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OUR VIEW

Safeguards could save our necks if there's a next time

Well that escalated quickly. And then took way too long to conclude. But while it feels like the Kitzhaber saga has finally reached its climax, in many ways the first domino has just been tipped. The governor's departure on Wednesday will set in motion a strange change in the state's top office.

And while we're reasonably confident in Kate Brown's ability to be more than just a placeholder during this important time, it's probably worth thinking about creating some safeguards in case we see something like this again. Fingers crossed.

The first is the addition of a lieutenant governor.

In the United States, 43 of 50 states have that position, and come election time, his or her name is spelled

out in smaller letters on yard signs. They debate the other lieutenant governor candidates, make the same long drives and same speeches to rouse the electorate. In many cases they are elected as the bottom of a ticket that includes the governor; in some states it's a separate race.

Oregon isn't one of those states. We don't have that position, and therefore our next in line of succession when some calamity befalls our top government official (say a corrupt fiancée) is our elected Secretary of State. Democrat Kate Brown holds that seat, and was elected to the non-partisan position by voters in 2008.

If we did have a lieutenant governor, it's possible Kitzhaber would have resigned sooner.

A lieutenant governor is kind of like a vice president. They don't really do much, they just hang around as a bench-warming backup, ready to take over in case of emergency. In some jobs a backup without many day-to-day

duties might be seen as superfluous. But when you are talking about the most important job in a country or the most important job in a state, having a person on standby is a necessary redundancy.

Not having that position waiting in the wings makes the succession process a muddier one — a series of falling dominoes and shuffling titles. Brown said she is ready to replace Kitzhaber. She will soon appoint another Secretary of

State. That person, as an appointee, would no longer be atop the chain of succession. Incidentally, if Brown had declined the promotion or stepped aside, Treasurer Ted Wheeler would have had the next crack at the governorship. Make no

mistake, if Kitzhaber and Hayes have committed crimes they should be held accountable. And they shouldn't have someone in state government that would shield them from prosecution if the facts call for it. But a lieutenant governor would offer a more orderly transition of power, should this disappointment happen again.

Then there's impeachment, a tool not available to the Oregon legislature.

It seemed for a short time this week that Kitzhaber may cling to his post until voters got a recall petition filed, signed and on the ballot. Fortunately that wasn't the case. But with everyone ready for him to step down it raised the question of how to boot someone who doesn't want to be booted.

Hopefully, this sort of malfeasance doesn't become routine in Oregon, as it has elsewhere. But Friday was a sad day for the state — now is the time to build a better government.

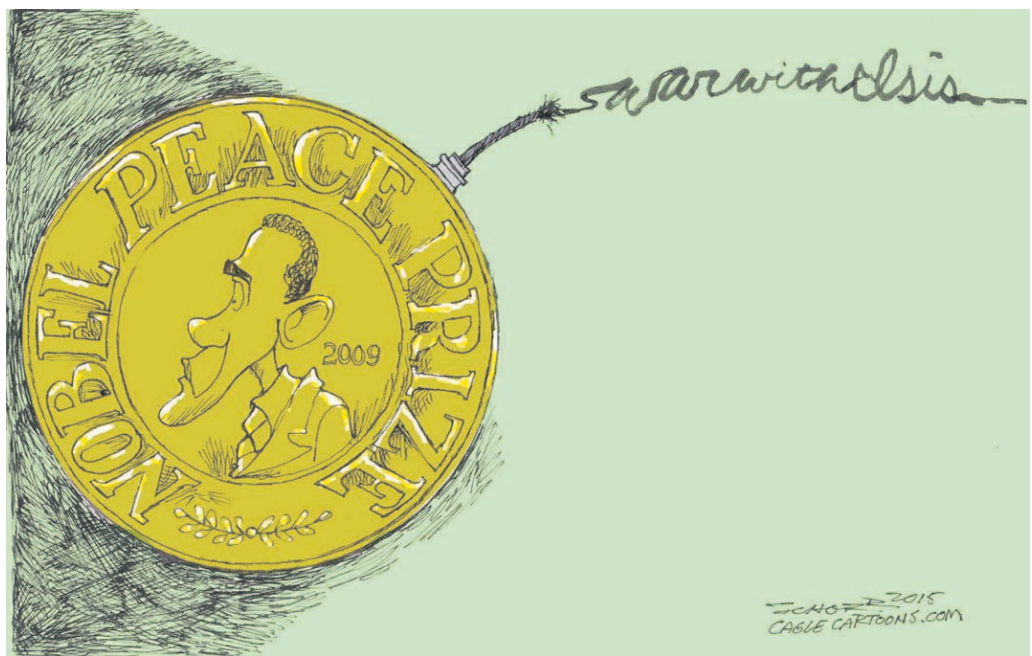
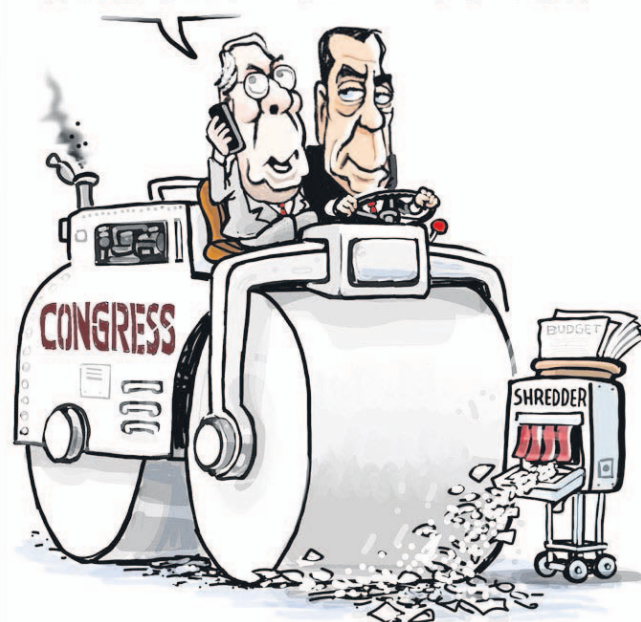


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Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



WE'RE JUST GOING OVER IT NOW...



OTHER VIEWS

Muslims, marriage and bigotry

In North Carolina, three young Muslims who were active in charity work were murdered, allegedly by a man who identified as atheist and expressed hostility to Islam and other faiths. Police are exploring whether it was a hate crime, and it spurred a #MuslimLivesMatter campaign on Twitter.

And, in Alabama, we see judges refusing to approve marriages of any kind because then they would also have to approve same-sex marriages. In one poll conducted last year, some 59 percent of people in Alabama opposed gay marriage. Somehow a loving God is cited to bar loving couples from committing to each other.

These are very different news stories. But I wonder if a common lesson from both may be the importance of resisting bigotry, of combating the intolerance that can infect people of any faith — or of no faith.

I don't think Muslims should feel obliged to apologize for the Charlie Hebdo terror attacks. Nor do I think atheists need apologize for the killing of the three Muslims.

But it does seem useful for everyone to reflect on our capacity to "otherize" people of a different faith, race, nationality or sexuality - and to turn that other-ness into a threat. That's what the Islamic State does to us. And sometimes that's what we do, too.

OK, I'm sure some of you are protesting: That's a false equivalency. True, there is a huge difference between burning someone alive and not granting a couple a marriage license. But, then again, it's not much of a slogan to say, "We're better than ISIS!"

There has been a pugnacious defensiveness among conservative Christians to any parallels between Christian overreach and Islamic overreach, as seen in the outraged reaction to President Barack Obama's acknowledgment at the National Prayer Breakfast this month that the West has plenty to regret as well. But Obama was exactly right: How can we ask Islamic leaders to confront extremism in their faith if we don't acknowledge Christian extremism, from the Crusades to Srebrenica?

More broadly, one message of the New Testament is the value of focusing on one's own mistakes rather than those of others. "You hypocrite," Jesus says in Matthew 7:5. "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

We could do with a little more of that spirit these days, at a time when everybody wants to practice ophthalmology on everyone else.

When I posted on my Facebook page about the North Carolina murders, one follower, Frank, wrote dismissively: "Muslims are



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

slaughtering people around the globe (including their own) but let's highlight this story — seems legit."

I've previously urged Muslims to reflect on intolerance in their camp, and this is an occasion when Christians, atheists and others can do the same. Did the furor in North Carolina that led to the cancellation of the Muslim call to prayer from Duke University's chapel tower inflame sentiments?

The Alabama legal drama, with Chief Justice Roy S. Moore of the state Supreme Court defying federal authorities, is, of course, different. But it also is redolent of faith as I-am-holier-than-thou chest-thumping, a reminder of the need for humility.

Do Moore and other conservative Christians think that when God made gays and lesbians fall achingly in love with each other, He screwed up?

It seems odd to me that so many conservative Christians are obsessed with homosexuality, which Jesus never mentions, yet seem unworried about issues Jesus did emphasize like poverty and suffering. Jesus explicitly advised a wealthy man, "Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Matthew 19:21), so maybe that's the Scripture that Moore should follow to demonstrate his piety.

Then there's Jesus' praise for those who make themselves eunuchs (Matthew 19:12); but I'd settle for a little "love thy

neighbor as thyself." I've written often about committed and self-effacing Christians doing outstanding work combating injustice around the world, and it's frustrating that they don't get attention. The problem is that their heroism is often overshadowed by sanctimonious blowhards.

Among Americans aged 18 to 24, a 2012 survey found that half or more describe present-day Christianity as "hypocritical," "judgmental" and "anti-gay." And more regarded it as immoral to view pornography than to have sex with a person of the same gender. Alabama is, once again, on the wrong side of history.

Pope Francis has been a breath of fresh air to Catholics and non-Catholics alike because he seems less moralizing and more moral, less about pointing a finger and more about offering a helping hand. After the tragedy in North Carolina and the legal chaos in Alabama, maybe that's a good instinct for all of us.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, writes op-ed columns that appear twice a week. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

A common lesson may be the importance of resisting bigotry, of combating the intolerance that can infect people of any faith — or no faith.

YOUR VIEWS

Support for Requa bronze

I support Pendleton as a place, and I support the memory of Don Requa. They complement each other. Hence, a well-placed statue of Don Requa in Brownfield Park is a good idea. It is a visible tribute to our city and to an educator who impacted so many lives. The prior well-reasoned authorization to place the statue in Brownfield Park was a tribute to Pendleton and to Don Requa. It should not be reversed due to political and social pressure by a vocal minority.

Eric C. Larson
Portland

20 statues might do the trick

For the love of God can we please stop talking about statues on Main Street. You could put ten statues on Main Street that's not going to "attract tourists" ... but maybe if you put 20 statues on Main Street that might work.

Pendleton is not an attractive-looking town nor inviting — that's the issue that needs to be addressed.

Kathryn Munden
Pendleton

Pendleton council must revisit placement of Requa bronze

As a professional historian I think it is important to recognize our historical heritage in public places. I believe the location of every statue should be carefully considered so that it is both meaningful to local residents and conveys the character of Pendleton to visitors.

The intense controversy over a statue in Brownfield Park reveals how strongly people feel about the connection between statues and place. The many letters and conversations of late regarding what statue to place there indicate that this issue is far from resolved. I suggest that the city council reconsider its decision and allow for constructive public input on the matter.

Susan Badger Doyle
Pendleton

Editor's note: These letters were edited for space consideration. They appear in their entirety at eastoregonian.com.