

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Transgender rules are controversial — for now

Last week the Oregon Department of Education released 15 pages of guidelines regarding transgender students.

Among the recommendations: Oregon students should be able to use the names, pronouns and bathrooms they want. In addition, transgender females should be allowed to play girls sports and transgender boys allowed to wear tuxedos to prom. In general, students should be able to present themselves as the gender of their choosing.

“A student who says she is a girl and wishes to be regarded that way throughout the school day should be respected and treated like any other girl,” reads the document. “So too with a student who says he is a boy.”

The guidelines were requested months ago after controversy at Dallas High School, where the principal let a transgender male use the boys locker room. There was an uproar from parents who demanded the student be banned from the changing room. These guidelines will not soothe the controversy, at least while transgender students are regarded with suspicion and fear.

The explicit guidelines are relatively rare among education

departments throughout the country, although many are currently compiling them as state legislatures debate their own transgender rules.

Transgender rights are the issue du jour, and any rules and regulations are bound to be controversial. Clearly legislators are much more interested in political points and creating those controversies — and installing sexual organ detectives at the door of every bathroom, apparently — than solving real problems.

And there are plenty of things to discuss regarding transgender issues, including high suicide rates, high unemployment rates, high sexual assault rates and more. Actual problems. If you think it is difficult to come to terms with transgender youth, try being a transgender youth.

Clearly, bringing those Oregonians out of the shadows will take some getting used to. As will students stating their gender instead of having it stated for them.

But schools are best suited to creating an understanding and supportive environment and introducing our youth to people who are different than them. Or perhaps not so different after all.

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OTHER VIEWS

Environmentalist suit smacks of sour grapes

The (Medford) Mail Tribune

An environmental group that filed ethics complaints against State Rep. Sal Esquivel and two other lawmakers over statements they made about a wolf delisting bill is howling up the wrong tree.

Esquivel, R-Medford, along with Reps. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, and Greg Barreto, R-Cove, were advocating for House Bill 4040, which affirmed the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission’s decision to delist the gray wolf from Oregon Endangered Species Act protection. The bill passed the House, then the Senate, and Gov. Kate Brown signed it into law.

Cascadia Wildlands filed a complaint against the three lawmakers alleging they violated rules that prohibit legislators from making false statements about legislation. The group says the three claimed the bill would not preclude a court challenge of the delisting decision. In fact, the group maintains, a Legislative Counsel review of the bill after it passed the House found it did preclude court challenges, and the state Appeals Court cited the bill when it dismissed the group’s lawsuit last month.

Esquivel says he was going on what he knew of the bill at the time, and did

not intentionally mislead anyone.

A reading of the bill in its various incarnations as it made its way through the Legislature is confusing to say the least. As originally introduced, the bill appeared to clearly say anyone could petition the Wildlife Commission to change the status of a species, and to file a court challenge if the commission failed to act as requested. The amended version that eventually passed the House replaced that language, but the final version doesn’t explicitly forbid court review, either.

In any case, many things are said about many bills, by many people, in the heat of a legislative session. We don’t disagree that legislators should do their homework and know what they’re talking about, but over the course of a session, some of those statements are bound to be less than precisely accurate.

This complaint smacks of sour grapes. The environmental group came out on the losing end of legislation and first got mad, and now is trying to get even. This threat to the legislative process may or may not lead to an ethics violation, but if interest groups can file complaints over every alleged misstatement, it likely will lead to limiting debate and discussion, effectively closing off the public even more from the state’s decision-makers.

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LETTERS POLICY

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THE COLUMBUS TRIBUNE-STAR
CARTOONS BY BOB THOMPSON



OTHER VIEWS

What does Paul Ryan want from Donald Trump?

Speaker Paul Ryan, the Republican Party’s highest-ranking official, stunned the political world Thursday when he announced he does not now support his party’s presumptive presidential nominee, Donald Trump, and might not ever do so.

“I hope to support our nominee,” Ryan told CNN’s Jake Tapper. “I’m just not ready to do that at this point. I’m not there right now.”

The interview left one basic question unanswered: What does Ryan want? Put another way, what could Trump do to help Ryan get there?

The short answer is that Trump must unify the Republican Party. Ryan used the words “unify” or “unified” a total of 27 times in the interview; it’s clearly a hugely important thing to him. But what, precisely, that means is not clear.

Gleaned from a long conversation with someone familiar with Ryan’s thinking, this is how Ryan approaches the situation:

Ryan and Trump obviously have huge policy differences: on entitlements, trade, immigration, and much more. They’re important; entitlement reform, in particular, is a goal to which Ryan has devoted much of his career in the House. But as important as they are, Ryan doesn’t expect Trump to convert to Ryanism.

“I’m not saying he’s got to support my policies,” Ryan told Tapper. “You always have policy disagreements. Heck, Mitt Romney and I had policy disagreements. So that’s just natural, and it’s too much to ask someone to change their policy views that they were duly elected on, on some policy dispute.”

Ryan suggested he’s looking for something bigger from Trump. He referred to the GOP’s “principles” 16 times: “I think conservatives want to know, does (Trump) share our values and our principles on limited government, the proper role of the executive, adherence to the Constitution,” Ryan said.

I asked the person familiar with Ryan’s thinking what that meant. If specific policy differences — entitlements, trade, etc. — are not violations of principle, then what was Ryan talking about?

The person pointed to the times Ryan has felt the need to publicly rebuke Trump in the last several months. There was Trump’s temporary Muslim ban proposal; his refusal in one interview to disavow David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan; and Trump’s acceptance, or even encouragement, of violence at his campaign rallies. Those were the things that disturbed Ryan enough for him to speak out at the time, and those are the things that trouble Ryan enough to withhold support of Trump.

“We’re talking about identity politics — that’s what he was referencing,” said the person familiar with Ryan’s thinking. “Identity politics is what Paul was getting at. He spoke out against the Muslim ban, against allowing a culture of violence at some of these campaign events, against the Duke comments. He’s just saying our party deserves a leader who is committed to unifying, not dividing, our party and our country. We’ve always said we would disagree on policy.”

“It’s time to go to from tapping anger to channeling that anger into solutions,” Ryan said on CNN. “It’s time to set aside bullying,



BYRON YORK
Comment

to set aside belittlement and appeal to higher aspirations, appeal to what is good in us and to lead a country and a party to having a vast majority of Americans enthusiastic about choosing a path.”

Concern over divisions along cultural or racial lines was also likely behind Ryan’s assertion that the GOP is “the party of Lincoln, of Reagan, of Jack Kemp.” Yes, Ryan’s inclusion of Kemp, a man of far smaller stature than Lincoln and Reagan,

had something to do with the fact that Kemp was Ryan’s mentor. But Ryan also included Kemp, the famously self-styled “bleeding-heart conservative,” to project an image of Republican inclusiveness, an ideal to which GOP leaders, including Trump, should aspire.

So in the end, it appears Ryan’s message to Trump was: We don’t have to agree on entitlements or trade, but you’ve got to tone it down on matters of race and culture if you want my support.

Ryan was as surprised as anyone else by the speed with which the Republican presidential contest came to an end Tuesday night. Ryan thought the battle between Trump and Ted Cruz would stretch all the way to the California primary on June 7 and perhaps to a contested Republican convention in July. So the speaker didn’t have a plan for what to say when the race abruptly stopped. He didn’t have a long time to think things through before the CNN interview.

Ryan’s stand carries significant risk. With no competition, Trump is going to win more primaries, and pile up more votes, by the time of the convention. If Ryan changes course and supports Trump without some truly meaningful concession from the nominee, Ryan will look weak. If he opposes Trump, he’ll anger a lot of people in his own party.

At the moment, Trump does not appear inclined to accommodate Ryan. Shortly after the CNN interview aired, Trump released a statement saying, “I am not ready to support Speaker Ryan’s agenda. Perhaps in the future we can work together and come to an agreement about what is best for the American people. They have been treated so badly for so long that it is about time for politicians to put them first!”

In addition, in some cases, Trump has a majority of Republican voters on his side. For example, exit polls from GOP primaries have shown strong support for temporarily banning Muslims who are not U.S. citizens from entering the U.S. In Pennsylvania, 69 percent of GOP primary voters supported the proposal. In New York, 68 percent supported it. In Florida, the number was 64 percent. In Georgia, 68 percent. In Ohio, 65 percent. Michigan, 63 percent. Texas, 67 percent. And in Ryan’s home state of Wisconsin, 69 percent supported it.

That’s about 2/3 support among Republican primary voters across the country for a proposal Ryan called “not what this party stands for, and more importantly ... not what this country stands for.” If Ryan were to urge Trump to back down from the proposal, Trump’s response might be: I won, and this guy is making demands?

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

STAR TRIBUNE
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I WANT TO THANK GOD, MY AGENT, MY LOVELY WIFE BUFFYLOU, AND THE 60 MILLION OF MY ANCESTORS THAT YOU SLAUGHTERED BEFORE YOU DECIDED TO APPRECIATE US.