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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to Governor Kate Brown for turning down the opportunity to take part in an Oregon Newspaper Publisher's Association-sponsored debate with Republican candidate Bud Pierce.

A governor's debate at the ONPA conference, held this year in Silverton July 21-22, is a tradition during gubernatorial election years. The only race in the last 30 years that hasn't included a debate at the conference was in 2010, when Chris Dudley declined.

Brown's reason for skipping out isn't specific — she's going to be "focused on her official duties" — but her campaign manager says she is excited for debates, forums and campaign events in the fall.

It could be that Brown has yet to decide her official position on some of Oregon's hot issues this cycle, including the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands national monument, the dangerous PERS spiral or the immense gross receipts tax coming to the ballot. All have surely been in the front of her mind for months now, and if she's not yet prepared to explain and defend her position, it seems a month of preparation would be enough.

Or possibly Brown's clashes with the media in her 15 months in office have left her uninterested in making such a defense in this venue. Newspapers in particular have been critical of failed promises of transparency from her office, and disappointed in her unwillingness to answer direct questions about controversial issues.

Brown surely has more to lose than Pierce by entering a debate at this stage of the game. He's a political newcomer from the minority party looking to hold the current regime accountable, while she would benefit by skipping straight to November and letting our blue state extend the Democrats' reign another term by default.

In order to make an educated decision come November, voters need to start studying the candidates and issues as soon as possible. It's not too late for Brown to clear a few hours on a Friday afternoon from her "official duties" to come make an early pitch to the state's journalists. We'd go so far as to say that should be an official duty for a sitting governor.

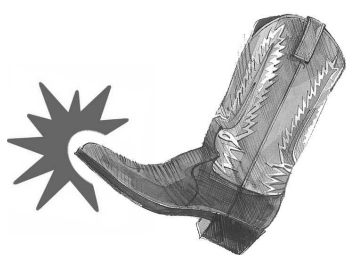
A tip of the hat to a plan to bring seasonal hydropower to McKay Dam south of Pendleton.

Bill Hampton, a registered professional engineer with a long family connection to Pendleton, has proposed installing a relatively small 1.9-megawatt generator and powerhouse at the dam.

It's not the first time it has been proposed, and that's because it's a good idea. A lot of water flowing through a small space creates a lot of power, and that power makes energy we can use to heat our homes and light our rooms.

The idea doesn't come without problems — water release from the dam isn't consistent and farmers and irrigators must be the top priority. But if their needs can be met and we can create some additional energy while doing it, we should.

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

Don't attack guns, attack ISIS

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

So many dead. So many wounded. So many noble but unrealistic ideas about what to do about it.

It didn't take long after Orlando for the bumper-sticker thinking to show up again. (It will be a while, maybe a long while, before just saying the word "Orlando" doesn't automatically conjure what happened over the weekend. The way saying "Columbine" or "Sandy Hook" still summons the demons.)

Get rid of guns! or something to that effect was all the rage, and we mean rage, on Facebook come Monday morning. Sometimes the post would simply ask "When will it all end?" before the nation goes Great Britain on its guns. Or how many have to die, or have we finally learned the lesson, or why can't we do this simple thing?

It's a simple question. In more ways than one. There are more guns in the United States than people in it. If the government were somehow to require — tomorrow — that everybody turn their guns in to the government, what percentage do you think would actually do it? Ten? Twenty? Fifty? If 90 percent of all Americans were to turn in their guns tomorrow, that'd leave tens of millions of guns still on the streets. (And, for the record, nobody in government — or running to be in it — is calling for anything like such massive confiscation. And likely won't. A presidential election season is no time for Big Ideas.)

Magazine size? There are more magazines in this nation than guns. How long, how many hundreds of years, would it take for the ones already in Uncle Bob's closet to break, or rust, or be lost in a house fire, or be turned in by his grandkids?

Change the Constitution? How, exactly? The Second Amendment isn't going anywhere. And won't be. We had a conversation a few months back about this very thing. If every single

registered voter in New York state were to vote in favor of some change to the Constitution, Arkansas could offset that vote with 51 percent of the vote here. A small state like Louisiana could counteract California. Mississippi could nullify Illinois. Then you're just at 50 percent. To change the Constitution, you'd need 3/4 of the states to approve. Folks, do we have that sort of time?

Do we debate changing the Constitution for the next decade, and put up with dozens of more terrorist attacks? Do we spend years trying to pass (mostly ineffective) gun laws through a divided Congress while the enemy plans more Orlandos? Do we debate magazine size while nutcases are filling their trunks with banana clips for the next trip to the movie house, nightclub or school?

The best answer to what's happening might have been suggested by the senior senator from Arkansas, John Boozman, who usually doesn't sound this angry. But Orlando was enough to get even the Hon. and honorable John Boozman up in arms, along with the rest of us:

"ISIS and radical Islamic terrorists have repeatedly called on supporters to attack Americans here at home," he said.

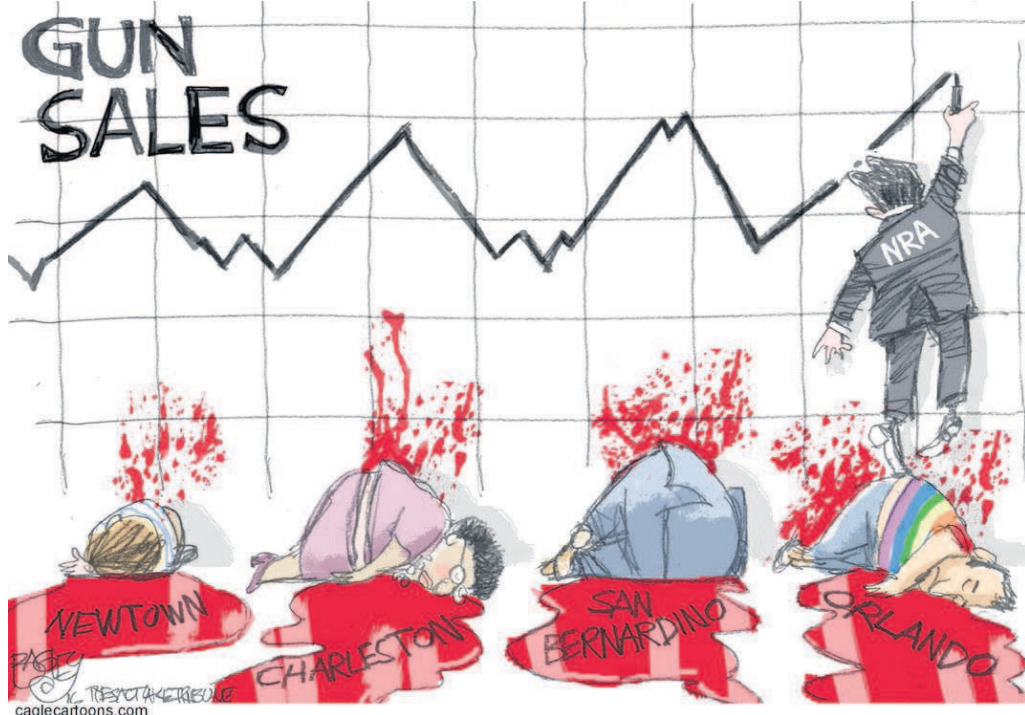
He sounded angry, and he was joined by a lot of people, and not just in this country. Some of us got angrier each time the death toll clicked up Sunday.

The United States must go to the enemy, and defeat him. If we don't defeat him, and clean him out of his safe places like so many rats out of an attic, he'll continue to recruit for ops in this country. There's scarcely a doubt that Americans are weary of war after Iraq and Afghanistan and all these years of fighting. But the enemy doesn't seem to be tiring. And he's recruiting.

We must defeat them. That's the answer. One-sentence posts on social media may make a body feel good, but such bumper-sticker thinking isn't going to stop the next terror attack.

Defeat them. Where they live. As hard as it is to do so.

OTHER VIEWS



Some extremists fire guns; other extremists promote guns

Over the past two decades, Canada has had eight mass shootings. Just so far this month, the United States has already had 20.

Canada has a much smaller population, of course, and the criteria that researchers used for each country are slightly different, but that still says something important about public safety.

Could it be, as Donald Trump suggests, that the peril comes from admitting Muslims? On the contrary, Canadians are safe despite having been far more hospitable to Muslim refugees: Canada has admitted more than 27,000 Syrian refugees since November, some 10 times the number the United States has.

More broadly, Canada's population is 3.2 percent Muslim, while the United States is about 1 percent Muslim — yet Canada doesn't have massacres like the one we just experienced at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, or the one in December in San Bernardino, California. So perhaps the problem isn't so much Muslims out of control but guns out of control.

Look, I grew up on a farm with guns. One morning when I was 10, we awoke at dawn to hear our chickens squawking frantically and saw a fox trotting away with one of our hens in its mouth. My dad grabbed his .308 rifle, opened the window and fired twice. The fox was unhurt but dropped its breakfast and fled. The hen picked herself up, shook her feathers indignantly and walked back to the barn. So in the right context, guns have their uses.

The problem is that we make no serious effort to keep firearms out of the hands of violent people. A few data points:

— More Americans have died from guns, including suicides, since just 1970 than died in all the wars in U.S. history going back to the American Revolution.

— The Civil War marks by far the most savage period of warfare in U.S. history. But more Americans are now killed from guns annually, again including suicides, than were killed by guns on average each year during the Civil War (when many of the deaths were from disease, not guns).

— In the United States, more preschoolers up through age 4 are shot dead each year than police officers are.

Canada has put in place measures that make it more difficult for a dangerous person to acquire a gun, with a focus not so much on banning weapons entirely (the AR-15 is available after undergoing safety training and a screening) as on limiting who can obtain one. In the United States, we lack even universal background checks, and new Harvard research to be published soon found



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

that 40 percent of gun transfers didn't even involve a background check.

We can't prevent every gun death any more than we can prevent every car accident, and the challenge is particularly acute with homegrown terrorists like the one in Orlando. But experts estimate that a serious effort to reduce gun violence might reduce the toll by one-third, which would be more than 10,000 lives saved a year.

The Orlando killer would have been legally barred from buying lawn darts, because they were banned as unsafe. He would have been unable to drive a car that didn't pass a safety inspection or that lacked insurance. He couldn't have purchased a black water gun without an orange tip — because that would have been too dangerous.

But it's not too dangerous to allow the sale of an assault rifle without even a background check?

If we're trying to prevent carnage like that of Orlando, we need to be vigilant not only about infiltration by the Islamic State, and not only about U.S. citizens poisoned into committing acts of terrorism. We also need to be vigilant about National Rifle Association-type extremism that allows guns to be sold without background checks.

It's staggering that Congress doesn't see a

problem with allowing people on terror watch lists to buy guns: In each of the past three years, more than 200 people on the terror watch list have been allowed to purchase guns. We empower the Islamic State when we permit acolytes like the Orlando killer, investigated repeatedly as a terrorist threat, to buy a Sig Sauer MCX and a Glock 17 handgun on consecutive days.

A great majority of Muslims are peaceful, and it's unfair to blame Islam for terrorist attacks like the one in Orlando. But it is important to hold accountable Gulf states like Saudi Arabia that are wellsprings of religious zealotry, intolerance and fanaticism. We should also hold accountable our own political figures who exploit tragic events to sow bigotry. And, yes, that means Donald Trump.

When Trump scapegoats Muslims, that also damages our own security by bolstering the us-versus-them narrative of the Islamic State. The lesson of history is that extremists on one side invariably empower extremists on the other.

So by all means, Muslims around the world should stand up to their fanatics sowing hatred and intolerance — and we Americans should stand up to our own extremists doing just the same.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.



LETTERS POLICY

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