

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher
JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor
TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Republicrats and Demicans

What lies ahead for two-party rule in U.S. politics is anyone's guess, and speculation about its unraveling has become a popular conversation point in the tumultuous past nine months.

Bernie Sanders, and Independent, has invigorated and swayed a large section of the Democratic party to vote for him in the primary. Donald Trump, who has switched his own affiliation between red and blue based on the direction of the wind for the past 20 years, has (probably) taken the Republican nomination outright.

The major parties still hold major power in fundraising and candidate building, but the donkey and elephant brands have come to mean less and less to the average voter.

A 2014 study by Pew Research shows 39 percent of voters identify as "independent," compared to Democrats (32 percent) and Republicans (23 percent). That's the highest percentage of voters claiming independence from a party in the 75 years of public opinion polling.

What that will mean in the national picture is uncertain. But locally, in the unquestionably red counties of Eastern Oregon, there is one path to the state Capitol — the Republican ticket. The Democratic Party is so neglected here that no contender even stepped up to make a bid for the Oregon House

or Senate in northeastern Oregon's three seats.

In that blank space on the ballot, Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, have publicly asked Democrats in their respective districts to write in their names. If they're able to rally enough support, their names will appear on the November ballot with both an "R" and "D" behind them.

Conveniently, it would also keep a write-in Democrat from mounting a late campaign and getting on that ballot.

While we like the idea of our representatives reaching out to all constituents for a show of support, it does feel strange to see them pursuing an electoral monopoly. The point of a system with more than one party, and therefore primaries before an election, is accountability. Having one candidate stand in for both parties is disingenuous and confusing.

Just because they can each get a few dozen Democrat voters to write their name on the ballot doesn't mean they represent that party's ideals.

But it is difficult to blame the opportunism. With no challengers willing to step up and take the Democrat mantle this time around, being able to show some level of bipartisan support when they return to the Capitol should be a badge of honor if nothing else.

Brown shows contradiction on transparency

Few state functions generate as much interest, or cost so much money, as transportation. Keeping deliberations about transportation policies and priorities open to public scrutiny ought to be a top priority for all who truly care about government transparency.

Taking a page from the Obama administration, which talks a good game on openness but actually suppresses the free flow of information, Gov. Kate Brown takes the position that a majority of the Oregon Transportation Commission can meet privately as part of a planning committee without any notice. As Hillary Borrod of our Capital Bureau reported, the planning group — appointed by Oregon Transportation Commission Chairwoman Tammy Baney — is discussing what issues a contractor should examine as part of a review of the Department of Transportation.

There may very well be politically

awkward aspects of the review. How this examination is framed will help determine the agency's future directions and look at how state highways and other transportation infrastructure currently function. On the line are hundreds of millions of dollars in project spending the Legislature could approve next year.

In light of cities vying with rural areas, gas taxes, perennial suspicions about waste and favoritism, debates over motor vehicles versus public transit, and a host of other issues, these discussions obviously should be conducted in public.

Our open meetings law states: "The Oregon form of government requires an informed public aware of the deliberations and decisions of governing bodies and the information upon which such decisions were made."

It does not bode well for Gov. Brown's views of transparency that she sees no contradiction in her rhetoric and actions on this matter.

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

It takes a policy

U.S. politicians love to pose as defenders of family values. Unfortunately, this pose is often, perhaps usually, one of remarkable hypocrisy.

And no, I'm not talking about the contrast between public posturing and personal behavior, although this contrast can be extreme. Which is more amazing: the fact that a long-serving Republican speaker of the House sexually abused teenage boys, or how little attention this revelation has received?

Instead, I'm talking about policy. Judged by what we actually do — or, more accurately, don't do — to help small children and their parents, America is unique among advanced countries in its utter indifference to the lives of its youngest citizens.

For example, almost all advanced countries provide paid leave from work for new parents. We don't. Our public expenditure on child care and early education, as a share of income, is near the bottom in international rankings (although if it makes you feel better, we do slightly edge out Estonia.)

In other words, if you judge us by what we do, not what we say, we place very little value on the lives of our children, unless they happen to come from affluent families. Did I mention that parents in the top fifth of U.S. households spend seven times as much on their children as parents in the bottom fifth?

But can our neglect of children be ended? In January, both Democratic candidates declared their support for a program that would provide 12 weeks of paid leave to care for newborns and other family members. And last week, while the news media was focused on Donald Trump's imaginary friend, I mean imaginary spokesman, Hillary Clinton announced an ambitious plan to improve both the affordability and quality of U.S. child care.

This was an important announcement, even if it was drowned out by the ugliness and nonsense of a campaign that is even uglier and more nonsensical than usual. For child-care reform is the kind of medium-size, incremental, potentially politically doable — but nonetheless extremely important — initiative that could well be the centerpiece of a Clinton administration. So what's the plan?

OK, we don't have all the details yet, but the outline seems pretty clear. On the affordability front, Clinton would use subsidies and tax credits to limit family spending on child care — which can be more than a third of income — to a maximum of 10 percent. Meanwhile, there would be aid to states and communities that raise child-care workers' pay, and a variety of other measures

to help young children and their parents. All of this would still leave America less generous than many other countries, but it would be a big step toward international norms.

Is this doable? Yes. Is it desirable? Very much so.

When we talk about doing more for children, it's important to realize that it costs money, but not all that much money. Why? Because there aren't that many young children at any given time, and it doesn't take a lot of spending to make a huge difference to their lives. Our threadbare system of

public support for child care and early education costs 0.4 percent of the GDP; France's famously generous system costs 1.2 percent of the GDP. So we could move a long way up the scale with a fairly modest investment.

And it would indeed be an investment — every bit as much of an investment as spending money to repair and improve our transportation infrastructure. After all, today's children are tomorrow's workers and taxpayers. So it's an incredible waste, not just for families but for the nation as a whole, that so many children's futures are stunted because their

parents don't have the resources to take care of them as well as they should. And affordable child care would also have the immediate benefit of making it easier for parents to work productively.

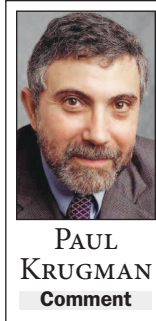
Are there any reasons not to spend a bit more on children? The usual suspects will, of course, go on about the evils of big government, the sacred nature of individual choice, the wonders of free markets, and so on. But the market for health care, like the market for child care, works very badly in practice.

And when someone starts talking about choice, bear in mind that we're talking about children, who are not in a position to choose whether they're born into affluent households with plenty of resources or less wealthy families desperately trying to juggle work and child care.

So can we stop talking, just for a moment, about who won the news cycle or came up with the most effective insult, and talk about policy substance here?

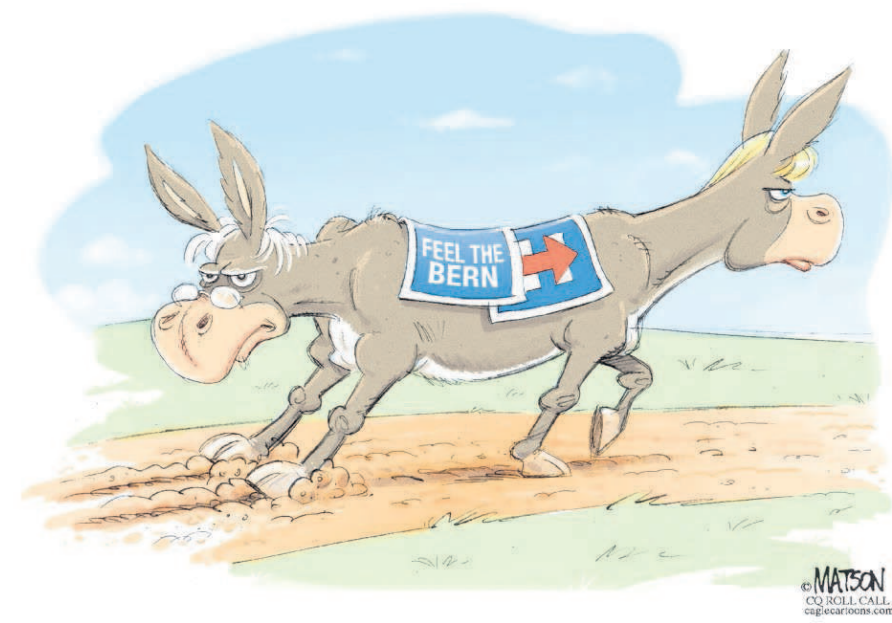
The state of child care in America is cruel and shameful — and even more shameful because we could make things much better without radical change or huge spending. And one candidate has a reasonable, feasible plan to do something about this shame, while the other couldn't care less.

Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999 as a columnist on the Op-Ed Page and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

If you judge us by what we do, not what we say, we place very little value on the lives of our children, unless they happen to come from affluent families.



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. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. 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 Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

Culture corner

It's been 20 years since Weezer released "Pinkerton," considered the band's gold standard among fans and critics. Since then, frontman Rivers Cuomo has eroded much of that goodwill with lazy songwriting (basically everything on "Make Believe") and one laughably bad collaboration with Lil' Wayne ("Can't Stop Partying").

Enter "The White Album," Weezer's fourth in a series of color-coded, self-titled records, and 10th overall, which hit store shelves on April 1. From the opening track, it's clear Cuomo is borrowing heavily from the Beach Boys — that intro on "California Kids" should remind you immediately of "Wouldn't It Be Nice" — but the sound overall blends well with Weezer's power pop style, especially on "(Girl We Got A) Good Thing" and "Summer Elaine and Drunk Dori."

Lyrically, the 45-year-old Cuomo

rediscovers the difference between youthful sincerity and merely sounding childish. In his pining for youth, Cuomo sings the opening lines of "California Kids" ("When you wake up; cobwebs on your eyelids;

stuck in rigor mortis") versus this line off 2009's "Raditude" ("Your mom cooked meatloaf, even though I don't eat meat; I dug you so much, I took some for the team").

This isn't to say Weezer hasn't had some very catchy songs since their mid-90s zenith, but "White" is undoubtedly their most enjoyable album, top to bottom, in nearly two decades. It might not

fully recapture "Pinkerton," but it's more than enough to remind you what they're capable of.

— Reporter George Plaven writes about agriculture for the East Oregonian, and is definitely no rock critic.



Atlantic Records

Culture Corner is a Tuesday feature to recommend music, film, literature and arts.