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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to one of the last measures backed by Secretary of State Kate Brown before she graduated to the governorship this week.

That bill, HB 2177, calls for automatic voter registration. It would require the state to use DMV address records to identify eligible voters and send them a ballot. Voters can then opt out and be unregistered, but you know people: when given the option of doing nothing or something, we tend to sit on our hands.

Which is why so few of us vote, even when it's already pretty darn easy.

Call us a little Calvinist, but voting should require the smallest modicum of effort (though it's awfully painless now in Oregon, with mail-in ballots and registration that can be done in just a minute or two on a smartphone). We think that makes it more meaningful. And, hey, if participating in your democracy is not your thing, then there's no need to expend money and energy to include you.

As Secretary of State, it was Brown's job to make voting as easy as possible without inviting fraud, and gathering more addresses and sending out more ballots is one way to do that. But we think the added expense will not greatly increase turnout. Those that want to vote have lifted their finger to do so.

The Legislature wasn't waiting for our thoughts on the matter, though. It is moving quickly on the bill already. It sailed through committee and passed a full House vote and could soon be signed into law by Kate Brown herself.

A tip of the hat to Chet Prior, who died earlier this week after a lifetime of community service.

News articles and his obituary have already told much of Prior's story, but we think his influence on the region is hard to overstate.



The Echo man was involved in just about everything that happened around his neck of the woods — from agriculture and community development to education and economics.

He was everywhere, involved in everything. He had more seats on more boards than a high school graduation in an old gymnasium.

And yet, he did it without hogging the spotlight. When we went looking

through our archives for photos of Prior, in almost every shot he was listening to someone speak or shaking someone's hand. He was a modest leader — not an oxymoronic phrase when it came to him.

Lloyd Piercey, owner of Echo's Sno Road Winery, told our sister paper *The Hermiston Herald* that "there isn't anything positive that happened in Hermiston that he didn't have a touch in."

That touch will be missed. We tip one low to you, Chet.

OUR VIEW

Pasco killing is a familiar refrain

Police shootings of civilians in Portland and Seattle have received a lot of attention, and yet such violence is something we have almost come to expect in an urban setting.

The death of an unarmed Hispanic man in a confrontation with three

officers in Pasco, Wash., is somehow more shocking, perhaps because we picture human relations outside big cities as providing some degree of immunity to official violence.

There have been four fatal police shootings in the southeastern Washington city since last July. Other eye-catching statistics include only one Hispanic city council member in a community that is 56 percent Hispanic, and 15 Hispanic members in a 67-officer police department.

Antonio Zambrano-Montes' death last week wasn't an unusual outlier in this scenario of unbalanced power, but an accidental cause célèbre because a bystander happened to video record the shooting and events immediately leading up to it. As with the August 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., Zambrano-Montes cannot be said to be completely blameless: He appears to have been throwing rocks at cars in the street shortly before police arrived. He started to run away when they confronted him. But what he was doing did not merit a

spontaneous imposition of the death penalty by police. He was unarmed, open-handed, arms partially raised as bullets ripped his life away.

Pasco isn't a continent away from Astoria and surrounding communities. Even if it were, we should still take an interest. Hispanic

leaders there have called for the U.S. Justice Department to investigate, and it should. Complete objectivity and thorough professionalism are essential to begin healing the massive distrust that has blown up in the Hispanic population

of Pasco. The current investigation by a special investigative unit comprised of officers in surrounding communities is nowhere near credible, particularly after absolving Pasco officers of all blame in the three previous fatal shootings.

Beyond advocating for justice, police reform and political empowerment in a small city in our region, this case should interest all of us because it suggests a general need to do a much better job bringing Hispanic residents into local power structures. It is important for that community to assert itself.

Civic leaders, including senior law officers should build connections with immigrant and low-income communities to build understanding before shootings occur — not as some dismal and half-hearted reaction afterward.

We must build better intercultural connections now to avoid future violence.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

Scott Walker's bumpy evolution education

It's almost as if Scott Walker knew he could get in trouble just by traveling to London. In the U.K. recently for a trade mission, the governor of Wisconsin and likely presidential candidate went to the Chatham House think tank to talk Wisconsin business — and ended up the headline of stories about, of all things, evolution.

Walker seemed to suspect something was coming. Answering a question about political polarization, he brought up the unpredictability of media coverage and referred specifically to the recent London visit of New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who ended up on the defensive over comments about vaccines.

"Look at my colleague, my friend," Walker said, referring to Christie. "When he came here a week or so ago, and I'm not going to get into his statement, but just saying that became the focus (of news coverage) ... even though that probably wasn't the most substantive thing he was talking about here. And yet for whatever reason, that was the lead in many ways on the news."

Twelve minutes later, something similar happened to Walker, despite all his efforts to play it safe.

Walker was in the U.K. in his capacity as governor, to promote the sales of Wisconsin products. Yes, it's hard to view an overseas trip, especially by an American governor with presidential ambitions, as anything but a campaign event. But Walker steered clear of politics and didn't take any members of his presidential political team along with him.

As befits a representative of Wisconsin, Walker talked a lot about cheese. He wants the world to buy and enjoy vast quantities of Wisconsin cheese. His enthusiasm gave rise to far too many lame cheese jokes at venerable Chatham House.

Walker also said many deeply boring things about Wisconsin trade. Things like: "Thanks to God and the glaciers, we have the best industrial sand in the United States, and arguably in the world."

After Walker's speech, the Chatham House audience of journalists and businesspeople not surprisingly had questions that touched on U.S. foreign policy. Walker took particular care to avoid criticizing President Obama, adhering to the now-quiet idea that an American politician should not criticize his country's leaders while abroad.

For example, a reporter asked whether Britain should contribute more to the fight against the Islamic State. Any Republican running for president might well have answered that President Obama should



BYRON YORK
Comment

contribute more to the fight against the Islamic State. Not Walker. "I defer to the president, even though I don't always believe in the same things that he does politically," Walker said.

Justin Webb, the BBC presenter moderating the session, remarked that in today's hyper-partisan world, Walker's response was "almost an old-fashioned way" of dealing with such issues.

"When you're in any country, not just the United Kingdom," Walker answered, "no matter what my opinions might be of this President of the United States right now, I just don't think it's wise to undermine the president of your own country."

And so it went. Walker was happy to talk about unions, health care, the University of Wisconsin budget, trade agreements, oil exports, and more. And then, 44 minutes

into a 45 minute question-and-answer session, Webb turned to Walker and said: "We're out of time, governor. I know you have to be somewhere else. Can I finish with a question — it's almost a tradition now to ask visiting, particularly Republican, senior Republicans who come to London. And it's not about cheese, and it's not about foreign affairs. It's actually about evolution. Are you comfortable with the idea of evolution? Do you believe in it? Do you accept it?"

"For me, I'm going to punt on that one," Walker said. "That's a question a politician shouldn't be involved in one way or the other, so I'm going to leave that up to you." Up until that moment, the story of the London trip might have been Walker's deference to Obama. Instead, it became, in the words of an Associated Press headline, "Wisconsin Gov. Walker Refuses to Answer Evolution Question."

Walker's political team back home scrambled to fix things, releasing a statement saying he believes "faith and science are compatible." But remarkably, for a man who has run for high office, Walker didn't have a ready-to-repeat answer on evolution. His staff didn't even know his views before drafting the statement.

But Walker learned a few lessons. First, there's no protection from out-of-the-blue questions. Second, Republicans, as Webb suggested, get special treatment when traveling abroad. And third, it doesn't matter if a candidate wants to talk about cheese and industrial sand, he's never the one setting the agenda.

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Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

There's no protection from out-of-the-blue questions — a candidate is never the one setting the agenda.

YOUR VIEWS

Walden's messages leave voter amazed and disgusted

I am constantly amazed and disgusted with the messages from Rep. Greg Walden. His recent claim that the Affordable Care Act has reduced funding for Home Health Care can only be called what it is — a lie. Only the GOP wants to kill this program along with the postal service, Social Security and many others.

The money from Medicare used for the ACA is only from the money that was otherwise wasted in subsidies to the private sector for Medicare Advantage plans. Most Medicare recipients have greatly benefited by the ACA in reduced co-pays for prescriptions and no co-pays for preventive medical care like colonoscopies and other services. And the premiums have grown by the smallest amounts in decades.

Mr. Walden also wants to assist in the passing of the Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement. This scheme totally and exclusively written by the rich and powerful (to whom Mr. Walden gifts) will mean huge job losses to America. NAFTA will look like an ant on an elephant's butt in comparison, and we all know how well that went for jobs in America. Congress is not

allowed to debate nor even copy the document but must blindly vote on your behalf. Logs will be exported for processing again, cheap beef imported, and maybe even the RVs we make here in Pendleton will be made overseas due to cheap labor. This pact is exactly and only for the benefit of big industry with no protections for American workers.

He is also willing to risk your safety by shutting down the Dept. of Homeland Security because of politics. He is apparently not willing to understand that he and his cronies will not be able to stop the President's Immigration Executive Order. He wants to take away the farm labor so needed in the Hermiston area. The Democrats learned their lesson well from the GOP minority in the Senate for the past four years. Now that the Dems are doing the same as the GOP did to them, it is somehow nearly criminal but was fine when the GOP did it. What part of Senate rules does Walden not understand? What part of "do as I want, not what I did" does Walden not grasp as unfair?

Now Walden has co-sponsored a bill to make nearly all his constituents (yes, you) pay to get faster Internet service.

Dave Fitzsimmons
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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