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OUR VIEW

Hard to stay on top of GOP's shifting sands

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's tour of Oregon tackled some serious issues.

Emotions and passions were high in Hermiston when discussing opioid addiction. The economic development stakes were just as high when Walden toured land that once housed the chemical depot and hopefully will soon house millions of dollars in investment.

But even in the sage land of Oregon, in sight of the Columbia River, Walden is never far from the turmoil of the Republican Party. He is the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee — making him about as “establishment” as you can be.

Walden's job is to get Republicans elected and, once there, make them the most powerful force in Congress.

That has never been an easy job. Ego, assertiveness and ambition abound. But it has been a tougher job than usual in the last decade as Tea Party challengers have gathered influence, driving wedges through the party and breaking the Republican caucus into smaller factions. They drove a Speaker of the House to find a new line of work.

But Walden's job is about to become even tougher.

Donald Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee — knocking off more than a dozen challengers on the way — and all along he has been insulting his competitors, high-profile Republicans and the party itself. Yet he has won primaries and Republicans have seen millions more ballots returned this year than in the last two primary campaigns.

There are lots of reasons why, but no one can argue that the biggest reason is Donald Trump.

Walden told the *East Oregonian* editorial board that he doesn't know how a Trump candidacy would affect the party. And that answer isn't really a cop-out. No one would have thought the party would be where it is today, and it is near impossible to predict where it will be a year from now.

Walden is trying to stand on the shifting sands of the GOP. The Bushes don't want any part of a Trump-led party. Powerful Speaker of the House Paul Ryan is wishy-washy so far. Republican voters are split on just about everything

except their dislike of Hillary Clinton. They want to defeat her and deny her the presidency and all that comes with it.

Walden has some ideas on how to make Trump more palatable to the party, and a more electable candidate. He said the vice presidential pick will be important, and threw out the name Joni Ernst as a VP he could get behind. Ernst is a popular junior senator from Iowa, a likable character and, importantly, a woman. Perhaps that could help the GOP win back some of the large percentage of women who do not have a high opinion of The Donald.

Whatever you think about Donald Trump, the man will not leave the Republican Party as he found it. He will either reinvent it and restore it to the Oval Office, or he will take a hammer to the cracks already appearing in its membership, its legislators and the Grand Old Party.



Greg Walden

Even while touring Umatilla County, Greg Walden is never far from the turmoil of the Republican Party.

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

Clinton's imagination problem

In March Hillary Clinton told a CNN interviewer, “We're going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business.” That was a true but dumb thing to say in advance of the West Virginia primary. So this week Clinton went on an apology and listening tour through Appalachia.

She heard tales of loss and renewal. Then she gave a speech proposing an agenda for the region. It was a perfectly serviceable speech. Yet you can see in it some of the reasons the Clinton campaign has not exactly caught fire.

The core problem is that she sounds like a normal Democratic candidate in the noble tradition of Edmund Muskie and Hubert Humphrey, but she doesn't sound like an imaginative candidate who is responding with fresh eyes to situations today.

This year it seems especially important to show voters that you see them and know them, and can name the exact frustrations in their lives. Clinton's speech was filled with the flattery that candidates always offer their audiences — “Appalachia is home to some of the most resilient, hardworking people anywhere.” But the political rhetoric was conventional and she didn't really capture the texture of life.

She didn't really capture the way economic loss has triggered a series of complex spirals, and that social decay is now center stage. A few decades ago there were 175,000 coal jobs in the U.S. Now there are 57,000. That economic dislocation has hit local economies in the form of shuttered storefronts and abandoned bank buildings.

Everywhere there are local activists trying to rebuild, but it's hard to hold off the dislocation, distrust and pessimism. Birthrates drop. Family structures erode. Life expectancy falls. People slip between the cracks and inevitably drug use rises. According to The Charleston Gazette-Mail, between 1999 and 2009, per-capita consumption of oxycodone, hydrocodone and fentanyl tripled. By 2009 West Virginians were annually filling 19 painkiller prescriptions a person.

Heavy opioid use often slides over into heroin use. Heroin overdose deaths tripled between 2009 and 2014. In those years the state had the highest drug overdose death rate in the nation.

It's not surprising that there's so much drug use in towns where there's so little to do. But the root of this kind of addiction crisis is social isolation. Addiction is a disease that afflicts the lonely. It is a disease that afflicts those who have suffered trauma in childhood and beyond. And once the social fabric frays it's hard for economic recovery to begin. I ran into employers in Pittsburgh who had

industrial jobs to fill but they couldn't find people who could pass the pre-employment drug test.

Clinton did gesture toward some of these truths, saying, “They're dying from suicide, but I thought Bill really put his finger on it. He said, ‘You know what they're really dying of? They're dying of a broken heart.’” But her policy ideas don't exactly respond to current realities.

She vowed to “take a hard look at retraining programs.” She'd expand tax credits to encourage investment. She'd get tough on trading partners who are trying to dump cheap steel. These are the normal, sensible ideas candidates propose, but they are familiar and haven't exactly done much good.

A daring approach might have been to use the speech to propose a comprehensive drug addiction and mental health agenda. That would have grabbed the attention of all those Americans whose families are touched by addiction and mental health issues — which is basically everybody.

A more imaginative approach might have been to unfurl a vision to reweave social fabric, the way David Cameron has in Britain. In areas of concentrated poverty, everything is connected to everything else — job loss, family structure, alcoholism, domestic violence, neighborliness. It would be nice if America, too, had creative politicians who could put together a comprehensive agenda that nurtures social connection, rather than just relying on economic levers like job-training programs that have consistently disappointed.

A more timely approach would have noted this fact: That for all of American history, people have moved in search of opportunity, but these days we're just not moving. The number of Americans who move in search of jobs has been declining steadily since 1985.

Place-based federal anti-poverty programs discourage mobility; if you move in search of opportunity you risk losing your benefits. The government could offer mobility grants to help people get their families from one place to another. It could set up migration zones — helping people find housing and connection in places where jobs are available.

Clinton's speech was not bad by any means. But she could have offered something inspiring and audacious — to tackle mental health problems, to reweave community, to make America the daring mobile place it used to be. She could have grabbed the nation's attention.

This is a country seriously off course. A little creativity is in order.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in 2003.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Clinton doesn't sound like an imaginative candidate.

OTHER VIEWS

Oregon voters should consider manufacturing when voting

Voters are going to the polls this year with economic worries uppermost in their minds. Although the “headline” unemployment rate has fallen to 5.0 percent, the labor force participation rate remains near historic lows, indicating that many people who might work are not doing so.

Discouraged workers have given up looking for work, and middle-class jobs with benefits are scarce. One issue ties these troubles together — manufacturing.

America's factories are struggling. In spite of economic growth, U.S. manufacturing is in a recession. The sector has now contracted for five straight months, with exports lower due to a weak global economy and a strong dollar. But competition from illegally subsidized foreign producers is the main culprit.

Federal data shows the United States has lost roughly 5 million manufacturing jobs since 2000, including roughly 35,000 jobs in



KEVIN KEARNS
Comment

Oregon alone. The loss of so many skilled, high-paying jobs has profoundly hurt America's middle class, with formerly well-paid workers forced into unemployment, early retirement, or lower-paying service jobs. No wonder voters are angry. To restore the viability of domestic manufacturing, voters need to choose candidates who will tackle the big problem

facing the nation's factories, namely, bad U.S. trade policies.

When Americans are asked why U.S. factories are moving overseas, they usually think “cheap labor.” But labor is only a small part of the picture. What really hurts America's factories is the massive subsidies that foreign governments provide to their industrial sectors. China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and some EU countries deliberately intervene in currency markets to weaken their currencies, making their goods artificially cheap against American-made products. That's why the annual U.S. trade

deficit with China has exploded over the past 15 years, jumping from \$83 billion in 2000 to \$366 billion in 2015.

That's a lot of lost jobs, and both the Bush and Obama administrations failed to take action. Voters should be asking, “Who will stop this hemorrhaging of our manufacturing base?”

In 2013, bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress urged President Obama to include strong, enforceable currency measures in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Congress did so again in 2015 when they passed negotiating objectives for the TPP.

Inexplicably, the Obama Administration ignored Congress, and there are no penalties for

currency manipulation in the TPP. That means the deal, if passed, will allow even more artificially cheap goods to enter the U.S. market,

Inexplicably, the Obama Administration ignored Congress and there are no penalties for currency manipulation in the TPP.

further weakening domestic industry.

America's manufacturers are beset by a host of other unfair trade practices. China massively subsidizes its energy sector, and props up key industries like autos, steel, glass, paper, rubber, and electronics. These subsidies are actionable under world trade law, and could be countered if only a U.S. president enforced existing trade laws.

Most countries have cohesive industrial strategies to grow their manufacturing sectors — but not the United States. That's why Germany, and not America, enjoys a trade surplus with China and the

world, successfully exporting its products while restraining imports.

A strong manufacturing base is critical to America's economic future. Manufacturing jobs pay better than service jobs, and provide better benefits. They support related jobs throughout the economy. And manufacturing undertakes 70 percent of private sector R&D, spawning future industries.

Voters must help rebuild manufacturing. Step one is to identify candidates who support action against currency manipulation and subsidies by China, Japan, and others, as well as candidates who reject outsourcing deals such as the TPP. When voters listen closely to candidates on trade issues, they'll quickly find out who wants a robust future for America's factories, jobs, and middle class.

Kevin L. Kearns is president of the U.S. Business & Industry Council (USBIC), a national business organization advocating for domestic U.S. manufacturers since 1933.