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OUR VIEW

Enjoy an interesting race while it lasts

Who is going to lead our country in little more than a year?

More than 500 people have registered with the Federal Election Commission for the job, including a cat named Limberbutt McCubbins, a student registered as “Sydney’s Voluptuous Buttocks” and, most recently, an Iowa man that goes by the name DeeZ Nuts. Oh, and there’s also a Democrat named Hillary Clinton and a Republican named Donald Trump and more than a dozen other well-backed GOPers.

The horses are out of the gate, and as of yet none have pulled back on the reins — not even furry Mr. McCubbins. So who is going to win this derby?

Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic nominee for the better part of a decade, has been unsurprisingly dogged by scandal.

That has left an opening on the left, filled by Vermont Independent and Socialist Bernie Sanders, who has been electrifying his growing crowds. There is even the low rumble that Joe Biden is still considering the job. There are another handful of Democrats who have yet to find their footing.

It looks, still, that Hillary is in good shape. She has a war chest no other Democrat can touch and an experience — eight years as First Lady, four as Secretary of State — that no presidential candidate has ever had, though the former didn’t help her much in 2004. Still, she defeats any of the top Republicans handily in head-to-head battles. That, as much as anything, will unite the Democratic establishment around her. So who will the

Republicans unite around? That’s not as easy a question to answer.

Donald Trump leads the polls right now, suggesting a total rewrite of the Constitution to solve immigration, and insulting plenty of ethnic groups and an entire gender along the way. But if the presidential campaign season is a circus, why not have a clown? Trump is clearly the candidate to fill that role, and it’s great for comedians and anarchists that he stay in the race for as long as possible.

The rest are jockeying for position. Jeb Bush has the big money and the big name, but has yet to push to the fore. Ted Cruz has been overshadowed by the Donald. Rand Paul still might have the best hair. John Kasich has become the likable favorite of moderates. Scott Walker and Marco Rubio have every chance to carry the GOP torch. Chris Christie and Ben Carson and Rick Perry and Carly Fiorina and Mike Huckabee are just prolonging the inevitable.

Although it’s not inevitable, perhaps the most likely outcome — Clinton v. Bush again for all the marbles — would be so dynastic and monarchical as to be anti-American. What a disappointment that would be after such a strange and fun and wild (and way too early) start to the campaign.

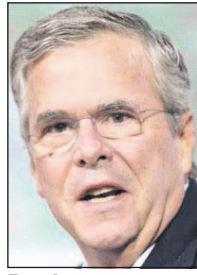
Since that matchup looms large on the horizon, we recommend enjoying the wildness and unpredictability of the current horse race. Because pretty soon, we may be down to two candidates who are too well polished and too well known to surprise us.



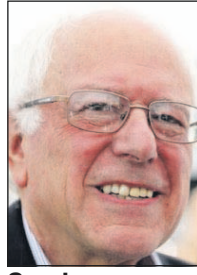
Clinton



Trump



Kasich



Sander



McCubbins

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OTHER VIEWS

Tighter rules for Oregon lobbyists

The (Medford) Mail-Tribune

Despite all the focus on ethics in government during the 2015 legislative session, one key element of the lawmaking process got little attention: lobbying. A report released last week by the Sunlight Foundation, an open-government group, gives Oregon an F grade for its rules governing lobbyists and what they must disclose.

Lobbyists play an important role in the Legislature, advocating for their clients and for and against bills, and in many cases educating busy legislators about the details of often complex legislation. There is nothing wrong with that — as long as the public knows who is doing the lobbying, for whom they are working and how much they are spending. The Sunlight

The Sunlight Foundation report says Oregon is one of four states with the most lenient rules for what lobbyists must disclose.

Foundation report says Oregon is one of four states with the most lenient rules for what lobbyists must disclose.

Lobbyists must register in Oregon, but they need not report the causes they are advocating or their positions on specific bills, as many other states require. When it comes to money, Oregon allows lobbyists to spend up to \$50 per year on any individual legislator before reporting any expenditures. That means a lobbyist can buy meals, drinks or small gifts for lawmakers without disclosing it as long as it doesn’t reach the threshold. Other states have a threshold of zero, or set it very low, such as \$5.

The biggest lack of disclosure, however, doesn’t directly involve lawmakers. It’s the amount of money lobbyists spend lobbying other lobbyists.

If that sounds confusing, it’s really not. When a lobbyist is trying to build support for a particular bill, or organize opposition to one, it’s helpful to enlist other lobbyists in the effort — a coalition of industries, for example, to oppose new requirements on employers.

And because lobbyists aren’t public officials, there is no limit on how much can be spent to influence them. What’s more, lobbyists have been specifically exempt from reporting these expenses since 2013, and a bill passed this year extends that exemption for two more years. Gov. Kate Brown signed it on Wednesday.

The bill originally would have made the exemption permanent, but Ron Bersin, executive director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, urged lawmakers to amend it to include only the two-year extension, because a new online reporting system for lobbyists is due to be finished in 2016, making the reporting easier and muting opposition on those grounds.

Bersin noted that industries, organizations and other interests reported spending a total of \$26 million on lobbyists in 2014, but the lobbyists themselves reported spending only \$92,000 on people they lobbied.

That huge difference would shed a great deal of light on who is spending what to influence Oregon government.

OTHER VIEWS



Jeb Bush’s slog: The tortoise and the hair

In politics, the smallest things often turn out to be the most telling ones, and so it is with the man who was supposed to be the Republican front-runner, who once inspired such rapture among party elders and whose entrance into the presidential race they yearned and clamored for.

They not only got their wish, they got it with punctuation: Jeb! That’s Jeb Bush’s logo, and the exclamation point is the tell. None of the other Republican presidential candidates has anything like it. None of the Democrats either. It’s a declaration of passion that only someone worried about a deficit of it would issue. Methinks thou doth exclaim too much.

Before Bush announced his candidacy, talk of his vulnerabilities focused largely on certain positions — his defense of Common Core educational standards, his advocacy for immigration reform — that were anathema to many voters in the Republican primaries. He was sure to catch flak.

But catching fire is his bigger problem. He can’t do it. In a bloated field of bellicose candidates, he’s a whisper, a blur, starved of momentum, bereft of urgency and apt to make news because he stumbles, not because he soars. Can he soar? Or even sprint?

“I’m the tortoise in the race,” he told a group of voters in Florida not long ago. “But I’m a joyful tortoise.”

And Donald Trump’s a demented peacock and I’m a crotchety hippo. Reverse anthropomorphism is a fun game, but if you’re playing it in the service of selling yourself, best not to summon a sluggish creature with a muted affect and an impenetrable shell.

Republicans should have seen this turtle coming. In some sense they did. Bush’s fans and backers praised him as a thoughtful “policy wonk” and conceded that he wasn’t any dynamo at the lectern or on the trail.

But they downgraded the importance of dynamism, maybe because they didn’t expect so much competition, including Trump. (It’s “the race between the tortoise and the bad hair,” cracked Jay Leno last week.) They couldn’t envision the way in which 16 rivals would rob Bush of clear distinction and definition.

Sure, he speaks Spanish and has a Mexican-born wife, but Marco Rubio also speaks Spanish and has two Cuban-born parents. Sure, he was twice elected governor of a state that’s not reliably red, but so were Scott Walker, Chris Christie and John Kasich.

He’s not the most eloquent or the most inspiring, so his backers began to pitch him as



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

the most adult. But at that first debate, Kasich stole even that superlative from him.

What’s left? He’s raised the most money, some of which he’ll use for television ads much sooner than anyone had anticipated. He’ll try to buy the oomph that he can’t organically generate.

Oomph is what that big speech last week — in which he blamed Hillary Rodham Clinton for the rise of the Islamic State — was largely about. He

was flexing his audacity and independence, showing that his surname wouldn’t cow him from going after a Democratic rival on any matter, including Iraq. It took gall to edit his older brother out of the diatribe. It took guts to go with a diatribe in the first place.

Did it help? Polls suggest not. A CNN/ORC survey that was released Tuesday showed that he doesn’t fare nearly as well as Trump when Republican voters are asked whom they trust most on the economy, on immigration and on battling Islamic extremists.

He runs afoul of the moment. Voters right now are more enamored of outsiders than usual, as the traction of not just Trump but also two other Republican candidates who have never held elective office — Ben Carson and Carly Fiorina — demonstrates.

Voters have had enough of protocol and pieties. Thus Trump thrives in a party that he constantly browbeats and shows no real loyalty toward, while Bernie Sanders flourishes among Democrats though he has repeatedly railed against them and doesn’t technically identify as one.

For some alienated voters, supporting either of these two insurgents is the same as raising a middle finger to establishment politicians and to politics as usual, and tactful, tasteful Bush can never be a middle finger. More like a pinkie.

The pinkie may prevail. In the Bush camp there’s a theory, or perhaps an anxiety-quelling fantasy, that the Trump mania and the related craziness will benefit Bush, who can methodically build support and incrementally lengthen his stride while the glare and heat are on others.

Trump burns out, the field eventually winnows and Bush is saved by a superlative after all. He’s the most durable candidate.

It’s a plausible scenario. But it’s hardly a joyful one. And there’s only one way to punctuate it — with a question mark.

Frank Bruni has been an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since 2011.

YOUR VIEWS

‘Naysayers’ are right about Pendleton city council

Ron Gavette recently wrote a letter focusing on the naysayers of Pendleton. He mentioned Rex Morehouse.

Mr. Morehouse recently wrote, “On another matter, it seems as some on the city council do not want input from anyone, except someone who agrees with them at council meetings. Council President Neil Brown and Councilman Al Plute want me to go to the city staff before talking to the council.”

Mr. Plute recently pleaded innocent in an editorial in the *East Oregonian*. If only the city council had followed his advice, there would be no street repair issue.

Keep in mind that Mr. Plute’s successful renovation of the old Temple Hotel was the result of urban renewal money. Few communities in the U.S. are as generous as Pendleton in providing financial assistance to wealthy downtown property owners.

Mr. Gavette stated that I was also a “naysayer.” I have attended city council meetings and spoken during the time slot before the actual business meeting. The effectiveness of this process is about as fruitful as talking in front of a mirror because the words of the public have no bearing on their decisions.

The two issues that have been the most prominent over the last few months are medical marijuana dispensaries and street

repair. The Round-Up is a month away, which means that there will be a flurry of activity with city workers busily repairing streets used by tourists who will be oblivious to the town’s street repair crisis.

The question that no one asks is who benefits from the decision of no medical marijuana dispensaries in Pendleton? The answer is the main supplier of drugs on the black market.

The Pendleton City Council is oblivious to the term “strategic planning.” The key goal that the Pendleton city management ignores is fiscal stability and accountability.

Until that happens, the city will be treading water and eventually drown in debt. Increasing fees and taxes will cause people to leave Pendleton.

Jerry Cronin
Pendleton

Federal spending on safety net a worthwhile use of funds

The discussions in Washington, D.C., should be focused on how they’re going to spend our money. The “safety net” is a good investment and it’s time to stop treating the people using it like second class citizens.

We need to have the agenda of this country generated from someplace other than Fox News talking points.

Patrick Delaney
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

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