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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the BMCC rodeo team and Hermiston barrel racer Callahan Crossley for their women's national collegiate title wins this week.

Callahan is the third Crossley sister to compete at the national finals, following in the footsteps of Jade and Jordan. But she's the first Callahan to ride to the gold.

Teammates Danyelle Williams (second) and Jessica Lewis (seventh) added enough points to BMCC's score to earn the school the team title.

We're excited to see these young women continue their rodeo careers, and wish them the best of luck — especially when they are riding in the Round-Up and Farm-City arenas.

A kick in the pants to southern government leaders still standing by the Confederate flag.

Whatever Dixie means to southerners deep in their genteel and well-meaning hearts, it is in fact the symbol of treacherous rebellion against the United States. We're 150 years removed from the Civil War, and the idea that the losing army would be allowed to continue flying their colors in the victor's capitals is absurd.

It's more than just a symbol of the south, heritage or Dukes of Hazzard-style rebellion. It's a symbol of racism and slavery, and a war in which 620,000 American soldiers died. And the longer that symbol is endorsed by the state, the more validity its message is given.

Even though Charleston is a long way from Hermiston, the flag debate matters because we live in a union, where citizens are free to express themselves however they choose but governments must operate under a unified code of allegiance.

How many British, French or Spanish flags do you see flying in places once occupied by those countries? If an ISIS cell sprang up somewhere in the U.S. and was defeated by our troops in a deadly conflict, would anyone argue that black flag still had a place of honor or heritage?

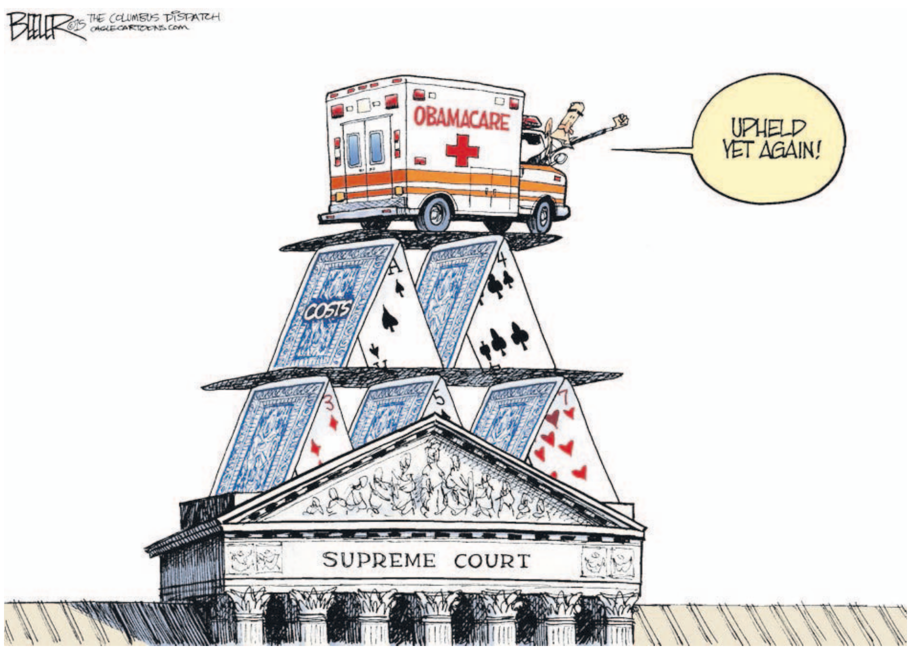
A tip of the hat to women who don't let workforce gender roles dictate their aspirations.

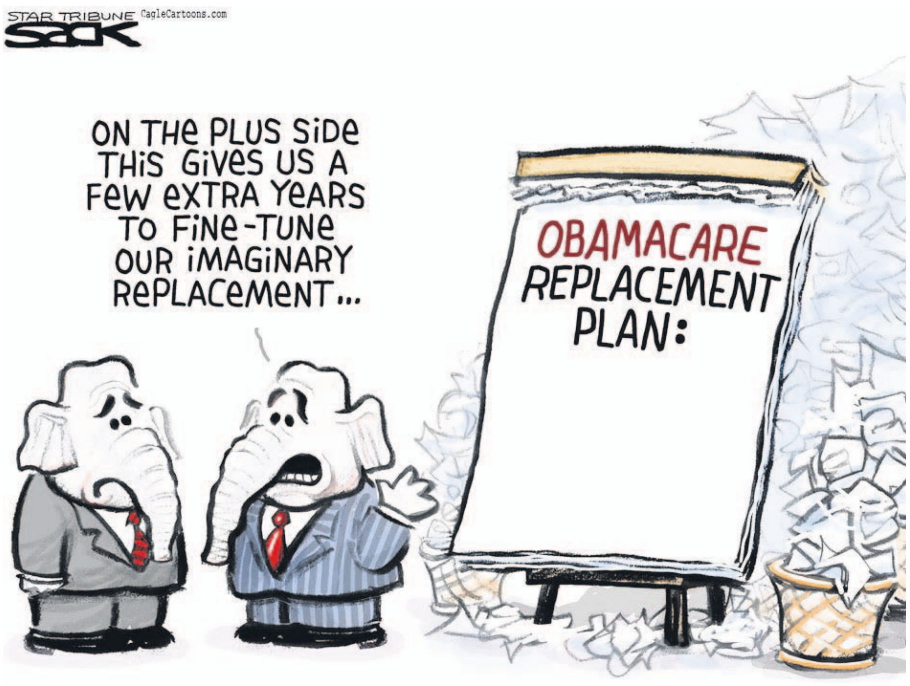
In Thursday's paper we profiled Deanne Shulman, the first female smokejumper in the nation, who faced criticism in the late 1970s and early 1980s as she trained to enter the macho profession. Once she finally got the job, she proved her worth and moved up the firefighting ladder to battalion chief.

Another more recent success story is Mackenzie Clarke from Damascus, Oregon, who on Wednesday was sworn in as the first female combat engineer to enlist in the Army National Guard. A combat engineer is one of 14 combat-specific jobs previously exclusive to males, and the first opened to women.

Pioneers like Shulman and Clarke are important because they help normalize what should already be normal — qualified women working alongside qualified men in all fields. And as that becomes more commonplace, issues like pay equality become much easier to take on.

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

Poking the Republican pyramid


GAIL COLLINS
Comment

Is it my imagination, or are half the governors in the country running for president?

On the Republican side they're piling up like ... those huge stacks of walruses we see off the coast of Alaska now that there's global warming. A stack of governors! Different from the walruses only in 1) lack of tusks, and 2) failure to believe that melting ice floes are a serious problem.

This week Bobby Jindal (Louisiana). Next week maybe Chris Christie (New Jersey). Sometime in July, Scott Walker (Wisconsin) and probably John Kasich (Ohio). We've already got a bunch of former governors in the race, like Jeb Bush (Florida) and Rick Perry (Texas). The guys who are still in office have been stalling, attempting to disguise their total disinterest in their current jobs until a state budget is passed. Although Walker, in a stroke of political genius, has decided that really means the day the budget is supposed to be passed.

That's Wisconsin's problem. Our question for today is what we can learn about our own national priorities from the governor-candidates God has given us.

Almost all governors brag about their economic development programs — hey, it's economic development! But we could have an excellent conversation about how often these things really work. They're frequently huge, thudding wastes of money. Louisiana, for instance, covers about a third of the in-state production costs for any movie that's filmed there, a policy that will pay off only if it turns out that tourists visit New Orleans just because it was the site of "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter."

"Louisiana sank more into 'Green Lantern' than it is putting into the University of New Orleans this year," a state paper noted in December.

Next door in Texas, then-Gov. Perry claimed that his Texas Enterprise Fund created more than 12,000 jobs with a $50 million investment in an institute for genomic medicine. It was actually more like 10 jobs once you stopped counting every single biotech job created anywhere in the state for the previous six years.

In Florida, when Bush was governor, he came up with a plan for biotech corridors that would spawn tens of thousands of jobs, transforming the state just the way Disney World did in the 1970s, except possibly without any pirates. Reuters studied the results and estimated that Florida state and local governments had anted up $1.32 billion and generated 1,365 jobs, or $1 million per new employee.

Often, the goal of these programs is to simply lure a business from one state to another. Then we get a battle of the tax breaks, creating a hole that will have to be filled by you, the ordinary taxpayer.

Ohio, home of Kasich, offered Sears a $400 million deal to ditch Illinois and move to Columbus. Sears decided to stay put after the Illinois Legislature passed a super-emergency $275 million counteroffer. One economics professor suggested the company should pay Ohio a 10 percent commission.

"We're disappointed that it didn't work out," Kasich said in a statement. "But it is very exciting that Ohio was in serious contention up to the very end, and that it took a special session of the Illinois Legislature to beat us."

Honestly, this kind of thing ought to be unconstitutional.

The great irony here is that finding the lowest taxes generally isn't a top business priority. What companies really want is to be near suppliers and markets. Maybe occasionally the CEO's house.

But tax cuts do help make friends. In Wisconsin, the state Economic Development Corp. board — which Walker used to lead — approved a $6 million tax credit for Ashley Furniture Industries, whose owners forked over $20,000 to Walker's re-election campaign. As *The Wisconsin State Journal* reported, in return for the tax credit, Ashley Furniture promised to expand the company headquarters and keep at least half of its current jobs in the state for the next five years. Doesn't that sound like a kind of low bar?

Under Christie, New Jersey has handed out $630 million to get companies to move jobs to the woebegone city of Camden. Which would seem like a worthy goal, except that most of the jobs in question were already in the state — in fact, frequently in an adjoining neighborhood.

"Most of the jobs coming to Camden are filled by existing employees who currently work just a few miles away," reported The Associated Press. "Nearly all the recipients boast notable political connections."

I think we have a topic. Nudge the governor pile and let the debate begin.

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Gail Collins, the first female head of The New York Times editorial board

OTHER VIEWS

ACA court ruling harms Oregonians

Cascade Policy Institute

The U.S. Supreme Court decision today in the King v. Burwell case is a sad reminder that the President of the United States and his administration can arbitrarily interpret laws passed by Congress to suit their own purposes.

In this case, the Affordable Care Act clearly states multiple times in its text that federal subsidies to offset insurance premiums can only be granted to individuals purchasing policies through an exchange "established by the state." When most states failed to establish such exchanges, the IRS arbitrarily decided to grant subsidies to individuals who purchased insurance through the federal exchange, healthcare.gov, as well. By a six to three vote, the court told us that the president and his administration need not follow the language of the law because in the court's opinion that could cause harm to the intent of the law which was to make insurance more affordable.

How this decision will affect Oregon is fairly clear. Oregon originally set up its own state-established exchange, Cover Oregon. But when that $305 million project failed to sign up one person for insurance on its flawed website, the Cover Oregon board voted to scrap the exchange and migrate Oregonians over to the federal exchange, healthcare.gov. Board members didn't seem to care how this decision might impact subsidies for Oregonians, and after the fact said they were relying on federal assurances that they considered this arrangement a "supported state based marketplace" — meaning it would still qualify for subsidies even if the court were to rule opposite of how it ruled Thursday.

What is clear now is that today's decision could actually harm more Americans, and more Oregonians, than it helps.

Now that the King ruling has found for the government, the Cato Institute believes that "approximately 157,000 [Oregon] individuals likely will continue to be subject to the law's individual mandate requirement," and 890,000 working Oregonians "also will continue to be subject to the employer mandates that are putting downward pressure on our economy." These negative results stem from the ACA's provisions that as long as subsidies make insurance somehow "affordable," then the act's mandates to purchase it remain in place.

Today's court decision does not end the discussion about who should control your health care and who should decide what, if any, insurance you must purchase at what price; but it does push that discussion farther into the future. It unfortunately postpones our ability to move toward a more individual, patient-centered health care and health insurance world.

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Founded in 1991, Cascade Policy Institute is a nonprofit public policy research and educational organization that focuses on state and local issues in Oregon.

LETTERS POLICY

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