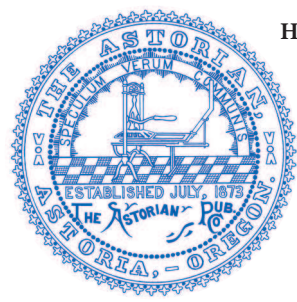


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OUR VIEW

Hear women roar

The latter half of 2017 will be remembered as the time that women all over the globe drew a line in the sand.

No longer will sexual harassment be endured silently. No longer will abusers operate with impunity. No longer will men dominate discussion and decision-making in boardrooms, capitol buildings and households across the country. And no longer will the people who hear these stories demean the accusers, and pick through their lives like vultures in search of rotten meat.

Everyone in this country remains innocent until proven guilty. But the onus is now on those who have been accused of heinous acts — accused by people with nothing to gain but to bring some sense of justice.

It's an admirable, dangerous time.

Beware the court of public opinion. And beware a moral flattening — where years of predatory behavior require the same punishment as a poor choice of words or a momentary lapse. Or a thoroughly reported article is given the same weight as a Twitter accusation.

The sword is coming for people we admire for their art, or athletic prowess, or their control of a corporate boardroom, or for their political views that mesh so well with our own.

Beware then, too, the desire make sexual assault and harassment just another partisan division. Find no additional joy from the demise of an enemy, and do not give those who you admire unfair protection from claims of abuse. That's how this issue became so prevalent and so powerful in the first place.

Politics certainly did play a part in the arrival of this moment. Donald Trump's electoral victory, despite his deeply problematic relationships with women and his televised brags of sexual assault, helped usher in this age. Charlotte Alter of Time magazine wrote during the campaign that "the 2016 election was a referendum on what women could achieve and what men could get away with."

A majority of Americans will no longer stand by the results of that referendum, and want immediate action to remedy the situation. The 2.6 million-strong Women's March the day after Trump's inauguration put the pressure on.

That movement wasn't just about sexual harassment and assault. It's ultimately about a fair society in which all viewpoints are considered, and women are not held back when they choose not to play games with powerful men.

And that has made us look at our own backyard.

Clatsop County shows real strength in terms of female representation in many political positions. Four of our five county commissioners are women. Astoria's mayor is a woman, as are two of the four city councilors. Two of Seaside six councilors are women. In Gearhart, the council has two women and two men. Cannon Beach and Warrenton each have one woman councilor. Our legislators are women, led by the esteemed state Sen. Betsy Johnson. All three Circuit Court judges are women. Our U.S. representative is a woman.

Of major public bodies, only the Port of Astoria lacks female representation — perhaps an artifact of its traditional role in bolstering heavy industry.

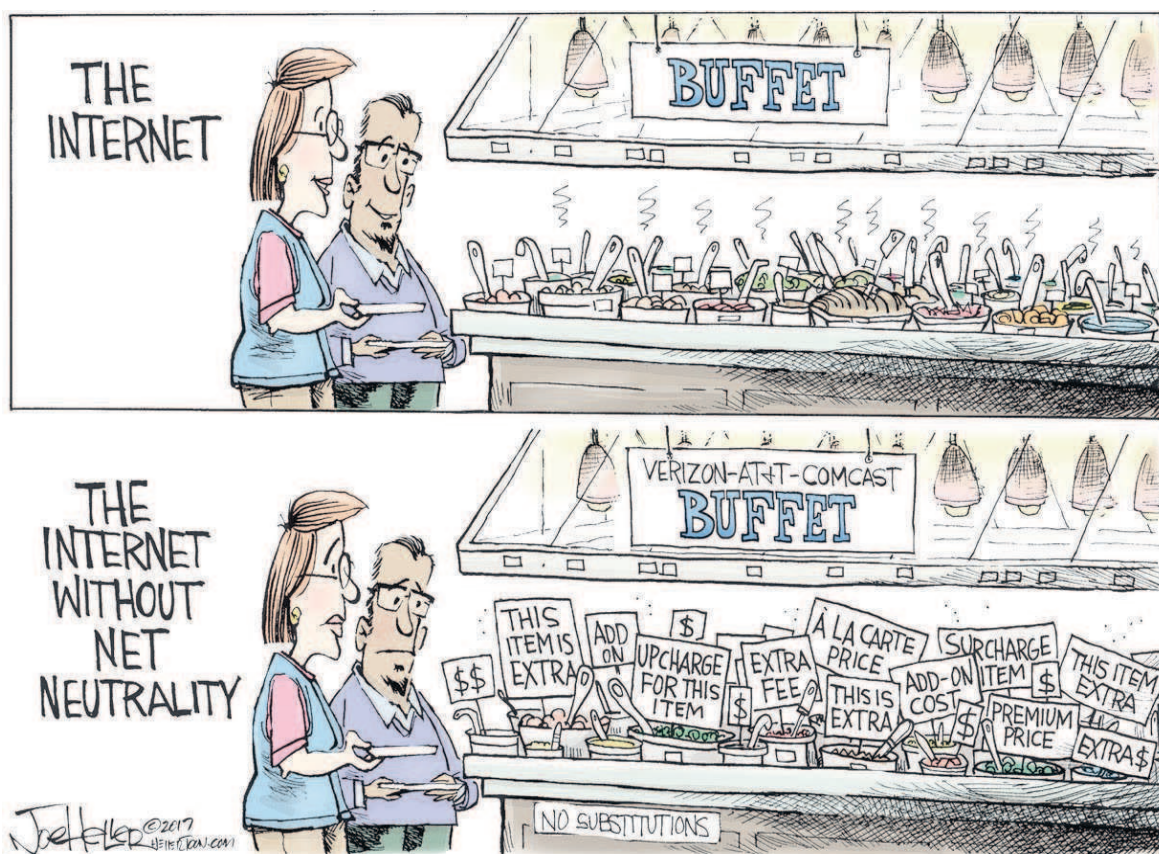
All this is in sharp contrast to northeastern Oregon, where our sister publication the East Oregonian counts little female leadership in top positions. No woman has ever represented Eastern Oregon in the statehouse. Oregon has only elected one female U.S. senator in its history. And with the exception of our local Suzanne Bonamici, all of Oregon's current representatives in the U.S. House are men.

Northwestern Oregon — and particularly Clatsop County — can take pride in our record of gender equality in elective offices. Women also are well represented here in private industry.

Does this mean we can declare local victory? Certainly not, because the victories of today must constantly be defended by women and men alike. It is certain that women have played a large role in Clatsop County's economic successes in recent years, along with our balanced approach to a host of social issues. As our colleagues in Pendleton noted last week, if only half of our population makes important decisions, those decisions are bound to be half as good. Clatsop County is made much stronger by welcoming women at every level of leadership and society.

On the state and national levels, we must do better. There is little semblance of equality. Women across the political spectrum should demand their rightful power and take it.

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Will these GOP senators stand by their principles?

By DAVID LEONHARDT
New York Times News Service

A small number of Republicans — fewer than 10 — will probably determine the fate of the Trump tax plan. The group includes five senators who have been independent enough in recent months to defy their party leaders, not just with words but actions, as well as a couple who may be newly willing to do so.

John McCain helped defeat the Republican health care bill, in protest of its secretive, rushed process. Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski voted against the same bill because they believed that middle-class and poor families had a right to health care access. Jeff Flake and Bob Corker ended their Senate careers rather than fully submitting to Trumpism. Then there are the two showing new signs of independence: James Lankford of Oklahoma and Jerry Moran of Kansas.

The tax bill is a test of all of them. For progressives, the bill is an easy call. It's a huge tax cut for the wealthy, partly paid for with middle-class tax increases. For the same reason, the bill is deeply unpopular with voters.

But the Republican senators are in a tough spot. They are philosophically conservative. They believe in low taxes and small government. They share this belief with their Republican colleagues, their political base back home and, yes, their donors.

Yet all of the potential swing senators have a problem: This tax bill also contains provisions that betray their stated principles.

For McCain, the principle is the Senate itself. His current term is probably his last, given his cancer diagnosis, and he has been making a righteous stand on the behalf of the Senate — that it should aspire to greatness rather than operating as a banana-republic legislature that rams through bills.

The tax bill violates that stand. Almost as an afterthought, it includes a major change to the health care system — the repeal of the individual mandate. The Senate has not held hearings where experts weighed the pros and cons, talked about unintended consequences and looked for (to quote a recent McCain speech) "compromises that each side criticize but also accept."

For that matter, neither the House nor Senate has held serious hearings on any part of the tax plan. No other modern piece of major legislation has ever been so rushed — except



AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

Senate Finance Committee member Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., front, with, from left, Sens. Patrick Toomey, R-Pa., John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, speaks to reporters following a meeting with President Donald Trump at the White House on Monday.

for the health care bill that McCain doomed. Congressional leaders are rushing this bill because they know it's unpopular, and their haste is making a mockery of the institution that McCain holds dear.

For Collins and Murkowski, the principle is health care. More specifically, it's decent health care for the working-class families who dominate their home states of Maine and Alaska. The two of them were the most consistent Senate opponents of the bills this year that would have taken insurance away from millions.

I do think it's fair to expect them to vote only for bills that are consistent with those principles. This tax bill is not — not even close.

Now the tax bill threatens to undo some of their good work.

The repeal of the mandate would create turmoil in insurance markets, because fewer healthy people would sign up for coverage, raising prices for everyone else. Collins opposes the measure for that reason, while Murkowski supports it if it's paired with other measures to stabilize health markets. But those measures would need to be sweeping to make

up for the damage.

Then there are Corker, Flake, Lankford and Moran. Their principle is the deficit. "We don't want to increase the debt and deficit as a result of tax cuts," Moran said. If the bill adds "one penny to the deficit," Corker said he wouldn't support it.

The current Senate plan adds more than 100 trillion pennies to the deficit in the first decade, according to the official estimate. And that estimate is probably low, because the plan depends on a budgetary gimmick. The bill's authors set the most popular tax cuts to expire, knowing that a future Congress may extend them. Corker and Flake have correctly called out this ruse. They and their colleagues would undermine any claim to fiscal conservatism if they voted for any bill that resembles the current one.

So what are the senators going to do?

I hope that they do not fold because doing so — doing what President Donald Trump and Sen. Mitch McConnell want — is the easier political path. I dearly hope they do not follow the cynical tactics of a few of their colleagues who have made a show of opposing a Trump-backed bill only to change positions after being offered a fig leaf of change. U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Rep. Tom MacArthur of New Jersey have each done so more than once this year, and now it's hard to take either seriously.

None of us should expect senators to vote only for bills that we personally support. They have their own beliefs and principles. But I do think it's fair to expect them to vote only for bills that are consistent with those principles. This tax bill is not — not even close.

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