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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to everyone who helped the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation end safely on Thursday.

There is a lot to say now — you can read today's front page for how it went down. And plenty to say in the future — about the underlying issues, the blatant disregard for the law, and the near-constant threat of violence for 41 days in Harney County and other counties surrounding it.

But for now, let's exhale and sleep soundly. Let's thank our lucky stars that the four occupiers — obviously stressed both mentally and physically — are alive. Let's be thankful that the tattered remains of the refuge are clear of those who do not belong there. Let's get back to rebuilding the refuge and the communities that surround it.



A tip of the hat to Elizabeth Doherty, the 10-year-old Rocky Heights Elementary student who returned a large amount of money that she found on the ground in Hermiston.

Doherty received a visit and a thank you from Hermiston Police chief Jason Edmiston, who seemed to relish the ability to connect with young people and support a good deed.

Elizabeth's dad said she never wavered in her decision to return the stack of the bills and a unique money clip.

Doherty deserves all the kudos she's received — thousands of atta girls both online and in person — and we're happy to add another one here.



A tip of the hat to Greg Smith and Bill Hansell, who are not only valuable representatives of Eastern Oregon in Salem but gracious hosts to their constituents.

This is not a political or policy endorsement, but a thank you on behalf of the Leadership Hermiston class that got the red carpet treatment at the Capitol this week.

Even with all the action packed into the 35-day short session, Smith and his wife opened their Salem home to the class of 18 and invited some of their legislative friends over to mingle. Then he and Hansell took the time to show the class the House and Senate floors between committee meetings and general session.

As both men preached the message that good legislation comes through strong interpersonal relationships, they showed through their actions that it's not just a talking point.



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.



LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

OTHER VIEWS

STAR TRIBUNE *CapleCartoons.com*
SACK



The GOP created Donald Trump

The betting markets now say that the most likely Republican nominee for president is a man who mocks women, insults Latinos, endorses war crimes like torture, denounces party icons and favors barring people from the United States based on their religion.

He's less a true-believer conservative than an opportunist, though, for he has supported single-payer health insurance, abortion rights and tighter gun measures. Lindsey Graham says he's "crazy." Jeb Bush says he would be worse than President Barack Obama, and the conservative National Review warned that he is a "menace to American conservatism."

It's Donald Trump, of course. He's smarter than critics believe — he understood the political mood better than we pundits did — but I can't think of any national politician I've met over the decades who was so ill-informed on the issues, or so evasive, or who so elegantly and dangerously melded bombast and vapidly.

So how did we get to this stage where the leading Republican candidate is loathed by the Republican establishment?

In part, I think, Republican leaders brought this on themselves. Over the decades they pried open a Pandora's box, a toxic politics of fear and resentment, sometimes brewed with a tinge of racial animus, and they could never satisfy the unrealistic expectations that they nurtured among supporters.

Perhaps it started in 1968 with Nixon's "Southern strategy," recruiting white segregationists infuriated by the civil rights movement. It then expanded to encompass immigration and the three G's — God, guns and gays.

Of course, Democrats also sometimes campaigned outrageously, and some Republicans scorned the politics of hate. There was a marvelous scene in 2008 when John McCain was running against Obama, and a woman at a McCain rally suggested that Obama was an Arab who couldn't be trusted. McCain corrected her and then praised his rival: "No, ma'am. He's a decent family man, a citizen, that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues."

Political nastiness and conspiracy theories were amplified by right-wing talk radio, television and websites — and, yes, there are left-wing versions as well, but they are much less influential. Democrats often felt disadvantaged by the rise of Rush Limbaugh and Fox News, but in retrospect Limbaugh and Fox created a conservative echo chamber that hurt the Republican Party by tugging it to the right and sometimes breeding a myopic extremism in which reality is irrelevant.

A poll released in September found that Republicans were more likely to think that Obama was born abroad than Ted Cruz was. That poll found that Trump supporters believed



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

by nearly 3-to-1 that Obama was born overseas.

The Republican establishment profited from the insinuations that Obama is a Muslim, that he's anti-American, that his health care plan would lead to "death panels." Rick Perry has described Trump as a "cancer on conservatism" and said his movement is "a toxic mix of demagoguery and meanspiritedness and nonsense that will lead the Republican Party to perdition" — indeed, but it

was a mix that too many Republican leaders accepted as long as it worked for them.

This echo chamber deluded its believers to the point that it sometimes apparently killed

them. During the 2009-10 flu pandemic, right-wing broadcasters like Limbaugh and Glenn Beck denounced the call for flu shots, apparently seeing it as a nefarious Obama plot.

The upshot was that Democrats were 50 percent more likely than Republicans to say that they would get flu shots, according to a peer-reviewed article in The Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law. So when the pandemic killed up to 18,000 Americans, they presumably were disproportionately conservatives.

The Republican strategy also nurtured expectations at the grass roots that could never be met. "The Republican Party created Donald Trump," said Erick Erickson, the conservative radio host, "because they made a lot of promises to their base and never kept them."

This is a theme of a smart new book by E.J. Dionne Jr., "Why the Right Went Wrong," who argues that Republican leaders repeatedly made unrealistic pledges — of smaller government, preservation of bygone values and an end to demographic change. "The history of contemporary American conservatism is a story of disappointment and betrayal," he writes, and that helps explain the disenchantment with the Republican establishment.

Maybe Trump's campaign will fall apart, but he has a huge lead in the polls in the South Carolina primary coming up, and he has already done enormous damage to the GOP establishment.

So today the leading candidate for president in the party of Lincoln is an ill-informed, inexperienced, bigoted, sexist xenophobe. And he's not a conservative at heart, just a pandering opportunist.

Donald Trump is the consequence of irresponsible politicking by Republican leaders, the culmination of decades of cultivating unrealistic expectations within the politics of resentment. It's good to see leading Republicans standing up to him today, but the situation recalls the Chinese saying, qi hu nan xia — when you're riding a tiger, the hard part is getting off.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon.

So today the leading candidate for president in the party of Lincoln is not a conservative at heart, just a pandering opportunist.

YOUR VIEWS

Confusing campaign season up for grabs

In this unpredictable election season, it is probably the most confusing voters have ever faced. Some of the presidential hopefuls are thinning out but the front runners are still pitching manure.

Let's look at the Democrats.

Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton are running close and both have ethical problems but they are not bashing each other as are the Republicans.

Sanders would represent the left wing of his party as a self-described socialist but his proposals and pursuit of greater economic equality and universal health care would fare no better in achieving them as president than he has as a senator.

Clinton is fighting an email problem, Wall Street activity and the possibility that men do not want a woman president. The facts are, she is the most qualified presidential candidate running in this race including those in the GOP stable. As the New Hampshire Concord Monitor noted in an East Oregonian opinion February 9, "No one has her experience, not in foreign policy but in putting the wheels of Washington in gear again"

What about the Republicans?

Donald Trump is in the lead but Ted Cruz is still pulling his "dirty tricks," including his trick on Ben Carson. He is the most disliked man in Congress and not one of his colleagues support him. He is a mean-spirited zealot who has earned the enmity of fellow Republicans. The religious right adores him but he is uncompromising and so intractable against the Affordable Care Act and other issues facing the nation, one cannot depend on where he stands.

His honesty is questionable after he failed to report his financial status to the Senate, stating it was a "paperwork error." Who believes that?

Trump is a puzzle. What are we going to do with him? Ohio Gov. John Kasich surged in New Hampshire and looks better all the time. Then there is Marco (Polo) Rubio still traveling the silk route. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush says Rubio is not a leader, an ironic comment by a candidate who appears to be of the same caliber. We may be seeing the last of the Bushes. Former President George H. W. Bush was a pretty good president but his swaggering, arrogant son, George W. will not be a help to the present Bush.

With the nation's present global and domestic situation, this is not the time to put

an amateur in the White House. Voters need to face this reality and seriously consider their candidate.

It's still a good horse race. Where's your bet?

Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

Turner a good choice for Pendleton mayor

John Turner is a man of courage, integrity, intelligence.

Having worked with him as president of Blue Mountain Community College and now president of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of Umatilla, I can attest to his character, work ethic, and ability to bring people together in collaborative ways for successful outcomes.

He has served the public as a warrior, mentor, educator, administrator and visionary economic developer for all of his adult life. He is a defender of freedom and an advocate of life-long learning. I endorse him unequivocally in his bid to be the next mayor of Pendleton.

Kim B. Puzey
Board member, BMCC
General manager, Port of Umatilla

Death penalty should be abolished

While seemingly insignificant to most people, I just read a story that is very important. Charles Sebesta, the District Attorney for Burtleson County, Texas, was just disbarred for using false testimony and withholding evidence in the case of Anthony Graves, who was convicted of the murder of six people in 1994 and spent 18 years in prison, 12 on death row (in Texas where they are serious about the death penalty). Graves was exonerated in 2006.

As a career prosecutor, it is gratifying to see one of my brethren get what's coming to him. People like Sebesta are what give my profession a bad name. But more importantly, the case shines a light on the fatal flaw in capital punishment. It's an absolute certainty that we have executed innocent people and will continue to do so as long as we have this barbaric form of punishment.

Put aside the cost or the fact it's ineffective; the death penalty must be abolished in the United States to insure we don't kill innocent people.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston