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OUR VIEW

Clean off the 2015 checklist

When this editorial reaches your doorstep, there will be fewer than 48 hours remaining in 2015. All those goals you had hoped to accomplish this calendar year but didn’t quite get around to? Well, you had better pare them down to something manageable, if you hope to cross them off the list before the clock strikes midnight on New Year’s Eve.

Walking the Pacific Crest Trail — that will have to wait until next year. Carving a wooden crib for your new grandson — might not be done on time. Dropping 20 pounds? You can take a few steps in a slimmer direction, but that age-old resolution will have to be won in 2016.

Yet even though time is running thin, there are plenty of meaningful actions you can take in these last two days to ensure that 2015 was not a lost cause.

First on the list: Write that check to a charity or nonprofit you believe in.

For tax purposes, the last days of every year are busy times for charitable donations. Talk to your tax professional, and see if you can do some good and benefit yourself financially at the same time. When those two hoops align, threading that needle is a no-brainer.

Consider giving to the Oregon Cultural Trust. In Oregon, it’s the easiest way to get a lot of bang for your buck.

A quick reminder how the trust works: Donate to a cultural organization of your choice. If they are one of the 1,400 that qualify, donate the same amount to the Cultural Trust, and you get the donation written off your taxes (up to \$500 for individuals or \$2,500 for corporations).

Next on the list: Take a moment to thank those who have earned it.

If your holidays were a blur of wrapping paper, a mountain of chocolate desserts and an unending loop of a “A Very Murray Christmas,” you may have missed the opportunity to tell your friends and family how much you appreciate them. There’s no reason to delay any longer.

No material gifts are required, either. A quick call on the telephone to say thanks for Christmas dinner (or thanks for driving through ice and snow to share a meal) will make both parties feel better.

A stress-free coffee with mom or dad or son or daughter — full of respect and admiration — can help

everyone enter 2016 feeling self-confident and optimistic. And no one gets tired of hearing thank you. A phone call works for that — or a quick aside in the hallway — but nothing is better than a thank you note. Write it down and it comes from a deeper place, and is remembered a little longer by the reader, too. Try it.

Third item on the list: Make that appointment you’ve been putting off.

You won’t be able to see a proctologist before Jan. 1, but you may be able to make an appointment for that exam you’ve been conveniently forgetting. Or maybe it’s that long-delayed visit to the dentist for yourself or your child, or the optometrist or your personal doctor, or maybe it’s that coffee and conversation you know is needed to mend a frayed friendship.

The longer you put these uncomfortable things off, the more uncomfortable they become. It’s best to bite the bullet right now. Whatever it is, take a step and put a date in ink. That puts the wheels in motion to will help make the first month of 2016 a successful one. All you have to do is show up.

The fourth item on the list: Make a small fix.

Replace that flickering floodlight, secure that dripping faucet or tighten that loose railing.

George Bailey learned about appreciating the imperfections in life, but there is also the joy and satisfaction of something working as it should.

Gretchen Rubin, author of “Better than Before” and host of the podcast “Happier,” touts the benefits of the One Minute Rule. She argues that anything you can do in less than a minute, and will make you happier once it’s done, you should do immediately and without delay.

It’s easy to get sucked away into evening-draining mundane chores and busywork, but there are also those little must-dos that occupy too much mental energy when they are being avoided.

So get those dirty clothes in the washer. Get that bill in the mail. Organize those recyclables.

When you unclutter your mind from the little things, you quickly find yourself concentrating on more important issues. And good luck with those!

Those important issues may take all of 2016 to solve. But until then: Get something done and do something good.

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

Bad idea to arm Oregon liquor inspectors

The (Bend) Bulletin

Oregon’s liquor inspectors can have badges, batons, body armor, handcuffs and pepper spray. They also want guns. They have sought to form a union to give themselves a better platform to argue for guns. But a state administrative judge has ruled against a group called the Oregon Liquor Control Commission Peace Officers Association from forming its own union. Julie Reading, the judge, essentially argued that the responsibilities of the inspectors has not changed that dramatically, according to documents and a report in the *Portland Tribune*.

Whether they have their own union or not, they need to prove they have a need for the guns. The OLCC doesn’t see the need. The employees shouldn’t get them just because they want them.

We don’t doubt inspectors can get involved in hostile situations. They can feel unsafe. The few examples they have offered don’t warrant arming them. One inspector told the *Portland Mercury* he had a beer dumped on him. Another

arrested a drunk who was carrying a concealed weapon.

There was also something else that the group wanted. It argued because its members have a function much like police, members should be subject to the same anti-strike provisions as police.

Why would a group give up the right to strike?

We can tell you Oregon has set up a very favorable situation for public employees who can’t strike. It gets complicated, but public employers are basically compelled to keep raising salaries and benefits for employees who can’t go on strike. That’s to get employees across the state with below average salaries and benefits closer to the average. That just keeps moving the average up — regardless of what’s going on in the economy.

There is no doubt that Oregon’s liquor inspectors play an important role in enforcing liquor laws. But they aren’t so vital to society that they should never be allowed to go on strike. And they have failed to prove the OLCC needs to arm them.



OTHER VIEWS

Cracks in the liberal order

In the twenty-five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the architecture of liberal modernity has looked relatively stable. Not flawless or wonderful or ideal, to be sure; not free of discontents and decadence. But it’s been hard to imagine the basic liberal democratic capitalist order cracking up, let alone envision what might take its place.

Through the dot-com bust, 9/11, the Iraq War and the financial crisis, it was striking how consensus held, how elites kept circulating, how quickly populist movements collapsed or were co-opted, how Washington and Brussels consolidated power even when their projects failed. No new ideological movement, whether radical or reactionary, emerged to offer the alternative to liberalism that fascism and Marxism and throne-and-altar traditionalism once supplied. And no external adversary, whether Putinist or Islamist or Chinese, seemed to offer a better way than ours.

Here in the dying days of 2015, though, something seems to have shifted. For the first time in a generation, the theme of this year was the liberal order’s vulnerability, not its resilience. 2015 was a memento mori moment for our institutions — a year of cracks in the system, of crumbling firewalls, of reminders that all orders pass away.

This was especially true in Europe, where for generations the parties of the center have maintained a successful quarantine against movements that threatened their dream of continental integration — be they far-right or far-left, nationalist or separatist.

On the Eurozone’s periphery, in Greece and Hungary and now in Poland, that quarantine is dead. But in 2015 it began to weaken in the European core. Elections in Great Britain empowered Scottish Nationalists, handed the Labour Party back to crypto-Marxists, and raised the odds that the United Kingdom could depart the European Union or dissolve. Elections in France kept Marine Le Pen’s National Front out of power — but by a narrower margin than ever before. Elections in Spain empowered both the populist left and Catalan separatists. And in Sweden, that blessed end-of-history paradise, the most popular political party was suddenly the Sweden Democrats, whose roots are in homegrown fascism.

Europe’s extremes gained, in part, because in 2015 the center was unusually feckless. Angela Merkel’s decision to open Germany’s borders to a million Middle Eastern refugees earned her the praise of her globalist peers. But it also pushed a fast-forward button on long-term trends threatening the liberal project in Europe — the challenge of Islam, the pressure of migration from Africa, the danger of backlash in countries with little experience of mass assimilation.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton taxpayers continue to get short end of stick

News from city hall: Pilot Rock scores a big one! The Pilot Rock Police Department hit the jackpot when the city accepted Pendleton’s offer to provide a 40-hour police presence for a mere \$4,000 per month (\$48,000 per year), considering that the city of Weston pays the Umatilla County Sheriff \$115,000 for their 40-hour coverage. Since starting salary for a Pendleton officer is \$60,000 to \$69,000 per year, it sounds like Pendleton’s taxpayers are making up the difference and deserve a pat on the back. Looks like the chief got that increased manning just in time. Maybe it’s time to donate that little-used surplus police car that’s parked at Fire Station #2 as a further show of support.

Work on the 70-foot Evan MacKenzie statue across from the PGG building is nearly complete. The switch from bronze to steel and the sheer size of the structure will undoubtedly

In the process, Merkel handed ammunition to the argument, expressed in artistic form in Michel Houellebecq’s novel “Submission,” that late-modern liberalism might have a certain tendency toward suicide. And she did so at a moment when both the Islamic State and Vladimir Putin’s Russia were supplying evidence that the liberal project can be at least temporarily defied.

Yes, ISIS probably won’t endure, and Putin’s ambitions exceed his grasp. But by pulling volunteers from Western countries and inspiring terrorists from Paris to San Bernardino, the would-be caliphate has

provided a new template for revolts against modernity. And by playing power politics in his near abroad and the Middle East, Putin has helped make the Pax Americana look more fragile than at any point since 1989.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. heart of that neoliberal imperium, were it not for Donald Trump the big political story of the year would be the emergence of a new New Left — visible in the continued potency of Black Lives Matter, the turmoil on college campuses, and the appeal of an avowed socialist on the Democratic Party’s campaign trail.

Except that Trump is the big story, and deservedly. His mix of reality-TV shamelessness, European-style nationalism and boastful authoritarianism might be a genuinely new thing in U.S. politics. And the fact that so many disaffected voters find it attractive is a revelation, an objective correlative to polls showing declining faith in democracy, and a window, perhaps, into a more illiberal politics to come.

Now: Trump will not be the Republican nominee (yes, really). Bernie Sanders won’t beat Hillary. Far-left antics at Amherst and Oberlin and Claremont McKenna and Yale are not as significant as elite college graduates like to think.

In Europe, Jeremy Corbyn probably won’t be Britain’s next prime minister, Marine Le Pen probably won’t be France’s next president, Sweden probably isn’t about to turn fascist, the EU probably isn’t about to break apart. Houellebecq’s vision of an Islamified Europe, like the Islamic State’s vision of a new Islamic empire or Putin’s Stalinist nostalgia, is more a resonant fantasy than a plausible atlas of the future.

It’s still wise to bet on the current order, in other words, and against its enemies and rivals and would-be saboteurs.

But after liberalism’s year of living dangerously, for the first time in a long time it might make sense to hedge that bet.

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Ross Douthat joined The New York Times as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at the Atlantic and a blogger for theatlantic.com.

LETTERS POLICY

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