

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

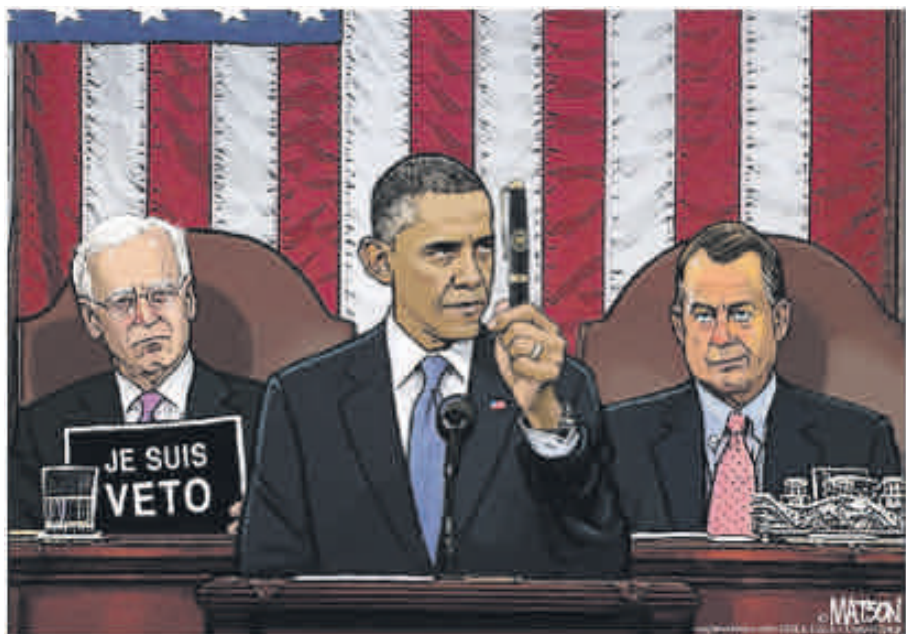
KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINER
Opinion Page Editor

OTHER VIEWS



Obama's address: State of the Union

Editor's Note: These are excerpts from President Obama's State of the Union speech, delivered Tuesday night from the Capitol in Washington D.C.

"We are fifteen years into this new century. Fifteen years that dawned with terror touching our shores; that unfolded with a new generation fighting two long and costly wars; that saw a vicious recession spread across our nation and the world. It has been, and still is, a hard time for many.

But tonight, we turn the page.

At this moment — with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, and booming energy production — we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth. It's now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next fifteen years, and for decades to come.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everyone who makes the effort?

So the verdict is clear. Middle-class economics works. Expanding opportunity works. And these policies will continue to work, as long as politics don't get in the way.

In fact, at every moment of economic change throughout our history, this country has taken bold action to adapt to new circumstances, and to make sure everyone gets a fair shot. We set up worker protections, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid to protect ourselves from the harshest adversity. We gave our citizens schools and colleges, infrastructure and the internet — tools they needed to go as far as their effort will take them.

That's what middle-class economics is — the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and

everyone plays by the same set of rules.

I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership. We lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy; when we leverage our power with coalition building; when we don't let our fears blind us to the opportunities that this new century presents. That's exactly what we're doing right now — and around the globe, it is making a difference.

In Iraq and Syria, American leadership — including our military power — is stopping ISIL's advance. Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group. We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort, and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism. This effort will take time. It will require focus. But we will succeed. And tonight, I call on this

Congress to show the world that we are united in this mission by passing a resolution to authorize the use of force against ISIL.

No foreign nation, no hacker, should be able to shut down our networks, steal our trade secrets, or invade the privacy of American families, especially our kids. We are making sure our government integrates intelligence to combat cyber threats, just as we have done to combat terrorism. And tonight, I urge this Congress to finally pass the legislation we need to better meet the evolving threat of cyber-attacks, combat identity theft, and protect our children's information.

If we don't act, we'll leave our nation and our economy vulnerable. If we do, we can continue to protect the technologies that have unleashed untold opportunities for people around the globe."

We have risen from the recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth.

YOUR VIEWS

Colorado isn't better off with legalized marijuana

In an opinion by Art Way of the Drug Policy Alliance (*AS, Jan. 17*) he indicated that since Colorado has legalized marijuana, marijuana possession charges and arrests are down, more than \$40 million have been raised by taxing marijuana, there is a slight decline in youth use rates, unemployment rates is at its lowest, and traffic fatalities are at historic lows.

Way's notations are high in hyperbole and low in being a trustworthy source for statistics. Way neglects to tell the truth of how marijuana is really impacting Colorado.

First, marijuana remains illegal under federal law.

Second, the Colorado Rocky Mountain HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) August 2014 report indicates:

- Traffic fatalities involving operators testing positive for marijuana have increased 100 percent from 2007 to 2012.

- Law enforcement officials are finding that in-home growers are growing more than permitted by law and selling their excess to the under 21 and out-of-state markets.

- Drug-related youth suspensions and expulsions increased 32 percent from school years 2008-2009 through

2012-2013. The vast majority were for marijuana violations.

In 2013 Clackamas County Mental health services in Oregon revealed that of the 242 kids 18 and under who entered treatment, over 70.5 percent were for marijuana addiction.

As a native of Oregon and someone who has been the victim of the crimes committed by pot dealers, Way's notations are about as ridiculous as his comment that, "Colorado is being real and facing the fact marijuana is here to stay. In doing so, we are establishing a public health approach to minimize the potential harms of marijuana."

Forbes noted that legit sales in Colorado are slower than expected and taxes are lower than predicted as many still buy their pot on the black market. Advocates try to convince the public that by legalizing pot it will get rid of the black market. In Colorado highway interdiction seizures of marijuana destined to 40 other states increased 397 percent from 2008-2013.

Will Oregon look like Colorado after legalizing marijuana? Of course it will, because the truth is that increasing the availability of marijuana, and increased use, will result in arrests for crimes related to that use, such as impaired driving, crimes committed under the influence, and public consumption.

Shirley George Welches, Ore.

OTHER VIEWS

Support our students

All college commencements are happy, but community college commencements are the happiest of all. Many of the graduates are the first in their extended family to have earned degrees. When their name is read, big cheering sections erupt with horns and roars from the stands. Many students are older; you'll see 50- or 60-year-old women grasping their diplomas awash in happy tears. The graduates often know exactly where they're going to work; they walk with an extra sense of security as they head off campus.

These bright days serve as evidence that America can live up to its dream of social mobility, that there is hope at a time when the ladder upward seems creaky and inadequate.

So when President Barack Obama unveils his community college plan in the State of the Union address Tuesday night, it represents an opportunity — an opportunity to create days like that for more students.

Obama's headline idea is to make community college free. It would reduce two years of tuition costs to zero for students with decent grades and who graduate within three years.

The evidence from a similar program in Tennessee suggests that the simple free label has an important psychological effect. Enrollment there surged when high school students learned that they could go to community college for nothing.

The problem is that getting students to enroll is neither hard nor important. The important task is to help students graduate. Community college dropout rates now hover somewhere between 66 and 80 percent.

Spending \$60 billion over 10 years to make community college free will do little to reduce that. In the first place, community college is already free for most poor and working-class students who qualify for Pell grants and other aid. In 2012, 38 percent of community college students had their tuition covered entirely by grant aid, and an additional 33 percent had fees of less than \$1,000.

The Obama plan would largely be a subsidy for the middle- and upper-middle-class students who are now paying tuition and who could afford to pay it in the years ahead.

The smart thing to do would be to scrap the Obama tuition plan. Students who go to community college free now have tragically high dropout rates. The \$60 billion could then be spent on things that are mentioned in Obama's proposal — but not prioritized or fleshed out — which would actually increase graduation rates.

First, you'd focus on living expenses. Tuition represents only a fifth of the costs of community college life. The bulk is textbooks,



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

housing, transportation and so on. Students often have to take on full-time or near-full-time jobs to cover the costs, and, once they do that, they're much more likely to lose touch with college.

You'd subsidize guidance counselors and mentors. Community colleges are not sticky places. Many students don't have intimate relationships with anyone who can guide them through the maze of registration, who might help bond

them to campus.

You'd figure out the remedial education mess. Half of all community college students arrive unprepared for college work. Remedial courses are supposed to bring them up to speed, but it's not clear they work, so some states are dropping remediation, which could leave even more students at sea.

You'd focus on child care. A quarter of college students nationwide have dependent children. Even more students at community colleges do. Less than half of community colleges now have any day care facilities.

Many students drop out because something happens at home and there's no one to take care of the kids.

In short, you wouldn't write government checks for tuition. You'd strengthen structures around the schools. You'd focus on the lived environment of actual students and create relationships and cushions to help them thrive.

We've had two generations of human capital policies. Human Capital 1.0

was designed to give people access to schools and other facilities. It was based on the 1970s liberal orthodoxy that poor people just need more money, that the government could write checks and mobility will improve.

Human Capital 2.0 is designed to help people not just enroll but to complete school and thrive. It's based on a much more sophisticated understanding of how people actually live, on the importance of social capital, on the difficulty of living in disorganized circumstances. The new research emphasizes noncognitive skills — motivation, grit and attachment — and how to use policy levers to boost these things.

The tuition piece of the Obama proposal is Human Capital 1.0. It is locked in 1970s liberal orthodoxy. Congress should take the proposal, scrap it and rededicate the money toward programs that will actually boost completion, that will surround colleges, students and their families with supporting structures. We don't need another program that will lure students into colleges only to have them struggle and drop out.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

OTHER VIEWS

A detainee's diary

Last week, several Republican senators, including John McCain, called on President Barack Obama to stop releasing detainees from the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Their argument was that after the terror attacks in Paris, the 122 prisoners still in Guantánamo should be made to stay right where they are, where they can do the West no harm.

On Tuesday, one of those detainees, Mohamedou Ould Slahi, who was sent to Guantánamo in 2002 and remains there to this day, is poised to offer a powerful rejoinder. Three years into his detention — years during which he was isolated, tortured, beaten, sexually abused and humiliated — Slahi wrote a 466-page, 122,000-word account of what had happened to him up to that point. His manuscript was immediately classified, and it took years of litigation and negotiation by Slahi's pro bono lawyers to force the military to declassify a redacted version. Even with the redactions, "Guantánamo Diary" is an extraordinary document — "A vision of hell, beyond Orwell, beyond Kafka," as John le Carré aptly describes it in a back cover blurb — that every American should read.

A native of Mauritania, Slahi, 44, is fluent in several languages — he learned English while in Guantánamo — and lived in Canada and Germany as well as the Muslim world. He came under suspicion because an al-Qaida member, who had been based in Montreal — where Slahi had also lived — was arrested and charged with plotting to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport in 1999. Slahi was questioned about this plot several times, but he was always released. After 9/11, Slahi was detained again for questioning. That time, he was turned over to the U.S. authorities, in whose captivity he has been ever since.

What was he accused of? Slahi asked this question of his captors often and was never given a straight answer. This, of course, is part of the problem with Guantánamo, a prison where being formally charged with a crime is a luxury, not a requirement. His efforts to tell the truth — that he had no involvement in any acts of terrorism — only angered his interrogators. "Looks like a dog, walks like a dog, smells like a dog, barks like a dog, must be a dog," one interrogator used to say. That was the best his captors could do to explain why he was there. Yet the military was so sure he was a key al-Qaida player that he was subjected to "special interrogation" techniques that had been signed off by the secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, himself.

"Special interrogation techniques," of course, is a euphemism for torture. The



JOE NOCERA
Comment

sections of the book that describe his torture make for harrowing reading. Slahi was so sleep-deprived that he eventually started to hallucinate. Chained to the ground, he was forced to "stand" in positions that were extremely painful. Interrogators went at him in shifts — 24 hours a day. Sometimes during interrogations, female interrogators rubbed their breasts over his body and fondled him.

It is hard to read about his torture without feeling a sense of shame.

Does Slahi crack? Of course: To get the torture to stop, he finally lied, telling his interrogators what he thought they wanted to hear, just as torture victims have done since the Inquisition. "Torture doesn't guarantee that the detainee cooperates," writes Slahi. "In order to stop torture, the detainee has to please his assailant, even with untruthful, and sometime misleading (intelligence)." McCain, who was tortured in Vietnam, knows this; last month, he made a powerful speech in which he condemned America's use of torture, saying, "the use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies, our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights." That is also why it is so disheartening that McCain has allied himself with those who want to keep Guantánamo open.

In 2010, a federal district judge ruled in favor of Slahi's habeas corpus petition because the evidence against him was so thin. The government appealed, and the order remains in limbo.

I asked Nancy Hollander, one of Slahi's lawyers, to describe her client. "He is funny, smart, compassionate and thoughtful," she said. All of these qualities come through in his memoir, which is surprisingly without rancor. "I have only written what I experienced, what I saw, and what I learned firsthand," he writes toward the end of his book. "I have tried not to exaggerate, nor to understate. I have tried to be as fair as possible, to the U.S. government, to my brothers, and to myself." One of the wonders of the book is that he does come across as fair to all, even his torturers.

But the quote that sticks with me most is something that one of his guards told him, something that could stand as a fitting epitaph for Guantánamo itself: "I know I can go to hell for what I did to you."

Joe Nocera is an Op-Ed columnist. Before joining *The Opinion Pages* in April 2011, he wrote *The Talking Business* column for *The New York Times* each Saturday and was a staff writer for *The New York Times Magazine*.