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**OUR VIEW**

# Trump v. Clinton bad for America

Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, surely two of the most divisive politicians in a generation, are in all-out attack mode until the November election.

That is bad for the country. Whatever political and cultural divides have been dug in the last decade, expect them only to deepen during the campaign and into the first term of what will assuredly be one of the most disliked presidents in the modern era.

It has already started, too. Both parties' conventions consisted only of digging ditches of demarcation and division. Only late in the Democratic convention, by former Republicans like Michael Bloomberg, was there any attempt to reach out and persuade members of the other party. Trump tried half-heartedly to cajole disaffected Bernie Sanders supporters, but was only able to go a few hours before insulting Sanders and wasting that opportunity.

It is perhaps understandable then that both Clinton and Trump have extraordinarily low favorability ratings. According to RealClearPolitics poll averages, only 35 percent of Americans have a favorable view of Trump while 58 percent have an unfavorable one. Clinton isn't much better. Using the same data source, 40 percent have a favorable view and 54 percent regard her unfavorably.

Therefore no matter who wins, a majority of the country will be unable to understand what in the

heck voters were thinking. In some ways it is just a sign of the times, when partisan rancor has reached a fever pitch and demonizing the opponent is the best way to encourage voter turnout. In other ways it is a low-water mark, when the best candidate each party could muster is the one that engenders the most fury from the other side.

**Both candidates have high unfavorable ratings, meaning that no matter who wins a majority of the country will be disappointed.**

Through the entire primary system, only about 9 percent of Americans voted for Trump or Clinton.

It's a good reminder that the system for narrowing our presidential choices is a poor one and that few voters have a chance to make a meaningful impact on choosing a nominee. It's also a reminder that few people actually step up to the plate and cast a ballot when they have the opportunity to.

You don't have to search too long before you find interviews of Trump talking highly of the Clintons, and vice versa. The Clintons of course attended Trump's last wedding and their children — Chelsea Clinton and Ivanka Trump — are good friends.

It's enough to make the election just seem like a farce, a choice between two narrow options orchestrated by a few and only exciting a few. The majority, disappointed, will go on feeling more and more removed from politics and their country and their fellow man. The walls will go up, whether Trump wins or not.

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**

## Retirement plan changes will benefit Oregon longterm

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Americans employed in the private sector are pretty much on their own when it comes to financing retirement. Company-paid pensions have all but vanished, and Social Security benefits average \$1,341 a month. Unless workers have managed to accumulate a sizable pool of savings, their choices in old age will be to live in poverty or stay on the job. A new program taking shape in Oregon will broaden those choices, and ultimately reduce the burden on public services.

The easiest way to save for retirement is through employer-sponsored programs such as 401(k) plans that deposit a portion of each paycheck into an investment account. The deposits are sometimes matched by the employer. Workers who have access to such plans are 14 times more likely to save for retirement than those who do not.

But nationwide, 42 percent of full-time private-sector employees between the ages of 18 and 64 have no workplace retirement savings plan. In Oregon, about half have no access to a such a plan. That helps explain why 55 percent of households with a worker between the ages of 55 and 64 have retirement savings of less than \$25,000. Unless these people act on their own to set up an Individual Retirement Account or something like it, they'll face old age without savings.

The Oregon Legislature confronted this problem in 2015 by creating the Oregon Retirement Savings Plan, which will begin enrolling workers next July. The plan will be open to all workers whose employers do not offer a plan of their own. It will be administered by the Oregon Retirement Savings Board,

with the state treasurer as its chairman. Last week Treasurer Ted Wheeler, who pushed for approval of the plan, announced details of how it will operate.

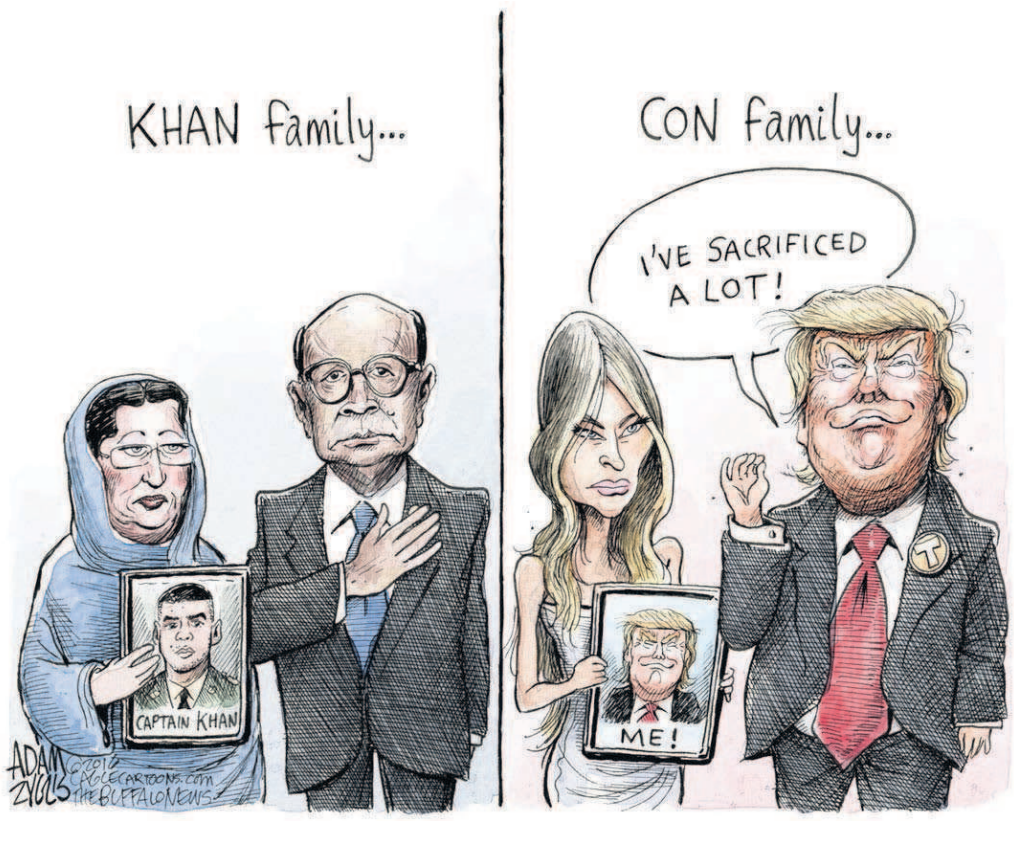
The high points: Enrollment will be automatic — workers will participate unless they choose not to. No employer contribution will be required. The savings rate will be 5 percent, unless workers choose to contribute at a higher or lower rate.

The money will go into Roth IRA accounts, which means that contributions are made with after-tax dollars but investment gains and eventual withdrawals are tax-free. Investments will be tailored to the age of the worker, with the objective shifting from growth to preservation of capital as retirement nears, unless the account-holder chooses a different investment objective.

Workers who think they can't afford to save 5 percent of their pay, or who prefer to set up their own savings plans, can opt out of the state program. But automatic enrollment has been shown to double participation in workplace savings plans. And even low-wage workers in a plan with modest investment returns can accumulate a sizeable nest egg over the course of their working lives.

A majority of states are considering publicly sponsored retirement savings plans; Oregon is further ahead than all but a few. The social benefits will be broad. Oregon will be a better place for everyone if fewer senior citizens are living in poverty and turning to the government for help with housing, medical and living expenses. Americans are increasingly on their own in preparing for retirement — and programs like Oregon's will make self-reliance easier.

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**OTHER VIEWS**

## Obama's American idea

There is a line from a conversation 20 years ago between Barack Obama and photographer Mariana Cook that offers an important insight into the president: "All my life," he said, "I have been stitching together a family, through stories or memories or friends or ideas."

There was much to stitch: his lost Kenyan father, his Indonesian stepfather Lolo Soetoro, his unusual journey through various names and identities, his black paternal side and his white maternal side, his youth in Asia, his adolescence in Hawaii, his student years in California and New York, and his coming-of-age in Chicago.

What Barack Obama ended up "stitching together" in his path to selfhood — the unifying idea that became his core reference — was the United States of America. As he said in his keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, "In no other country on Earth is my story even possible."

This was the moment Obama emerged onto the national stage: "There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America — there's the United States of America." I can still feel the frisson his words stirred in Boston.

In the dozen years since, his message has not changed. It was evident again in Philadelphia last week as he endorsed Hillary Clinton's presidential bid. He spoke of the American values that led his Kansas grandparents and his wife Michelle's family to see the children of immigrants as "just as American as their own, whether they wore a cowboy hat or a yarmulke; a baseball cap or a hijab."

Obama was at his most uplifting. Because he discovered America, pieced it together after his years overseas, saw it as a newcomer might, understood from experience the space it affords for personal reinvention, he brings a singular intellectual passion to the American idea: a nation of immigrants equal before the law dedicated to the proposition that among their inalienable rights are "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

He admonished Donald Trump, the would-be savior: "We don't look to be ruled." No, Americans are engaged in "self-government." He was reminding Americans, at a critical moment, of the first words of the Constitution: "We the People." Of every color, creed, sexuality, race, ethnicity are the people composed: That, for Obama, is America's strength; it's what gave him his.

In no other nation is tomorrow so vivid, yesterday so pale. Where you came from yields to American rebirth. There is no real America to take back, as Trump insists, because America's many-hued reality is a ceaseless becoming. It is a mosaic in which



**ROGER COHEN**  
Comment

a Barry Soetoro, his boyhood name in Indonesia, can become a Barry Obama and at last a proud Barack Hussein Obama — the country where, as Obama said in 2004, a "skinny kid with a funny name" finds his place.

Yet this America, whose fault lines Obama the hybrid stepped across 12 years ago, is perhaps more divided than ever as his presidency winds down. There was something about Obama's blackness, his intellectualism, his cool distillation of problems that was intolerable to a wide swath of the white working class angered by lost jobs, lost wars, lost security and lost pride.

**"There is not a black America and a white America and a Latino America and Asian America — there's the United States of America."**

— Barack Obama, At 2004 Democratic National Convention

These Americans have felt left behind. They have perceived not outreach from Obama's White House but condescension.

More than 2.5 million members of the American armed forces have been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq over the past 15 years. For a significant number of those 2.5 million families, Obama has failed to honor their sacrifice because, in his prudent realism (a "surge" in Afghanistan with a date certain to end), there is little place for the heroic American narrative.

I think a lot of this fracture was inevitable given the global economic context, and domestic political and cultural realities, within which Obama worked. Still, he could not bridge the divide; perhaps he sharpened it.

Michelle also participated in Obama's 1996 conversation with Cook, part of which appeared in *The New Yorker* in 2009, and worried that her husband was "too much of a good guy for the kind of brutality" of politics. Obama talked about how Michelle was at once "completely familiar" and "a complete mystery to me in some ways" and how the tension between those two feelings "makes for something strong, because, even as you build a life of trust and comfort and mutual support, you retain some sense of surprise or wonder about the other person."

America has been governed, for almost eight years now, by a happy, grounded man who knows how to love a woman. That has not been the least of Obama's gifts to the nation he stitched together in his personal quest.

We were reminded of that gift last week in Philadelphia by Obama and Michelle — and are reminded every day of Trump's threat to America's "E pluribus unum — Out of many, one." Trump, whose American journey has led him only to denigration of Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim parents of a fallen American soldier, and to this arid conviction: Hatred brings a headline.

Roger Cohen joined *The New York Times* in 1990.

**YOUR VIEWS**

### Despite law, little has changed on limiting television noise

Of the few things Congress has acted on, even passed a law about that actually might make a daily improvement in quality of life for many Americans, the Commercial Audio Level Mitigation (CALM) Act seems to be among the most wished for by the people.

Three years later, there has been no change. Flaunting the rules, broadcasters have found no consequence to ignoring federal legislation. The process of filing a complaint with the FCC is arduous and apparently designed to encourage giving up, not finishing the complaint.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a commercially available TV that had the ability to control the audio level internally, advertised as "smart, very smart."

A TV sound regulator was also available, but it required complex hookup and yielded a dense 60Hz buzz. But the automatic technology has been available for decades, and not expensive, either.

What right do big corporations have to ignore federal regulations and why can't or shouldn't little guys like you and me get away with flaunting our own choice regulations?

Thomas L. Farney  
Hermiston

**LETTERS POLICY**

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