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OUR VIEW



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Superdelegates further complicate a complicated process

Oregon's primary election is in the books, and some deciding votes were cast on issues both large and small.

But in the national presidential race, it may have been a complete waste of time. Donald Trump is the only candidate left on the Republican side, and he won a majority of the GOP vote here. On the Democratic side, Bernie Sanders easily handled Hillary Clinton, winning all but one county — Gilliam — and outpacing her by about 13 percentage points.

But Sanders' win only gained him a few delegates, and those may well be canceled out by Oregon superdelegates pledging their support to Clinton.

It has Sanders supporters — and Clinton detractors — claiming foul and accusing the process of being undemocratic. In two words: It is.

And who would ever assume such a process would be? Remember, this is not an election for Americans to choose their next president. This is an election for two political parties to choose their representatives. How state governments all over the country get roped into spending taxpayer dollars to achieve that is beyond us.

There is nothing democratic about different states holding elections on different dates with different rules — some primaries and some caucuses, some closed and some open, some with day-of registration and some that required registering weeks in advance.

Remember, too, that unlike the presidential election in November, you "win" delegates, not states. Though cable news likes to trumpet who won Wisconsin or Alabama, it doesn't matter. Delegates are the only thing that matters — not states, nor votes necessarily.

And since the Democratic party is the only major party with their nomination still up for grabs, let's look at how those delegates are chosen. For the Dems, 2,383 delegates are needed to wrap up the nomination, and Clinton is right at the precipice of doing so. She has 2,293 pledged delegates while Bernie Sanders has 1,533. Clinton also has about 3 million more individual votes cast for her in primary elections than Sanders, and that is partly why she is ahead on delegates.

But it's not the only reason:

There are 715 superdelegates in the Democratic primary, which carry plenty of weight and can help choose the eventual nominees.

Parties created superdelegates because they want to avoid the populist, idealist candidates that can stimulate their base and then get clobbered in national elections. In modern history, it has happened to both parties: the extreme conservative Barry Goldwater for the Republicans in 1964 and liberal, anti-war darling George McGovern for the Democrats in 1972. After both candidates floundered in election day routs, the parties rearranged their nominating system to give their insiders more sway.

Those rascally voters may pick the candidate they like most, but they might not pick the candidate who can win the White House. And to political parties, winning the position of power is more important than any democratic principles.

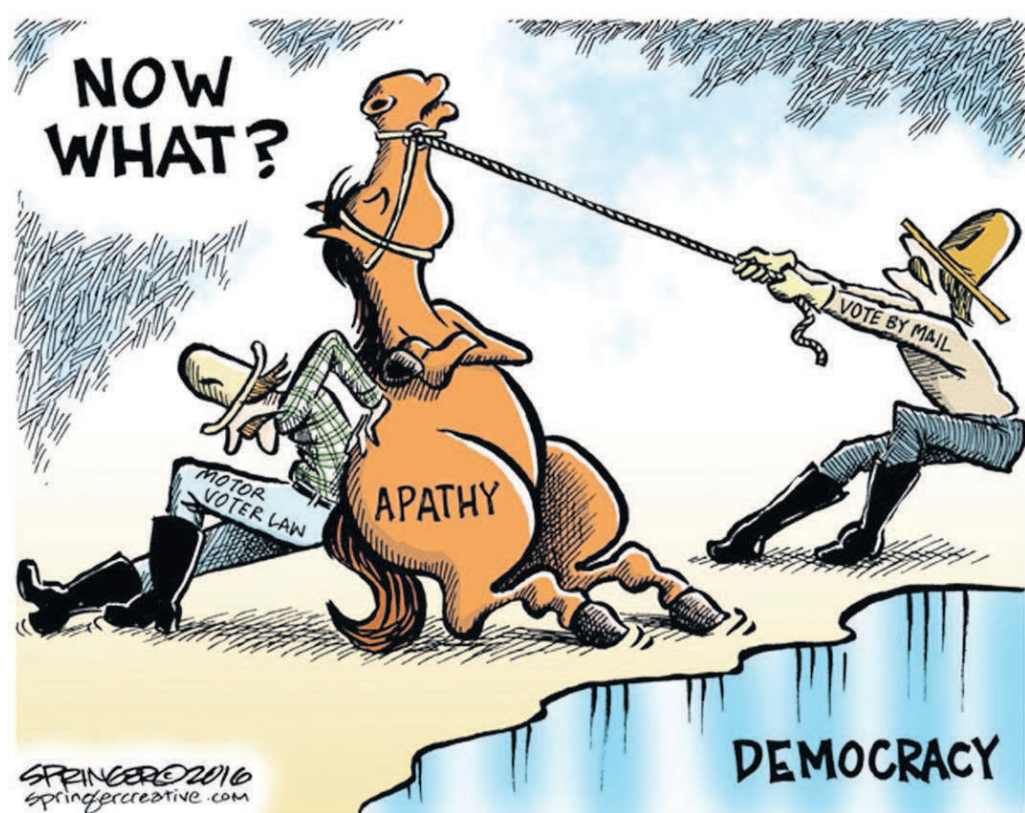
Oregon's 11 Democratic superdelegates include names you've heard of, and some you have not. They are: Suzanne Bonamici, Kate Brown, Laura Calvo, Peter DeFazio, Frank Dixon, Lupita Maurer, Jeff Merkley, Karen Packer, Ellen Rosenblum, Kurt Schrader and Larry Taylor.

Six of them have pledged their support to Clinton, despite the fact that Sanders won significantly more votes here. Three others remain undecided, so Clinton's unearned gains could still grow.

It is understandable then, that outsider candidates like Sanders and Trump have excelled in this primary season. Voters are disappointed with each party's inability to pull together for the good of the country. Neither Sanders nor Trump has long been a member of the political party whose nomination they are running for, and many of their views are outside the party platform.

Trump has succeeded at destroying each and every mainstream candidate the GOP could throw at him. Clinton looks like her mainstream power will be enough — barely — to hold off Sanders.

If Clinton crushes Trump in November, look for the GOP to change their primary rules to make it even more difficult for an outsider to win the party's nomination. They want to win the presidency much more than they want to win votes.



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OTHER VIEWS

The fragmented society

There are just a few essential reads if you want to understand the American social and political landscape today. Robert Putnam's "Our Kids," Charles Murray's "Coming Apart" and a few other books deserve to be on that list. Today, I'd add Yuval Levin's fantastic new book, "The Fractured Republic."

Levin starts with the observation that our politics and much of our thinking is drenched in nostalgia for the 1950s and early 1960s. The left is nostalgic for the relative economic equality of that era. The right is nostalgic for the cultural cohesion. The postwar era has become our unconscious ideal of what successful America looks like. It was, Levin notes, an age of cohesion and consolidation.

But we have now moved to an age of decentralization and fragmentation. At one point in the book he presents a series of U-shaped graphs showing this pattern.

Party polarization in Congress declined steadily from 1910 to 1940, but it has risen steadily since. We are a less politically cohesive nation.

The share of national income that went to the top 1 percent declined steadily from 1925 to about 1975, but has risen steadily since. We are a less economically cohesive nation.

The share of Americans who were born abroad dropped steadily from 1910 to 1970. But the share of immigrants has risen steadily ever since, from 4.7 percent of the population to nearly 14 percent. We are a more diverse and less demographically cohesive nation.

In case after case we've replaced attachments to large established institutions with commitments to looser and more flexible networks. Levin argues that the Internet did not cause this shift but embodies today's individualistic, diffuse society.

This shift has created some unpleasant realities. Levin makes a nice distinction between centralization and consolidation. In economic, cultural and social terms, America is less centralized. But people have simultaneously concentrated off on the edges — separated into areas of, say, concentrated wealth and concentrated poverty. The middle has hollowed out in sphere after sphere. Socially, politically and economically we're living within "bifurcated concentration."

For example, religious life has bifurcated. Church attendance has declined twice as fast among people without high school diplomas as among people with college degrees. With each additional year of education, the likelihood of attending religious services rises 15 percent.

We're also less embedded in tight, soul-forming institutions. Levin makes another distinction between community — being part of a congregation — and identity — being, say, Jewish. Being part of community takes

time and involves restrictions. Merely having an identity doesn't. In our cultural emphasis and life, we've gone from a community focus to an identity focus.

Our politicians try to find someone to blame for these problems: banks, immigrants or, for Donald Trump, morons generally. But that older consolidated life could not have survived modernity and is never coming back. It couldn't have survived globalization, feminism and the sexual revolution, the rising tide of immigration and the greater freedom consumers now enjoy.

Our fundamental problems are the downsides of transitions we have made for

good reasons: to enjoy more flexibility, creativity and individual choice. For example, we like buying cheap products from around the world. But the choices we make as consumers make life less stable for us as employees.

Levin says the answer is not to dwell in confusing, frustrating nostalgia. It's through a big push toward subsidiarity, devolving choice and power down to the local face-to-face community level, and thus avoiding the excesses both of rigid centralization and alienating individualism. A society of empowered local neighborhood organizations is a learning society. Experiments happen and information about how to

solve problems flows from the bottom up.

I'm acknowledged in the book, but I learned something new on every page. Nonetheless, I'd say Levin's emphasis on subsidiarity and local community is important but insufficient. We live within a golden chain, connecting self, family, village, nation and world. The bonds of that chain have to be repaired at every point, not just the local one.

It's not 1830. We Americans have a national consciousness. People who start local groups are often motivated by a dream of scaling up and changing the nation and the world. Our distemper is not only caused by local fragmentation but by national dysfunction. Even Levin writes and thinks in nation-state terms (his prescription is Wendell Berry, but his intellectual and moral sources are closer to a nationalist like Abraham Lincoln).

That means there will have to be a bigger role for Washington than he or current Republican orthodoxy allows, with more radical ideas, like national service, or a national effort to seed locally run early education and infrastructure projects.

As in ancient Greece and Rome, local communities won't survive if the national project disintegrates. Our structural problems are national and global and require big as well as little reforms.

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



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Religious life has bifurcated. Church attendance has declined twice as fast among people without high school diplomas as among people with college degrees.

YOUR VIEWS

EOTEC a long time coming, past investment will pay off

In 1965 the Hermiston Development Corporation was formed. Its president Joe Burns and I got together at that time to find a place to build a trade center facility, which was needed to attract manufacturing facilities and other businesses to Hermiston. They found several suitable locations, and one of those locations is the Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center location.

During this time the city council recognized the need for a new city hall, library, police department, fire department, public works department and other future needs, and the intent to locate them into a city center complex. That is why the police and fire department buildings and the post office building are located where they are today. To accommodate this the city had to raise the money necessary to move the fair.

A county-wide election was held to move the fair. Unfortunately, it did not pass county-wide. Before the election the city did purchase the acreage south of the airport for a new

location of the fair. The city then would give this property to the county for fair use. This gift, of course, did not happen at that time.

The county government is located in the city of Pendleton, and Pendleton has its own Pendleton Round-Up Grounds, but the county did not have a county fairgrounds located in Pendleton. The city of Hermiston elected to give their "local" fairgrounds to the county for a county fair location. The county accepted this gift.

A little history of the Hermiston area: Would you believe at one time there was a nine-hole golf course inside Hermiston? Mayor Walt Pearson, in 1961, stated that his father played on this golf course years ago. Also, at that same time the city had its own local agricultural trade fair each year on property owned by the city. It also had a horse racing track. So much for the past.

As we now know, in 2012 the city of Hermiston and the county together formed the EOTEC. After a long struggle to accomplish this task, we see the fruits of our labor from the past.

Tom Harper, retired city manager
Hermiston