaps John Lennon, "give peace a chance," before he berates the president-elect. That is what I think. I could be wrong.

DAVID GRAVES
Astoria

Repeat offender

The headline for the article reporting that the Environmental Protection Agency had penalized Nygaard Land LLC for unlawfully filling wetland ("Nygaard Land penalized for wetlands fill," *The Daily Astorian,* Dec. 6) might more properly have stated "Nygaard docked for filling wetlands again."

Nygaard Land is a repeat offender, as anyone who follows such shenanigans knows. Lacking a three strikes law, they quietly go about their business converting woodlands to dairy pasture to land suitable for development, and make news only when the wetland issues resurface. Wetland violations, fines and subsequent mitigation is simply a cost of doing business. It's dirty work, but someone must do it.

Perhaps the EPA ought to insist the company hire an in-house wetlands specialist to help cut the red tape and assist in identifying potential trouble spots, while making sure the essential paperwork and permits are in order. But then, perhaps the EPA tolerates such regulatory lapses, as the fines may be considered a funding source for the EPA.

In "Clapsot" County, land is more valuable than the trees taking up space upon it, and it seems shameful that such negative publicity cannot be avoided.

GARY DURHEIM
Cannon Beach

Watch for snags

The public should be aware of the dangerous hemlock snags along Williamsport Road and the surrounding timberland on city property. These snags are some of the worst a person can encounter, and can come down at any time. Beware when driving at night and hiking in the timber on Williamsport Road.

HAL HANKEL
Astoria

Not Hug Point

The lead story, "'A love letter to my home state'" (*The Daily Astorian,* Dec. 12), about a movie being filmed locally, featured a picture of two members of the cast supposedly filming at Hug Point.

Unfortunately, someone either in the movie company or the editorial staff can't tell the difference between Hug Point and Neahkahnie Mountain, as the people were sitting on the stone fence at the overlook on Neahkahnie Mountain, nowhere near Hug Point.

As a fifth generation Oregonian, it annoys me to see the topography of our state misrepresented.

PAT McDONALD
Gearhart

Boycott Walmart

Boycott Walmart. The Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce pushes "buy local." Even if Walmart hires 500 people, 400 will be part-time. How long before those 500 jobs are offset with business closures?

The 15,000 population of Astoria and Warrenton doesn't need another big box store. Drive to Longview, Washington, if you really need Walmart. I'd like to see Trader Joe's in the local market, but I've been told they need 100,000 population for the numbers to crunch.

Nobody can compete with the buying power of Walmart. Aren't Costco, Fred Meyer, and Safeway enough big guys?

I, for one, will never walk through the doors of Walmart. Please citizens, unite behind a cause. Let them spend the money to build it — if you don't come, it will fail. Maybe in a year, corporate will pull the plug.

I know for families of four plus, it's hard to not shop and realize the cost savings. I'm a single guy, and that cost savings is minimal. Families of three to four, you can make it work. You have neighbors employed by the target employers, don't disrupt their lives.

I hope Walmart can't find employees. Enough said.

DUGAN JENNINGS
Warrenton

Treasure the staff

On Dec. 6, I was at Columbia Memorial Hospital undergoing some invasive procedures to diagnose a problem. From the second I entered the East Lobby to the second I walked out a few hours later, I did not meet one single person who was not warm, friendly, compassionate, helpful, very competent and just plain nice to be around.

I should confess that I have been a nurse for nearly 35 years (retired now), so I know how things can be — how things can go wrong, how people can be when under stress. Here's the thing: I don't remember anyone's name, but I do so wish they could all get a big pay raise. Really. Seriously. They should be treasured.

CATHERINE MARTIN
Astoria

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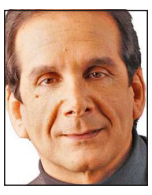
The Trump Cabinet: Bonfire of the agencies

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — Democrats spent the first two decades of the post-Cold War era rather



relaxed about Russian provocations and revanchism. President Obama famously mocked Mitt Romney in 2012 for suggesting that Russia was our principal geopolitical adversary. Yet today the Dems are in high dudgeon over the closeness of secretary of state nominee, Rex Tillerson, to Vladimir Putin.

Hypocrisy aside, it is true that, as head of Exxon Mobil, Tillerson made major deals with Russia, received Russia's Order of Friendship and opposed U.S. sanctions. That's troubling but not necessarily disqualifying. At the time, after all, Tillerson was acting as an agent of Exxon Mobil, whose interest it is to extract oil and make money.

These interests do not necessarily overlap with those of the United States. The relevant question is whether and how Tillerson distinguishes between the two and whether as agent of the United States he would adopt a tougher Russia policy than he did as agent of Exxon Mobil.

We don't know. We shall soon find out. That's what confirmation hearings are for.

Mission oriented

The left has been in equally high dudgeon that other Cabinet picks appear not to share the mission of the agency which they have been nominated to head. The horror! As if these agency missions are somehow divinely ordained. Why, they aren't even constitutionally ordained. The Department of Education, for example, was created by President Carter in 1979 as a payoff to the teachers' unions for their political support.

Now, teachers are wonderful. But teachers' unions are there to protect benefits and privileges, not necessarily to improve schooling. Which is why they zealously defend tenure, protect their public-school monopoly and reflexively oppose school choice.

Conservatives have the odd view that the purpose of schooling — and therefore of the Department of Education — is to provide students with the best possible education. Hence Trump's nominee, Betsy DeVos, a longtime and passionate proponent of school choice, under whom the department will no longer be an arm of the teachers' unions.

She is also less likely to allow the department's Office for Civil Rights to continue appropriating to itself the role of arbiter of social justice, micromanaging everything from campus sexual mores to the proper bathroom assignment for transgender students. If the mission of this department has been to dictate policy best left to the states and localities, it's about time the mission was changed.

EPA and climate change

The most incendiary nomination by far, however, is Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency. As attorney general of Oklahoma, he has joined or led a series of lawsuits to curtail EPA power. And has been upheld more than once by the courts.

Pruitt has been deemed unfit to serve because he fails liberalism's modern-day religious test: belief in anthropogenic climate change. They would love to turn his confirmation hearing into a Scopes monkey trial. Republicans should decline the invitation. It doesn't matter whether the man believes the moon is made of green cheese. The challenges to EPA actions are based not on meteorology or theology, but on the Constitution. The issue is that the EPA has egregiously exceeded its authority and acted as a rogue agency unilaterally creating rules unmoored from legislation.

Pruitt's is the most important nomination because it is a direct attack on the insidious growth of the administrative state. We have reached the point where EPA bureaucrats interpret the Waters of the United States rule — meant to protect American waterways — to mean that when a hard rain leaves behind a pond on your property, the feds may take over and tell you what you can and cannot do with it. (The final rule excluded puddles — magnanimity from the Leviathan.)

On a larger scale, Obama's Clean Power Plan essentially federalizes power generation and regulation, not coincidentally killing coal along the way. This is the administration's end run around Congress' rejection of Obama's proposed 2009-2010 cap-and-trade legislation. And that was a Democratic Congress, mind you.

Pruitt's nomination is a dramatic test of the proposition that agencies administer the law, they don't create it. That the legislative power resides exclusively with Congress and not with a metastasizing administrative bureaucracy.

For some, this reassertion of basic constitutionalism seems extreme. If so, the Obama administration has only itself to blame. Such are the wages of eight years of liberal overreach. Some legislation, like Obamacare, will be repealed. Some executive orders will be canceled. But most important will be the bonfire of the agencies. We may soon be secure not just in our puddles but our ponds.

PUBLIC HEARING/ OPEN HOUSE
Oregon Department of Transportation

Northwest Area Commission on Transportation (NWACT)
Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – Draft 2018 to 2021 STIP for Public Review

Thursday January 12, 2017

NWACT Meeting 1-3PM
Open House: 3-3:45PM

Scappoose Fire Station
52751Columbia River Hwy (Hwy 30)
Scappoose, OR

The open house will feature maps to view and handouts about selected projects. ODOT staff will be on hand to answer questions and take comments. There will be comment cards available to leave comments regarding specific projects.

Oregon Department of Transportation

To view or comment on this document, please visit: **https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/STIP/Pages/STIPDocs.aspx#2018-2021_STIP**.
You can also contact the Region 2 STIP and Financial Plan Manager John Maher at Ph. **503-986-2614** or his email address: **John.D.MAHER@odot.state.or.us**.

Accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities. To request an accommodation, please call John Maher the Region 2 STIP and Financial Plan Manager at **503-986-2614**.