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OUR VIEW

Your vote matters

The presidential election is supposed to be the pinnacle of American democracy: candidates scurrying to every corner of this country, exhausting themselves by doing everything possible to earn votes.

By the time Election Day finally arrives, they will have eaten every local specialty, sipped a million diner milkshakes and taken just as many swigs of local beer. They will have answered a billion questions, been questioned on every policy position in their platform, and heard from voters in downtown Chicago, the tip of Florida and the top of the Rocky Mountains.

After all that, we get to pick. Americans go to the polls, or mail in their choices, and on Election Day we tally the results. This weird thing called the electoral college meets, and the next president is named. If the person currently holding the job will no longer have it, they prepare to peacefully surrender the reins of power. The loser calls to congratulate the winner, then tearfully thanks their running partner, family and supporters in a televised concession speech. America lurches forward.

Except this year things have been a little different, and Election Day will likely be different, too.

Republican candidate for president Donald Trump has routinely denigrated the voting process without proof — calling it “rigged” well

before ever the first vote was cast. Perhaps that is because the polls are not in his favor, and Trump has never conceded anything.

Yet Trump’s accusations, like many levied in his campaign, tap into a real fear but belie a deeper and truer issue. Clearly, foreign governments are very interesting in fiddling with the American election process. Clearly, online data is more susceptible than ever. Such cyber warfare would be terrorism of the most dangerous variety — it would send the country into panic and suspicion of our neighbors and institutions.

But Trump has pointed the finger in the wrong direction — dead people and immigrants casting ballots — while an actual, vital concern goes without further inquiry.

For now, our election is in good hands. Especially in Oregon, our system is remarkably resistant to fraud — both in the voting process and then on the back end tabulation. Perhaps more states should consider our system and take additional efforts to keep results safe from cyber terrorists.

The time to fill out your ballot is now. Affix a stamp and put it in the mail, or take it directly to your neighborhood drop box. However you do it: Be sure to vote. Have faith in our country, its elections, and our democracy. Then accept the results, whatever they are.

**Vote.
Have faith in
this country, its
elections, our
democracy**

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

After Malheur verdict: Where to now?

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

A jury’s “not guilty” verdicts last week in the trial of seven Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupiers shocked everyone. The defendants and their supporters expected to be railroaded by a corrupt federal government. Opponents of the occupation assumed that laws must have been broken in the course of a six-week armed takeover of a federal facility. Prosecutors thought they had an airtight case — but they pressed it further than the jury was willing to follow.

As the shock wore off, however, it became evident that the verdicts were the product of prosecutorial over-reach. Ammon Bundy, his older brother Ryan and five of their supporters were charged with conspiring to prevent federal employees from doing their jobs. To make a conspiracy charge stick, prosecutors must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused harbored a specific intent to break the law. Courtroom arguments thus hinged on the defendants’ state of mind rather than on physical evidence. Prosecutors should have contented themselves with proving the Bundys and their band damaged public property.

The defendants’ court victory is not final — the Bundy brothers and their father, Cliven, still face federal charges in Nevada stemming from a 2014 standoff over the family’s refusal to pay livestock grazing fees. If prosecutors in Nevada learn anything from the Oregon trial, they will focus jurors’ attention on what the Bundys did, not what they were thinking.

The acquittals also cannot erase the worst consequence of the Malheur occupation. The celebrations outside the federal courthouse in Portland could not change the fact that one of the occupiers, Robert “LaVoy” Finicum, was shot by state police at a roadblock as the takeover near Burns was nearing its end. Finicum’s death does credit to no one: Not to the occupiers, who were awoken from their self-aggrandizing dreams of standing at the vanguard of a national uprising, and authorities whose determination to avoid bloodshed turned to ashes in an instant.

Other consequences will follow. The occupation began in response to the re-imprisonment of Harney County ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond, whose release from incarceration was reversed after a U.S. attorney insisted

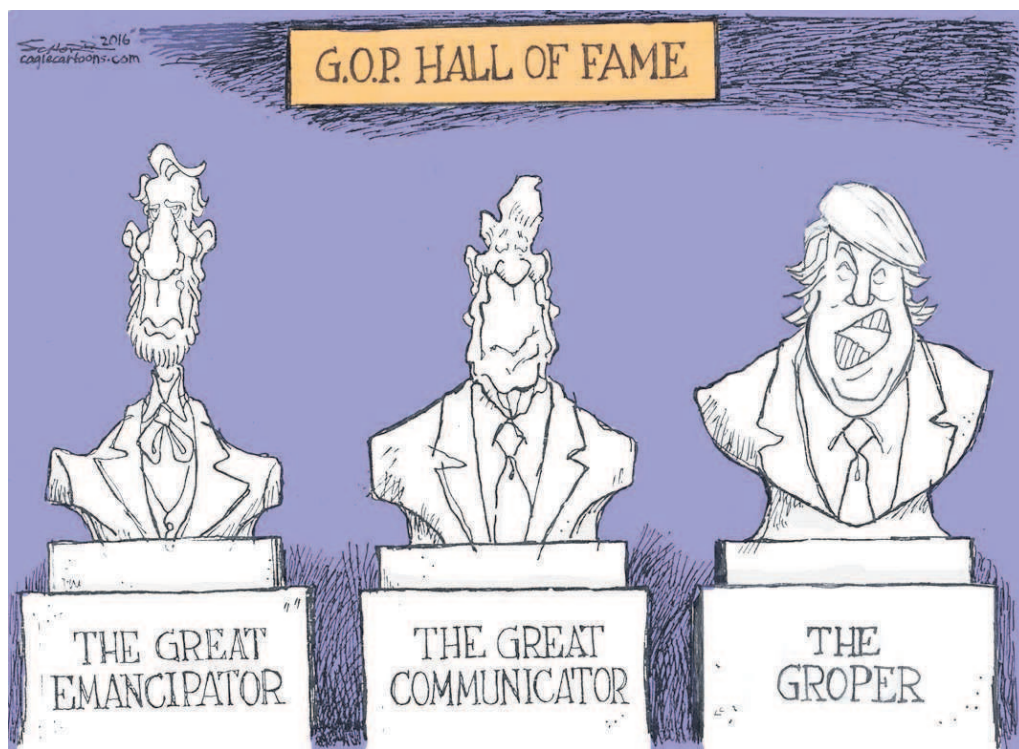
that mandatory minimum sentences must be served. The acquittals of the Bundys and the others undercut the occupiers’ claims of oppression and injustice. David Fry, the last to leave the refuge, said on Thursday that “we the people must unite to take this country back from evil tyrants” — odd words from a man who had just won a not guilty verdict from a jury of his peers in open court.

The acquittals will now be seized upon as proof of a double standard in law enforcement and the justice system. The acquittals came on the same day that police in riot gear arrested 117 Native Americans and others attempting to stop the construction of an oil pipeline in North Dakota. Their treatment at the hands of the courts will be watched, and the results will be contrasted to the verdicts that an all-white jury reached for all-white defendants in Portland.

The verdicts also send a chilling message to employees of federal land-management agencies, particularly in the rural West. The Bundys and their supporters disrupted or destroyed valuable work being done at the Malheur refuge, and will pay no price for it. Such a result gives other public employees reason to fear that their own work — and perhaps their physical safety — will be similarly unprotected. Those who populate the extreme fringes of the movement for private control of federal lands will be emboldened.

It’s likely that no verdict could have advanced the public interest in defending the concept of land held in trust for all citizens — a concept that was under assault during the six-week occupation. The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge belongs to every American, and the share claimed by a Boston apartment-dweller is no smaller than the share belonging to a Harney County rancher. At the same time, the rancher understands his world in ways that can be used to protect and enhance the value of the Bostonian’s share of the refuge.

A recognition of both national ownership and local interests and expertise underlies the collaborative management plans that have been painstakingly developed for the Malheur refuge and places like it. The occupiers’ contempt public lands being managed for the broad common good has now been validated in court — which makes the hard work of collaboration more vital than ever.



OTHER VIEWS

What did you do in 2016?

One day, Americans who were too young to have followed the 2016 campaign will look back and try to make sense of it. They will want to know how such a dangerous person could have gotten so close to the presidency — a man who spoke of abandoning our allies, admiring foreign despots, weakening constitutional rights, and serially molesting women.

Those future adults may also pose a more personal question to their elders: Mommy and Daddy, what did you do in response to Donald Trump?

It will be a fair question. The reality is, Trump could still win. It is unlikely, yes, but the gift he received from a surprisingly bumbling FBI shows that campaigns aren’t over until they’re over.

With seven days left, it is not too late for anyone alarmed by Trump to get involved. As it happens, Trump himself has pointed toward the best way to do so. Again and again, he has attempted to undermine democratic legitimacy, be it inviting foreign interference or flirting with voter intimidation.

The right response to anti-democracy is more democracy. It’s also the way to defeat Trump. His paths to the presidency depend on large third-party vote shares and low turnout.

Fortunately, we know a lot more about how to encourage democratic participation than even a decade ago, thanks to a flowering of research in psychology and political science. Here, then, is a how-to guide for fighting Trumpism:

- First, obviously, you should vote. You knew that, but many people who intend to vote become waylaid — by a traffic jam, a sick kid or a work meeting. Make a detailed plan now, about when and where you will vote.

- Voting plans increase voter turnout. In an experiment by David Nickerson and Todd Rogers, involving tens of thousands of phone calls, some people received a vague encouragement to vote. They were no more likely to vote than people who received no call. Other people received calls asking questions about their logistical plans — and became significantly more likely to vote. The questions nudged them.

- Second, tell other people about your plan, and ask about theirs. The power of peer pressure increases voter turnout. One aggressive experiment mailed people a sheet of paper with their own turnout history and their neighbors’. A more gentle experiment presented Facebook users with head shots of their friends who had posted an update about having voted. Both increased turnout, as have many other experiments.



DAVID
LEONHARDT
Comment

You don’t need an intricate effort to influence people, though. Post your own voting plan to Facebook, and ask your friends to reply with theirs. Text or call relatives in swing states and ask about their voting plans. Do the same when you see friends.

And when people tell you their plan, don’t just nod and smile. Say that you expect to hear from them after they’ve executed their plan. “Social pressure is mighty persuasive,” says Carolyn DeWitt, president of Rock the Vote.

- Third, with the people you feel most comfortable, consider taking the risk of talking politics. I’m well aware of how awkward the subject can be. I come from a close and politically diverse family, and we avoid politics at most gatherings.

But this election is different. Trump threatens American values, threatens America’s interests and — as is clear from the financial markets’ dire view of a Trump presidency — threatens the economy.

It’s worth reminding undecided voters in your life about who he is: what he has said about prisoners of war and the disabled, how he has humiliated women, how he has promoted online racism and anti-Semitism. Almost everybody loves somebody who is part of a group that Donald Trump has demeaned.

If you do talk politics, you’ll have a lot of company. In each of the last three presidential campaigns, at least 40 percent of adults tried to influence someone else’s vote, according to the American National Election Studies.

- Finally, it’s not too late to volunteer to get out the vote. You can do so through a campaign’s website or through a group like Rock the Vote, which is looking for volunteers who have a few spare minutes to call people and ask about their voting plans.

You can also sign up with a nonpartisan group to help protect voting rights. That work is vital, given the efforts to restrict rights. (In Texas, for example, some poll workers last week falsely told voters that they needed photo identification.) The Election Protection Coalition, a large, well-regarded group, is seeking both laypeople and lawyers to work at phone banks or polling sites.

In less than a week, the often-depressing campaign of 2016 will be over. Before it is, take a moment to imagine how it would feel to live in a country that had voted for and was run by Donald Trump.

Then go out and do your part to keep America great.

David Leonhardt is a columnist for the New York Times.

YOUR VIEWS

No matter who wins election, we must come together

On Nov. 9 I will be up early getting ready for work. Many of you will be doing the same. We will have a new president-elect, selected by the majority of those who voted.

Maybe my choice won, maybe yours won. Either way there will be classes to teach, people to feed, merchandise to be sold and work to be done. We will still be the greatest nation on earth, striving to live up to our creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...”

In the beginning these words only referred to landed white men. Over the years our nation has struggled to make these words more inclusive. We even fought a horrific Civil War in order to become a more perfect union as envisioned by Abraham Lincoln. Our nation still has a way to go, but we will continue to make progress as long as we keep the dialogue going, as long as we can compromise.

Change is a constant in life, and no one likes change, but nothing stands still. If we can set aside our innate nearsightedness and self-centeredness to put ourselves in the shoes of those around us, we will continue to move forward. We are not a divided nation; we are a diverse nation, made up of all peoples in this world. We all came from somewhere else to reside on this continent. This great social experiment of self-governance we are part of requires everyone’s participation in order that

all can enjoy their “unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Perhaps we will determine that the person chosen in this election is wrong for the nation. Our Constitution has made a provision for this. We have used it before. Whatever comes our way, we the people are still the United States of America.

Brenda Kirk
College Place

State timber lands could bring in more than marijuana taxes

The Medford Mail Tribune reprinted the East Oregonian’s opinion chastising citizens for foregoing the windfall that could be had by taxing marijuana.

Rather than promote what is proving to be a pernicious influence on our communities, perhaps the editorial board could go to work pushing to have O&C timber lands put back into production. Down here in Southern Oregon those lands produce 83 cents per acre per year, yet they are meant to replace what would be tax revenue.

So while these lands remain unproductive, your counties and cities hit you with bond after bond. Yes, there is tax revenue, but it comes right out of the hapless workers’ wallets.

Hubert Smith
Jacksonville, Ore.

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 the city of residence and phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.