

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

MARISSA WILLIAMS
Regional Advertising Director

MARCY ROSENBERG
Circulation Manager

JANNA HEIMGARTNER
Business Office Manager

MIKE JENSEN
Production Manager

OUR VIEW

Others step in where governor is silent

Addressing Oregon's annual Leadership Summit a year ago, Gov. Kate Brown made no mention of the biggest financial crisis facing state government: PERS, the underfunded, bloated retirement system for public employees.

Nada. Zilch.

A year later and a month after being elected governor in her own right, Brown spoke again to 1,200 leaders from business, government and academia gathered in Portland. She mentioned PERS once. She used the rest of her seven-minute speech to lecture Oregon's business community about its responsibilities to the state.

Gov. Brown continues to proclaim that the courts have left her no constitutional options for reducing the pension program's \$22 billion deficit. That's nonsense, of course. State Sens. Betsy Johnson and Tim Knopp have put forth several ideas, most of which passed scrutiny from the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Counsel.

Now, another state leader has weighed in.

Katy Durant served for 11 years on the Oregon Investment Council, a panel of citizens that sets investment policy for the state's \$69 billion public trust fund portfolio, which includes PERS, the Common School Fund and the State Accident Insurance Fund.

Durant retired from the board last week, but before she offered a warning and a list of sensible solutions to the PERS crisis.

According to *The Oregonian*, Durant wrote Gov. Brown, challenging her to show "bold leadership" on PERS. Without that, Durant wrote: "This house of cards will quickly collapse, leaving Oregon in a fiscal crisis."

"Failure to act quickly and decisively will result in a severe imbalance" between the pension fund's growing liability and the state's ability to meet it, Durant wrote. She then offered several proposals. Among them:

- Increase the full retirement age for public employees from 58 to 67 to match Social Security.

- Move elected officials out of PERS and into a 401(k) type system to eliminate the conflict of interest in voting for their own benefits.

- Reduce the assumed rate of return on fund investments to a more realistic level.

- Require public employees to contribute to their pension plan.

- Make annual debt payments of about \$1 billion.

Durant's proposals — along with those by Johnson and Knopp — deserve thorough consideration by the governor and lawmakers.

These reforms would help ensure the long-term sustainability of PERS and allow our schools and local governments to better address current needs.

Doing nothing — Gov. Brown's default position on this matter and too many others — is unacceptable and would amount to an abdication of her responsibility as our state's chief executive.

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.

Culture Corner

If the presidential election caught you by surprise, you owe it to yourself to try to understand.

Stereotyping a wide swath of our country isn't helpful. And cable television and social media lack the depth and humanity to find true knowledge.

Personal stories and honest conversation is the most helpful way. And J.D. Vance's memoir "Hillbilly Elegy" is the most enlightening approach available today.

Published earlier this year and without a mention of Donald Trump, the current bestseller does an excellent job of shedding a light on the voters in the Rust Belt states that flipped the last election.

Vance, a Kentucky hillbilly transplanted to an Ohio steel town, is the son of a drug-addicted mother and the product of a long line of lawbreakers and troublemakers. Still, generation by generation their livelihoods improved. Along the way, family, faith and community provided supports.

Yet now poor whites feel worse about their future than any other demographic in the country. They disliked Obama immensely (he represented a path

forward that didn't include them) and they voted for Trump in droves.

Vance rose above his station, became a Marine and served in Iraq, returned home and graduated from Yale Law School. He is a staunch conservative

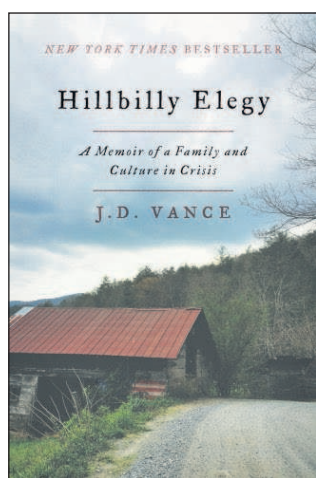
— Peter Thiel blurbled the book — yet he is no partisan.

He faults people who have failed to better themselves, yet blame the government for their problems. He writes of hillbillies: "We can't trust the evening news. We can't trust our politicians. Our universities, the gateway to a better life, are rigged against us. We can't get jobs. You can't believe these things and participate meaningfully in society."

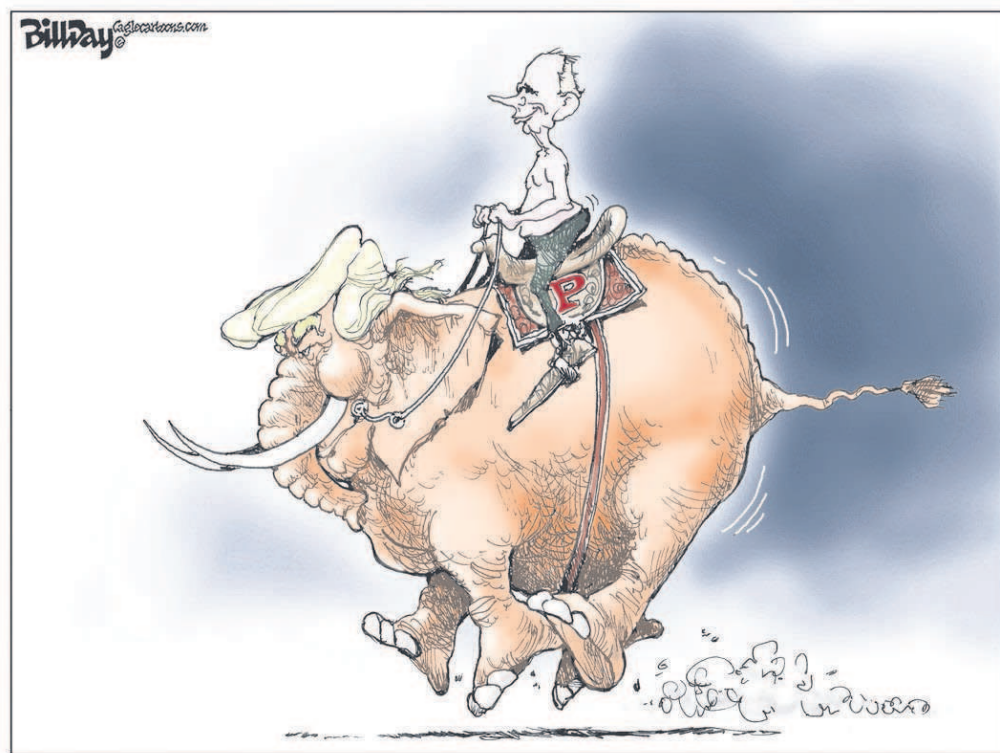
He faults government, too, for trying to help poor people without really understanding them. The outreach, in Vance's eyes, does more hurt than help.

This memoir is the opposite. There is plenty of sadness and anger in its pages, but those emotions are overwhelmed by a murky truth that would do us good to try to understand.

Tim Trainor is opinion page editor of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS



The tainted election

The CIA, according to *The Washington Post*, has now determined that hackers working for the Russian government worked to tilt the 2016 election to Donald Trump. This has actually been obvious for months, but the agency was reluctant to state that conclusion before the election out of fear that it would be seen as taking a political role.

Meanwhile, the FBI went public 10 days before the election, dominating headlines and TV coverage across the country with a letter strongly implying that it might be about to find damning new evidence against Hillary Clinton — when it turned out, literally, to have found nothing at all.

Did the combination of Russian and FBI intervention swing the election? Yes. Clinton lost three states — Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania — by less than a percentage point, and Florida by only slightly more.

If she had won any three of those states, she would be president-elect. Is there any reasonable doubt that Putin/Comey made the difference?

And it wouldn't have been seen as a marginal victory, either. Even as it was, Clinton received almost 3 million more votes than her opponent, giving her a popular margin close to that of George W. Bush in 2004.

So this was a tainted election. It was not, as far as we can tell, stolen in the sense that votes were counted wrong, and the result won't be overturned. But the result was nonetheless illegitimate in important ways; the victor was rejected by the public, and won the electoral college only thanks to foreign intervention and grotesquely inappropriate, partisan behavior on the part of domestic law enforcement.

The question now is what to do with that horrifying knowledge in the months and years ahead.

One could, I suppose, appeal to the president-elect to act as a healer, to conduct himself in a way that respects the majority of Americans who voted against him and the fragility of his electoral college victory. Yeah, right. What we're actually getting are wild claims that millions of people voted illegally, false assertions of a landslide, and denigration of the intelligence agencies.

Another course of action, which you'll see many in the news media taking, is to normalize the incoming administration, basically to pretend that everything is OK. This might — might — be justified if there were any prospect of responsible, restrained behavior on the part of the next president. In reality, however, it's clear that Trump — whose personal conflicts



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

of interest are unprecedented, and quite possibly unconstitutional — intends to move U.S. policy radically away from the preferences of most Americans, including a pronounced pro-Russian shift in foreign policy.

In other words, nothing that happened on Election Day or is happening now is normal. Democratic norms have been and continue to be violated, and anyone who refuses to acknowledge this reality is, in effect, complicit in the degradation of our republic. This president will have a lot of legal authority, which must be respected. But beyond that, nothing: he doesn't deserve deference, he doesn't deserve the benefit of the doubt.

And when, as you know will happen, the administration begins treating criticism as unpatriotic, the answer should be: You have

The victor was rejected by the public, and won the electoral college only thanks to foreign intervention and grotesquely inappropriate, partisan behavior on the part of domestic law enforcement.

to be kidding. Trump is, by all indications, the Siberian candidate, installed with the help of and remarkably deferential to a hostile foreign power. And his critics are the people who lack patriotism?

Will acknowledging the taint on the incoming administration do any good? Maybe it will stir the consciences of at least a few Republicans. Remember, many, though not all, of the things Trump will try to do can be blocked by just three Republican senators.

Politics being what it is, moral backbones on Capitol Hill will be stiffened if there are clear signs that

the public is outraged by what is happening. And there will be a chance to make that outrage felt directly in two years — not just in congressional elections, but in votes that will determine control of many state governments.

Now, outrage over the tainted election past can't be the whole of opposition politics. It will also be crucial to maintain the heat over actual policies. Everything we've seen so far says that Trump is going to utterly betray the interests of the white working-class voters who were his most enthusiastic supporters, stripping them of health care and retirement security, and this betrayal should be highlighted.

But we ought to be able to look both forward and back, to criticize both the way Trump gained power and the way he uses it. Personally, I'm still figuring out how to keep my anger simmering — letting it boil over won't do any good, but it shouldn't be allowed to cool. This election was an outrage, and we should never forget it.

Paul Krugman joined *The New York Times* in 1999 as an Op-Ed columnist.

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. Senators

Ron Wyden
Washington office:
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office:
541-962-7691

Jeff Merkley
Washington office:
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
Pendleton office:
541-278-1129

U.S. Representative

Greg Walden
Washington office:
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office:
541-624-2400

Governor

Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582

Senator

Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-423
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

Representatives

Greg Barreto, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-38
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

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. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.