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OUR VIEW

What, me think?

GOP’s willful ignorance on issues of science, climate change, is distressing

When Steve Symms entered the U.S. Senate in 1981, supplanting the Democrat Frank Church of Idaho, it was said that single upset dropped the collective intelligence quotient of the Senate. Symms did not distinguish himself during his 12 years as Idaho’s junior senator.

To those who watched Symms from the Senate Press Gallery or in the committee rooms, it seemed as though he worked hard at displaying his intellectual shortcoming in the demanding job of being a U.S. senator.

Who knew that Symms was a pioneer?

It now seems as though a requirement to be a Republican congressman or senator is to play dumb.

Our bankers would not be impressed with that response. And neither is climate change impressed with the Republicans’ willful ignorance. Nor are a host of corporations that have already adopted climate change strategies.

And that leads us to what the GOP is really up to. Wrote Kolbert, “... ignoring a problem does often make it more difficult to solve. And that, you have to assume, in a perverse way, is the goal here. What we don’t know, we can’t act on.”

Department of Energy.

Writing on *The New Yorker’s* website last week, Elizabeth Kolbert noted the mantra that Republican candidates adopted in the 2014 election. When asked about climate change they would say: “Of course, I’m not a scientist.” That disclaimer apparently gives them license to put scientists out of business.

If we think about the lameness of the GOP excuse, shouldn’t we all be allowed to question our bank statements by saying, “Of course, I’m not a banker?”

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Baltimore case is complex, prosecutor is biased

The Freddie Gray case is another sad and complicated case. Now we see the 35-year-old black federal prosecutor, Marilyn Mosby, has filed second degree murder charges against the driver of the police van that Gray was being transported in. Ms. Mosby is the youngest federal prosecutor in the country. Interestingly, she is also married to Nick Mosby, who is a city coucilmnan for Baltimore and an outspoken voice on the riots there.

There have been suggestions that Ms. Mosby should step down from this case. Of course, this won’t happen because this case will give her lots of TV time and polevault her career into the national spotlight. Don’t be surprised to see her name mentioned the next time the federal Attorney General’s spot becomes vacant.

The claim of “rushing to judgment” is usually heard from the Rev. Al Sharpton side of these issues. In this case Ms. Mosby may have set a new record on how quickly she indicted the six officers (the driver is actually being charged with second degree murder?). Now the “thugs,” as named by the mayor of Baltimore and President Obama, have switched over from burning and looting businesses and shooting at police to celebrations and parties. Marilyn Mosby has become their hero.

Freddie Gray broke the most basic rule of policing — stop when you are told to do so by a police person. If he had obeyed that one simple rule, he and several others that have been shot by the police would be alive today. Freddie had more than 20 court cases against him and five of those were still active at the time he died.

He has been in and out of prison since 2009 for various drug charges. In February 2009 he was sentenced to four years in prison for two counts of drug possession with intent to deliver. He was paroled in June 2011. In April 2012 he was arrested again for violating parole, returned to prison in May 2013 for drug possession and served another month in prison. Don’t those five pending cases give good reason for him to be stopped by police?

The definition of “justice” seems to be different from one case to another, but I hope justice will prevail here. Regardless, we have learned one thing for sure — the Freddie Gray family will end up being rich.

David Burns
Pendleton

Sentencing reform needs its own reformation

I hope everyone knows that Oregon state is “one strike and you are out” with Measure 11. First-time offenders are sentenced the same as repeat and violent offenders. According to the Rand Report on Measure 11 and the Criminal Justice Commission report on Measure 11, it is the consensus that the power is now in the district attorney’s hands. The judge has absolutely no say in the matter. There are no checks and balances any more, there is no justice in Oregon.

Who checks the DA? No one, and what usually or can happen when someone is left unchecked. Just take a look at the federal government and you can see what happens. There are over 4,000 inmates in Oregon prisons, first-time offenders, no serious crimes before or no criminal history before doing time that is costing the citizens of Oregon approximately \$135 million/year.

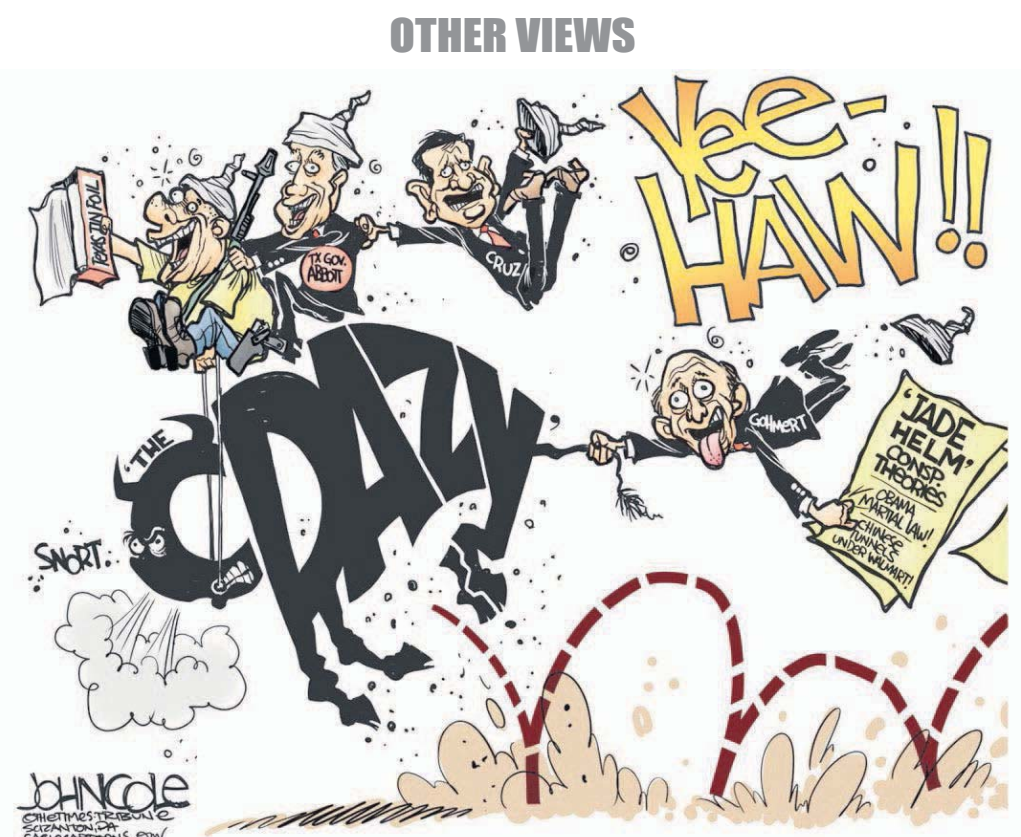
There is no help in prisons, no counseling, no kind of rehab, nothing. The health care is barely above Third World countries. You think this is a fair law? Really? For repeat offenders and violent crime, maybe, but for first-time offenders?

How many lives have been destroyed because of the DA having unlimited power and the fact that they can withhold any evidence they want or not use it? I am not saying first-time offenders should get off free, but first-time offenders, non-violent, should be able to pay their dues on the outside: GPS, community service, extended time on parole, counseling, mandatory, at the person’s own expense, etc. You take 4,000 inmates out of the system and there go two prisons; why do you think the state and the DAs want to keep it that way? More money for them. Turn empty prisons into halfway houses for those who are released and have nowhere to go. The state could run it.

Please think about this Measure 11 that so badly needs to be reformed. The legislatures really need to re-think what soft on crime really is. Reforming Measure 11 is not being soft, it is bringing back fairness, justice and checks and balances to the legal system. Give the judges back their discretionary power over first-time offenders, if nothing else.

That way, everything will be looked at, prior criminal history, if any, psychological reports — everything, not just what the DA wants him to see.

Barbara Dickerson
Milton-Freewater



Fringe festival

In 2008, Mike Huckabee ran for president as a likable chucklehead who had lost 100 pounds. And you can, too! Now he’s running for president as a grievance-burdened theocrat who has lost his mind. In the interim, he lent his name to infomercials hawking a dubious diabetes treatment of cinnamon and some other concoction, putting the Huckster in Huckabee.

In 2005, Carly Fiorina was fired as chief executive officer of Hewlett-Packard, after laying off nearly 30,000 people and overseeing the collapse of the company’s stock price. She left with a \$21 million severance package. She then lost a Senate race in California by 1 million votes. Now she’s running for president. And why not? Rewarded for failure in business, she’s trying it in politics.

Until 2013, Dr. Ben Carson was known mainly as a celebrated neurosurgeon, much in demand on the speaking circuit for his inspirational talks. But then he compared President Barack Obama to a psychopath, said expanding health care was the worst thing to happen to this country since slavery, and claimed homosexuality was a choice, because “people go into prison straight — and when they come out, they’re gay.” Of course, he’s now running for the highest office in the land.

As David Axelrod noted, politics ain’t brain surgery. It’s harder.

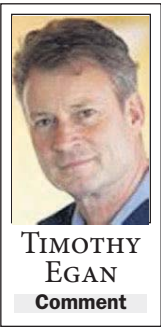
Last election cycle, the Republican presidential field was a clown car, holding the thrice-married Newt Gingrich lecturing about values, the pizza magnate Herman Cain fending off sexual harassment claims, and Michele Bachmann confusing John Wayne with a serial killer. That was just the front seat. This time around it’s a clown bus, with as many as 17 Republicans expected to compete.

Most of them are unelectable, to say the least. But can any of them get out of the party’s winnowing period without saying things they picked up in the far right netherworld? Probably not. As previous gaffe-a-matics have shown, it pays to be crazy. And for many Republicans, crazy is the new mainstream.

In Texas, the Republican governor, Greg Abbott, is not sure if simulated military maneuvers planned for his state are routine exercises by our men and women in uniform, or a plot to take everyone’s guns and enforce martial law. He’s ordered the state guard to monitor his government’s soldiers — just in case. Oh, and Wal-Mart is involved. Something about tunnels beneath abandoned stores.

There is no ceiling for crazy in Texas, nor political consequence. This year, the Lone Star State’s most odious export is Sen. Ted Cruz, who also has some concern about the nefarious designs of our military, and those Wal-Mart tunnels.

He couldn’t just say, as the Pentagon



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

did, that our troops would soon be conducting a long-planned field operation, called Jade Helm 15. He had to dog-whistle to the mouth frothers.

“I understand a lot of the concerns raised by a lot of citizens about Jade Helm,” said Cruz. “It’s a question I’m getting a lot, and I think part of the reason is we have seen, for six years, a federal government disrespecting the liberty of citizens.” Dwight Eisenhower — look him up, Texans — is rolling over in his five-star grave.

If you don’t think the inability to distinguish a military exercise from a totalitarian takeover disqualifies you from leading the free world, Fox News has a hosting chair for you. That’s where Mike Huckabee promoted his brand of Gomer Pyle politics over the last few years, building a following for quack health remedies and Christian victimhood.

Since moving out of the Fox nursing home, he’s gone ever deeper and darker, all while traveling by private jet and building a palace in Florida. He suggested that military recruits should wait until Obama leaves office before joining the service. Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister who learned his shtick on the traveling preacher circuit, has become an outright theocrat, attacking the constitutional foundation against state-sanctioned religion.

“You’ve got to understand, this for me is not about the right side or the wrong side of history,” he said last year, regarding same-sex marriage. “This is the right side of the Bible.”

Ben Carson, like Huckabee, sees the secular world through Scripture. He makes much of his standing as a Seventh-day Adventist, those nice people who show up at your door with pamphlets, prompting little kids to ask, “What’s a Seventh-day Dentist?”

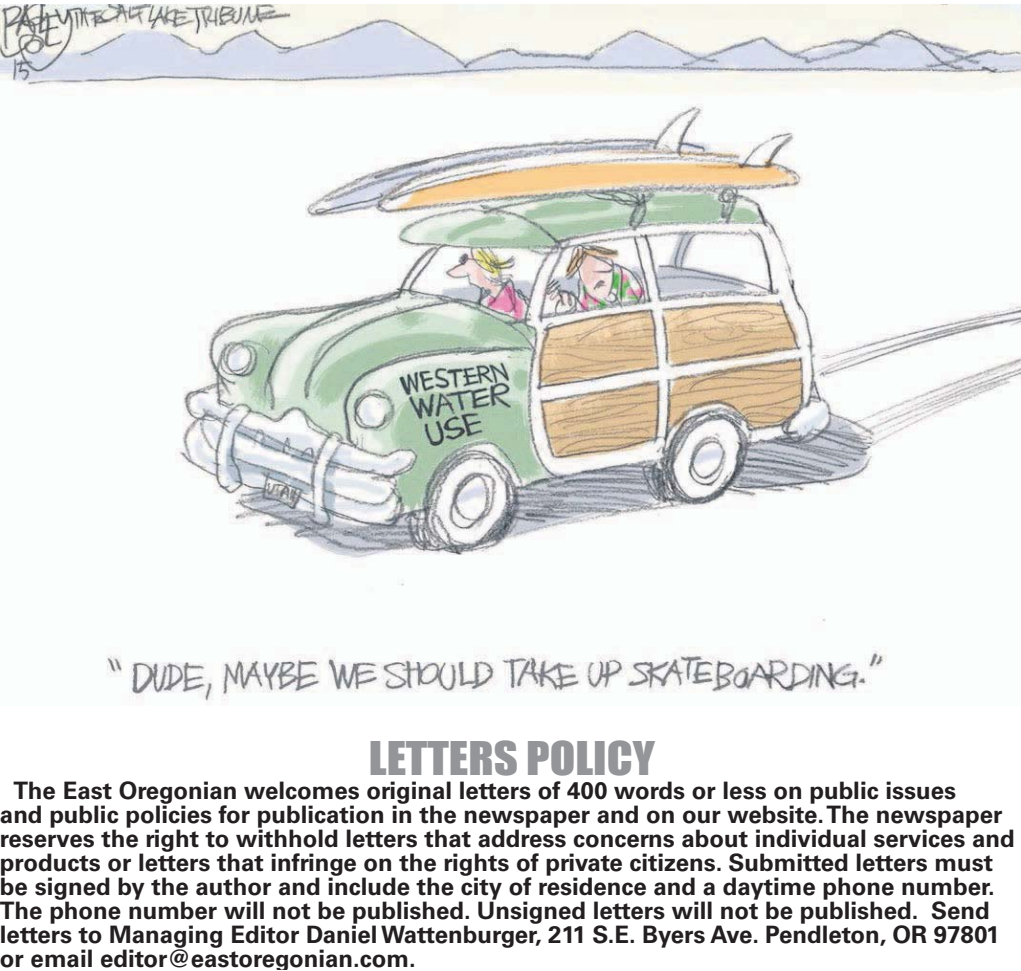
But the Adventists, to their credit, are distancing themselves from Carson. After his presidential announcement, the church released a statement that the pulpit should remain neutral in politics, based on “our historical position of separation of church and state.”

So in the past week Republicans have gained two people whose political philosophy could find a home among Iran’s governing ayatollahs, and a failed chief executive who thinks driving a great company into the ground is a good business model. All are featured prominently in conservative media.

This shows that if you’re on TV long enough, you start to think you’d make a good president. Or perhaps it’s that if you run for president as a Republican, you can ensure that you’ll be on TV.

One reinforces the other, and ultimately influences the nominee. And that’s when the rest of us start paying attention.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the *Pacific Northwest* correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.



LETTERS POLICY

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