

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Time to think about November

There is more than Trump versus Clinton to think about this November.

The presidential race is definitely sucking up a lot of the election air, and rightfully so. This is the leader of the free world we're talking about, and the top two candidates have deep flaws that require constant spelunking in order to get to the bottom of them.

But don't let that one race keep you from researching the others. And just as importantly, don't let your annoyance with Trump and Clinton keep you from thinking about and voting in the dozens of other races where your vote will have a much bigger impact. Because let's face it — Oregon is never going to go for Donald Trump. But in the myriad of other decisions, your vote matters to a much larger degree.

And if it's not quite decision time yet, it is time to get serious about educating yourself on the issues.

Our editorial board will sit with many local and statewide groups with something at stake in November. We'll do our best to ask the difficult questions and demand straight answers. We will pass along what we learned and what we think in editorials and endorsements.

We also will set aside a large chunk of space for your letters on the candidates and issues. We hope our readers take the opportunity to not just mimic talking points in their letters of support, however. That

gets repetitive and readers tune them out. We recommend putting your personal thoughts to paper (or email) and use your own reasoning instead of what campaigns try to pound into us from stump speeches and advertisements.

In Umatilla County, it's mostly a light ballot. Perhaps the most competitive local race will be that for sheriff: incumbent Terry Rowan has been challenged by Ryan Lehnert for the position.

In our cities, Pendleton council races were all decided in the May primaries. In Hermiston, candidates have until August 30 to make it on the council ballot, and Mayor Dave Drotzmann has no challenger. We do hope to see some competitive races, like we did last time around, and encourage anyone thinking about running to step into the field.

We also will spend a lot of time on statewide issues, from the interesting race for the governor to the handful of measures that will be in front of Oregon voters. Measure 97 is perhaps the most drastic tax legislation since Measure 5 was passed back in 1990, and it requires looking over with a fine-toothed comb.

The campaign season can seem interminable and vacuous, and perhaps you were right to ignore the chatter until now. But now is the time to take it seriously, and make your vote a knowledgeable one come November.

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

Oregon's cagey relationship with the public continues

The Oregonian

It shouldn't require superhuman tenacity, legal expertise or deep pockets to be able to review how school districts, state environmental regulators or other governmental agencies handle the public's business. But in Oregon, where legislators routinely shield agencies from disclosure requirements and where agencies demand as much as \$1 million to retrieve data for the public, those seeking to scrutinize government workings have needed to summon all three.

That's not likely to change much, even with the recent release of proposed public records reforms by Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum.

Rosenblum's draft amendments provide some worthwhile ideas, but the proposal avoids tackling some of the biggest problems facing those seeking public information. The draft amendments to the public disclosure law leave unlimited the fees that agencies can charge for fulfilling requests. The reforms lack any built-in consequences for public bodies that take excessive amounts of time to respond. Agencies can continue citing any one of the more than 400 exemptions that shield public records from public scrutiny.

In short: Oregon's cagey relationship with the public continues.

Still, the proposal offers a foundation upon which Rosenblum and her task force of public officials, journalists, citizen advocates and others can and should build more aggressive reforms. True government accountability and transparency depend on it.

First, the positives. The proposed changes give shape to a law that currently measures compliance with fuzzy standards of whether an agency responded "as soon as practicable and without unreasonable delay." Rosenblum's proposal calls for specifying that public bodies acknowledge a request within five business days and fulfill them within 10, except for schools that are not in session. It also calls for producing an exhaustive catalogue that lists the exemptions legislators have authorized over the years. And a new statement of purpose makes clear that the default mode for government should be to make records accessible to the public — with narrowly construed exceptions.

But the fixes are largely symbolic and won't resolve many of the conflicts that citizens and media members reported to the task force, such as the

\$1,042,450.20 estimate Portland Police cited to fulfill a request from *The Oregonian*/OregonLive's Carli Brosseau for information from the bureau's evidence database, or the \$750 that the Department of Environmental Quality wanted to charge *The Oregonian*/OregonLive's Rob Davis to search and produce emails with a few keywords.

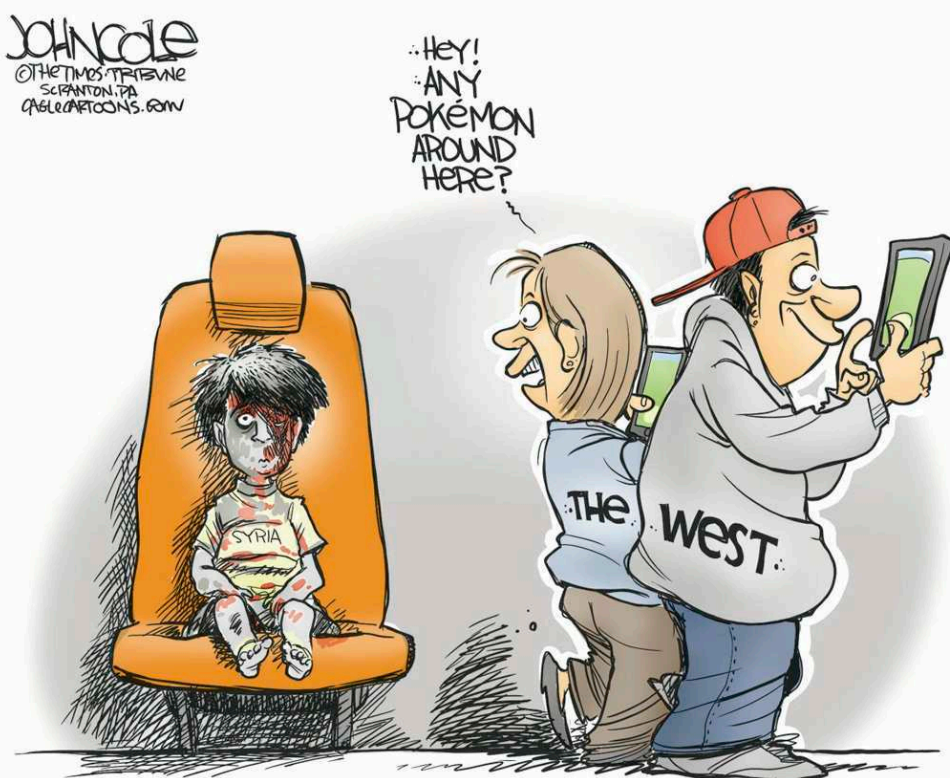
For many citizens who don't have the resources or desire to spend such money, \$750 might as well as be \$1 million. This is how a government thwarts citizen scrutiny.

With no consequences in the proposed legislation, it's unclear whether the fixes would have prevented one of the most egregious public-records runarounds recently. In December 2014, Anne Marie Gurney with the Freedom Foundation requested from the Department of Human Services the names and contact information for home health care workers to alert them of their rights regarding paying fees to unions. Although the information was public, the agency stalled and put Gurney off for four months — long enough for the Legislature to pass a law exempting that information from public disclosure laws. Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill, despite knowing there was an unfilled request for the information, Brown acknowledged earlier this year.

Fortunately, there's still time to strengthen the proposed reforms. Veteran *Oregonian*/OregonLive investigative reporter Les Zaitz, who serves on the task force for the Oregon Territory Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, plans to raise the issue of fees at an Aug. 31 meeting. And Michael Kron, the attorney general's special counsel who is heading up the public records task force, said Rosenblum wants to continue convening the group to tackle fees and streamlining exemptions, even if those issues don't get addressed in the 2017 session. Separately, Brown's office is developing a proposal for a public records advocate to handle disputes.

These are promising steps. But as Zaitz noted, there needs to be a change in mentality as well as a change in law. Public officials need to get away from this misconception that they own public records and that citizens gain access only by their good grace, he said, adding "this is about citizens watching what their government is doing."

Rosenblum, Brown and legislators need to show with their actions that that's an outcome they genuinely want to support.



OTHER VIEWS

From Trump, a stunning admission and a new direction

In general, in a campaign filled with controversial statements, it's fair to say Donald Trump doesn't do apologies and he doesn't do regret. Which is why it was extraordinary that in his speech in Charlotte Thursday night — one of his first under a new campaign management — Trump did that rarest of things: He expressed regret for rhetorical excesses of the past and conceded that they may have caused pain for some people.

"Sometimes in the heat of debate and speaking on a multitude of issues, you don't choose the right words or say the right thing," Trump told the crowd at the Charlotte Convention Center. "I have done that. And believe it or not, I regret it. And I do regret it. Particularly where it may have caused personal pain. Too much is at stake for us to be consumed with these issues."

That was new Trump. Very new Trump.

But there was much more new Trump in Charlotte. Trump introduced a theme of a "New American Future" — his team capitalized in his prepared text — which all Americans would reach by working together in a Trump administration.

For the man who at the Republican convention proclaimed that "I alone can fix" the nation's problems, the Charlotte speech represented a remarkable turn toward common effort. According to the prepared text, Trump used the word "together" seven times in the speech, which must be a record for him. (He used "together" once — once — in his convention acceptance speech.) From Charlotte:

"We are one country, one people, and we will have together one great future."

"I'd like to talk about the New American Future we are going to create together."

"This isn't just the fight of my life, it's the fight of our lives — together — to save our country."

"We are going to bring this country together."

"Together, we will make America strong again."

Now, much of that is political boilerplate. But it is political boilerplate that Trump, the unconventional politician and speaker, has not used before.

And not just "together" — Trump also added a message of inclusiveness that could have come from any mainstream politician, Democrat or Republican. But not, until now, from Donald Trump.

"We cannot make America Great Again if we leave any community behind," Trump said. "Nearly four in 10 African-American children are living in poverty. I will not rest until children of every color in this country are fully included in the American Dream. Jobs, safety, opportunity. Fair and equal representation. This is what I promise to African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and all Americans."

Trump expanded on the appeal to black voters that he made Tuesday night at a speech in West Bend, Wisconsin, charging that Hillary Clinton and Democrats have



BYRON YORK
Comment

for decades taken black support for granted. Citing figures on poverty, education, and crime, Trump said, "If African-American voters give Donald Trump a chance by giving me their vote, the result for them will be amazing ... Look at how badly things are going under decades of Democratic leadership ... It is time for a change ... What do you have to lose?"

"Change" — Trump hit the theme over and over, portraying himself as the "change candidate" to voters wary

of electing Democrats to a third consecutive term.

Much of the speech was a tighter, more disciplined indictment of Clinton along the lines of Trump's older speeches. But in Charlotte, Trump admitted his own rhetorical sins before laying into Clinton for her substantive lapses.

"The American people are still waiting for Hillary Clinton to apologize for all of the many lies she's told to them," Trump said. "Tell me, has Hillary Clinton ever apologized for lying about her illegal email server and deleting 33,000 emails? Has Hillary Clinton apologized for turning the State Department into a

pay-for-play operation where favors are sold to the highest bidder? Has she apologized for lying to the families who lost loved ones at Benghazi?"

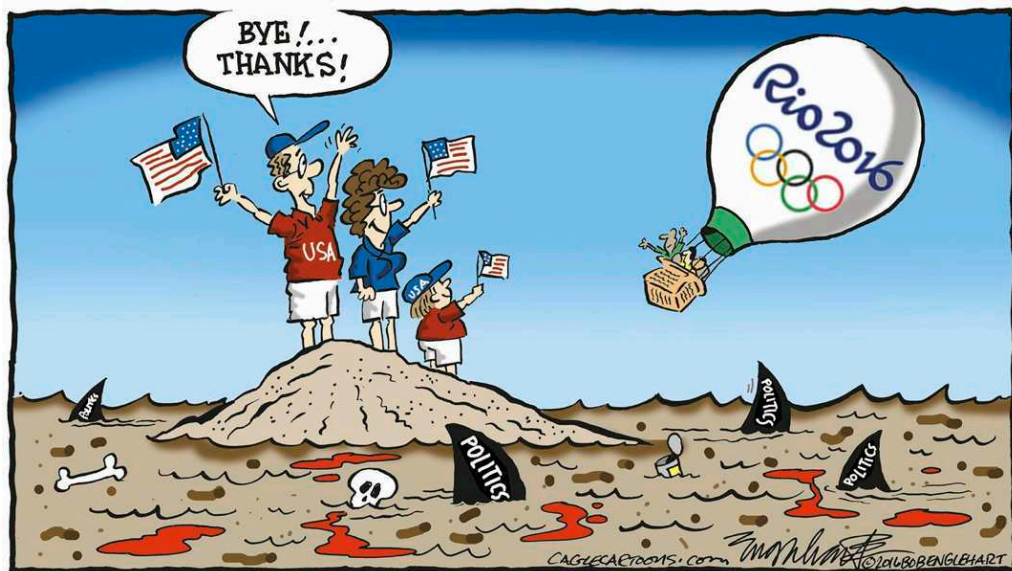
There were the standard Trump critiques of big trade deals. Of a corrupt system. Of immigration practices. But there were also rhetorical turns everywhere. For example, when Trump declared that he would "refuse to let another generation of American children be excluded from the American Dream," he turned a term favored by immigration reformers to his own uses: "Let our children be dreamers, too."

In all, it was perhaps Trump's most remarkable speech of the campaign — and the third noteworthy effort this week. On Monday, Trump gave a solid speech on his proposals to fight radical Islamic terrorism. On Tuesday, he gave a sharp and focused speech on law and order, coupled with an appeal to black voters. And then Thursday night in Charlotte.

Among other things, the North Carolina speech defied expectations set by some of the reporting on the recent changes at the top of the Trump campaign. Some press accounts suggested that Trump's decision to bring in Breitbart executive Steve Bannon and to promote pollster Kellyanne Conway somehow amounted to an effort to return to the old Trump of the Republican primaries. The original wild man so beloved by a winning margin of GOP voters would come back.

That's not at all what has happened so far. Trump's speech in Charlotte suggested a candidate willing to take a new approach to the formidable problems he faces in this race. Perhaps the old Trump will come roaring back at any moment. But Trump in Charlotte was something entirely new.

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



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. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include city of residence and a phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.