

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Culinary arts teacher Kristin Swaggart reacts during a "Buck Pride" assembly where Swaggart was named a winner in the Farmers Insurance Teachers Dream Big Challenge on Tuesday at Pendleton High School.

# Pendleton trucks home foodie prize

Once again, Pendleton High School has dreamed big and the community pulled together for a great cause. Much like Pendleton supported the #YoungmanOnEllen effort to send beloved PHS Spanish teacher Kathryn Youngman to the Ellen DeGeneres Show and push her through cancer treatment, the town created a social media storm in support of a teacher's bid for a prize that will have far-reaching benefits.

Kristin Swaggart's \$100,000 prize from the Farmers Insurance "Dream Big Teacher Challenge" competition is a personal triumph. It is also much more. The prize money will be used to create new student opportunities at Pendleton High School.

Most of all, the national recognition and financial windfall are about the conjunction of the food movement and the professional opportunities it creates. And the prize shows the kind of payoff that comes to a school that dares to create exciting new curriculum and teachers that dream big.

Swaggart is head of the Pendleton High School culinary arts program. In a May 6 article in the *East Oregonian*, Antonio Sierra described Swaggart's personal odyssey, which includes her revelation about the connection between diet and health, her drive to acquire new skills through a return to the classroom and the employment opportunities that flowed from her educational accomplishment.

The food truck purchased with this prize money will give Pendleton High students practical food preparation and serving experience,

as well as bring in revenue for the program by selling food at local events. It also will boost PHS' career and technical education program. The Pendleton Tech and Trade Center — slated to open in February — will be based at the former West Hills School, and will include a commercial kitchen, lab classroom space and indoor and outdoor dining space. A mobile kitchen and food truck is an additional asset.

The food movement is changing Oregon, which has always boasted a large agricultural sector. The restaurant explosion that swept Portland starting some 30 years ago is reaching well beyond the state's westside metropolitan center. Places such as Joseph, Echo and Pendleton have recently acquired what might be called food magnets.

Plateau, operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, is regarded as one of the best restaurants in Oregon. We reported last week on the explosion of Japanese restaurants. Each and every new enterprise will need reliable, responsible and experienced employees to succeed. Perhaps more will now be educated by Pendleton High School, enriching both their students and the community.

Pendleton High's culinary arts program and the recognition and money that Kristin Swaggart has brought to it are very much about economic opportunity that will increase in the decades ahead. That's good for students. It's good for PHS. And it's good for tummies across the area.

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

### Food security an issue in rural Oregon

The (Medford) Mail-Tribune

As we recover from a holiday of feasting, let's pause and consider this news: During the three-year period of 2013-15, Oregon led the nation in the increase in food insecurity, with nearly one in six households not certain it would be able to put food on the table.

While metro Oregon has seen a great recovery from the Great Recession, that's not necessarily true in rural Oregon. According to a report from the Oregon Center for Public Policy, food insecurity rose 18.4 percent in Oregon by 2015, compared with the early years of the recovery. Nationally, food insecurity declined by 6.8 percent over the same period.

According to the report, that increase pushed Oregon to the dubious rankings of sixth-worst nationally for food insecurity and eighth-worst for hunger. The number of Oregonians considered food insecure totaled 605,000, more than the entire population of Portland (602,000). The number of children in those ranks totaled 210,000.

The OCPP study comes as the state continues to report declining unemployment and many businesses report difficulty in filling vacancies. That is not the incongruity it would appear, but rather a reflection of a rural workforce that never found its footing after blue-collar, natural resource-

dependent jobs largely dried up.

What exists now is a mismatch of people in need of decent-paying jobs and decent-paying jobs in need of people. The missing connectors are adequate skill levels, training and a Portland-centric state government that has largely looked the other way as the gap between urban and rural Oregon grows.

When rural Oregonians said, "We need a reasonably reliable supply of timber to keep our mills running," Salem responded with plans to expand high-speed internet to rural communities. That's great, if you have the skills and are able to hire, and keep, skilled employees in small communities. For the most part, it's simply not a good fit.

Parts of rural Oregon have benefited from tourism, but the service-oriented jobs that come with that industry do little to help the standard of living. The Rogue Valley is a retiree magnet, boosting another sector of the economy mostly associated with low-paying jobs.

The Oregon Legislature will convene in a couple of months and no doubt will promptly take up a looming funding crisis as its first priority. Rather than trying to fill that revenue-spending gap entirely with increased taxes, perhaps our leaders could instead look about the state and see what they can do to fill part of that gap by helping rural areas rebuild their employment base with jobs that match the workforce.

## OTHER VIEWS

### Can the Democrats move right?

Since Election Day the great intra-Democratic debate over What Went Wrong has been dominated by two visions of how liberalism should be organized — identity politics versus economic solidarity — with writers variously critiquing or defending each tendency, or arguing that they are complements and that any tension can and ought to be resolved.

This is an interesting and fruitful debate, but it has been mostly about a debate about two different ways of being (sometimes very) left-wing. There has been much less conversation about the ways in which the Democratic Party might consider responding to its current straits by moving to the right.

That kind of movement is often part of how political parties recover from debilitation and defeat — not just by finding new ways to be true to their underlying ideology, but by scrambling toward the center to convince skeptical voters that they've changed.

It's what Democrats did, slowly but surely, after the trauma of Ronald Reagan's triumphs; it's what Bill Clinton did after his 1994 drubbing; it's what Rahm Emanuel and Howard Dean did, to a modest degree, on their way to building a congressional majority in 2006. And it's also what Donald Trump did on his way to stealing the Midwest from the Democrats this year — he was a hard-right candidate on certain issues but a radical sort of centrist on trade, infrastructure and entitlements, explicitly breaking with Republican orthodoxies that many voters considered out of date.

If the idea of moving rightward seems distinctly strange to today's Democrats, it's partially because until this rude awakening, much of liberalism was in thrall to demographic triumphalism: convinced that the party's leftward drift under President Barack Obama and candidate Hillary Clinton was in line with the drift of the country as a whole, and confident that with every birth and death and naturalization and 18th birthday their structural advantage would only grow.

Because Trump won without the popular vote, a version of this theory is still intact — but it shouldn't be. The Democratic coalition is a losing coalition in most states, most House districts, most Senate races; the party's national bench is thin, its statehouse power shattered, its congressional leadership aged and inert. It has less political power than it did after the Reagan revolution and the Gingrich sweep. To repurpose an aphorism often applied to Brazil: It has the majority of the future, and if current trends continue, it always will.

So the incentives are there to look for issues where Democrats might plausibly move rightward, back toward voters they have lost. And so are the issues themselves. The Democrats have ceded a lot of territory in their recent gallop leftward, and it wouldn't be that hard to come up with a revised version of the (again, Bill) Clinton playbook suited to the present time.

For instance: Democrats could attempt to declare a culture-war truce, consolidating the gains of the Obama era while disavowing attempts to regulate institutions and communities that don't follow the current social-liberal line.

That would mean no more fines for Catholic charities and hospitals, no more transgender-bathroom directives handed down from the White House to local schools, and restraint rather than ruthlessness in future debates over funding and accreditation for conservative religious schools. Without backing away from their support for same-sex marriage and legal abortion, leading Democratic politicians could talk more favorably about moral and religious pluralism, and offer reassurances to people who feel



ROSS DOUTHAT  
Comment

themselves to be dissenters from a very novel cultural regime.

Democrats could also talk anew about the virtues of earned benefits, about programs that help people who help themselves, about moving people from welfare back to work. This (Bill) Clintonian rhetoric hasn't entirely disappeared from the party, but it has diminished, and some of the Trumpian (and pre-Trumpian) backlash against liberalism in white working-class communities was associated with welfare programs — disability rolls, food stamps, Medicaid — that seem to effectively underwrite worklessness at a time of social disarray.

The incentives are there to look for issues where Democrats might plausibly move back toward the voters they have lost.

It would not require Democrats abandoning their commitment to the social safety net to foreground programs more directly linked to work and independence, and to acknowledge the problems of dependence and stagnation associated with no-strings-attached support.

There is similar room for Democrats to move toward the center on immigration policy — to retain their support for humane treatment of migrants but reverse the creep toward open borders-ism and abjure mass amnesty by presidential fiat; to support a path to citizenship without supporting a perpetually ascending immigration rate.

Likewise on crime and terrorism. The party's (laudable) support for criminal justice and policing reform left its leaders struggling to find a language to address the post-Ferguson spike in lawlessness that pushed public support for the police upward and helped Trump on his path. And Obama's obvious preference for a stiff-upper-lip approach to terrorism, similarly, made it hard for his party to address the anxieties created by San Bernardino, Orlando, Paris and Nice, and the sense that the Islamic State and its disciples had ushered in a new and frightening status quo.

In each of these cases, I suspect that the party wouldn't have to move that far or compromise that much to end up in a stronger political position. A centrist crime-control agenda to pair with sentencing reform, a more incremental, Dream Act-ish approach to immigration, a stress on the most pro-work elements in the party's arsenal of welfare policies, a mild softening of the party's secularism and complete-the-sexual-revolution zeal ... with the right leadership and salesmanship, these moves might reassure and win over a crucial fraction of the many voters — blue-collar and white-collar, male and female — who pulled the lever very reluctantly for Trump.

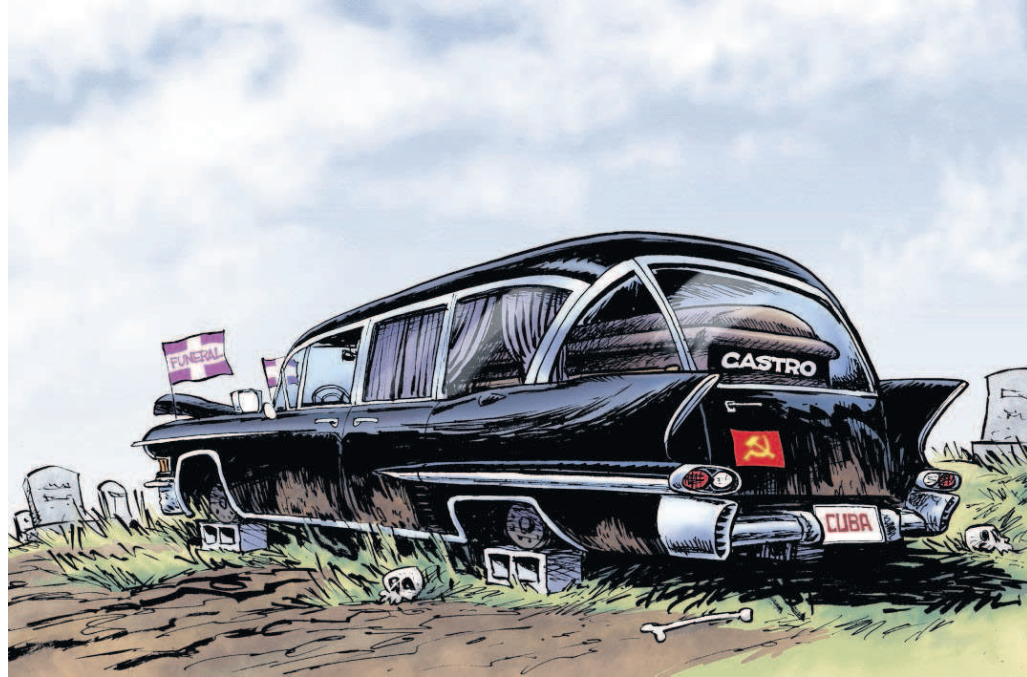
But these shifts would require asking both identity and populist liberals (and the many-if-not-most liberals who identify with both strands) to compromise some of their commitments, to accept that open borders and desexed bathrooms and a guaranteed income and mass refugee resettlement will remain somewhat-radical causes rather than simply and naturally becoming the Democratic Party line.

This is a hard ask, since even modest shifts require compromising deeply held (if, in some cases, recently discovered) ideals. And it's made much harder by the fact that liberals spent the last four years telling themselves that such compromises were not necessary anymore, that they belonged to the benighted 1990s and need trouble liberal consciences no more.

But that was a lie. And harder truths are what the buckling Democratic Party needs now.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at the *Atlantic* and a blogger for *theatlantic.com*.

THE COLUMBIAN DISPATCH  
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## YOUR VIEWS

### Christian in name, but not so much in outreach

Stuart Dick's *East Oregonian* Nov. 22 levees rant in his letter to the editor of Nov. 22 leaves me wondering what a Christian is supposed to be.

Surely Stuart Dick means well, but the letter calls this into question. His mean-

spirited tirade with his reference to God is an oxymoron. I thought, and I could be mistaken, one who follows Christ was to build bonds across a no-man's-land.

His offense taken at a perceived wrong, even as he may be right in some degree, I believe violates the spirit of grace.

Ron Gavette  
Pendleton

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