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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the stranger, that anonymous helper who shows up just in the nick of time to help with a perilous predicament then vanishes as mysteriously as they appeared.



We've heard stories of these good Samaritans for the past week, but specifically overnight Wednesday as the snow storm stranded motorists. Whether it's a single person showing up to help dig a car out of a drift or a group helping push or shovel or otherwise free a vehicle and get the driver back on the road, they seem to be everywhere.

Many times, names are not exchanged. The helper merely goes along with their day (or night) without expectation of anything more than a thank you.

We're happy to oblige, and look for the chance to pay it forward.

A kick in the pants to Pendleton's refusal to invest in snow plowing services.

First, to clear the air — the city did not sell its snow plow to buy a statue. Rumors like that swirl along with the falling snow each winter.

In reality, the city has a plow it uses in only select circumstances. Like when it needs to clear snow to access utilities.

Sure, it was a once-in-a-decade overnight snowfall Wednesday. But every winter there is at least a day or two that we could use a plow to make getting around town safer and easier.

We've been told people didn't like their roads cleared when the city used to provide the service in the 1990s. Nobody likes a pile of snow in their driveway.

But if those are the only two options — leaving snow stacked on the city's streets or piling it up on private property — the city isn't trying hard enough to solve the problem.

A tip of the hat to the Oregon Emergency Board, made up of 20 lawmakers, for denying \$3.8 million to the Department of Corrections for the construction of a second women's prison in Oregon.

There are many things this state needs, and another prison isn't one of them. Dedicating more money, and emergency dollars at that, to a prison project is not a good use of our state funds.

Instead of approving the expenditure, the emergency board told the corrections department to work with counties to whittle their female inmate population enough to relieve the need for a second facility. The second prison was planned to open in Salem in June to house

as few as 20 inmates to start.

Of course, that's just a start. Surely there would be need, at our current pace, to fill that prison in a few years and start planning the next.

We'd rather see the state put its corrections dollars to use on improving diversion and rehabilitation programs that don't require big slabs of brick and mortar.

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

Time to invest in voter fraud investigation

The (Bend) Bulletin, Dec. 9

If there's one thing certain about voter fraud, it's this: There's not much research into how much fraud there actually is.

It's time that changed.

Oregon would be a good place to begin. According to an article in *The Bulletin* by reporter Taylor W. Anderson, state Rep. Mike Nearman, R-Independence, and James Buchal, a lawyer and Republican from the Portland area, have filed a potential ballot measure with the Secretary of State's Office that would amend the constitution to require proof of citizenship to register to vote. The measure also would allow all current registrations to expire in two years so that all who hope to vote in Oregon would have to re-register, with proper identification. In some cases the state would be required to issue copies of Oregon birth certificates for free.

That's a lot of work for county clerks and the Secretary of State's Office, and it would be a hassle for the more than 2.5 million voters currently

registered in the state. It may or may not be necessary.

A 2012 Pew Center on the States study of voter registration found problems, though they stem from things other than fraud. Research into voter registration fraud generally comes from studies of particular elections after the fact.

It may well be that the number of cases of fraud reported are a tiny fraction of voter frauds committed. Or not. But without studies, no one knows for sure.

The first step in fixing a problem should be to find out if Oregon has one. Would the proposed change in voter registration accomplish anything?

Oregon lawmakers should ask if it is possible to do a more extensive study of fraud in Oregon. Even if it is not possible, it may expose weaknesses in the current system that should be addressed. As the Pew study noted, most states lack the modern data matching techniques used by business.

Can Oregon do more? Lawmakers should ask.

YOUR VIEWS

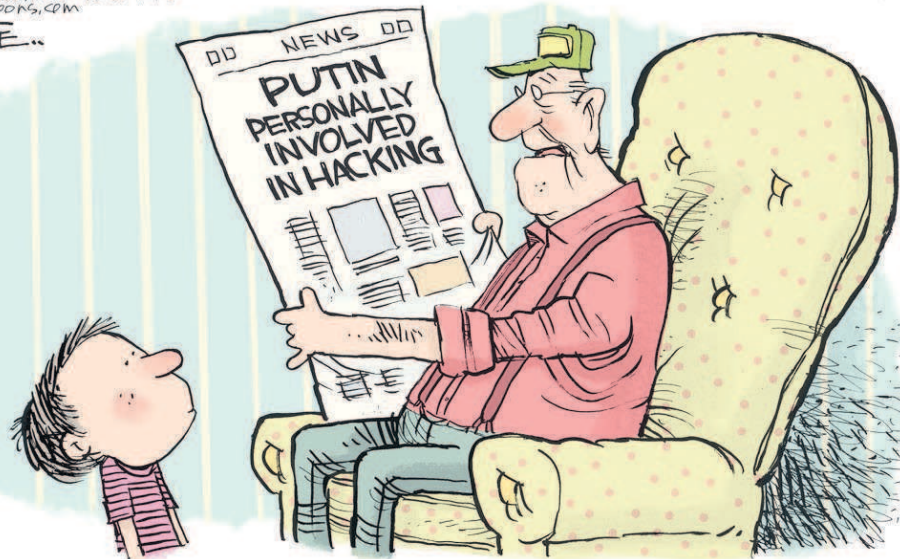
The decay of democracy

We've reached a very serious state of affairs in this country (perhaps the actual turning point towards the demise of our country) when, as NPR's reporting Thursday exemplifies, it's become necessary to actually

"report" (or provide a tutorial over the nation's airwaves) on one of the very basics of our democracy — that is, the "why" behind the importance of presidential news conferences. Incredible.

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"SO, THEY DUG UP DIRT ON DEMOCRATS AND RELEASED IT TO THE PUBLIC. USUALLY, THAT'S ONLY DONE TO REPUBLICANS AND CALLED 'JOURNALISM'..."

OTHER VIEWS

Dinner and a kiss-off for Mitt

Farewell, Mitt Romney, farewell. Romney, who once spent nearly a decade being rejected by the American electorate, got the heave-ho from Donald Trump this week — passed over for the secretary of state nomination in favor of an oil executive who is great pals with Vladimir Putin.

It is, of course, extremely fashionable in Trump's Washington to be great pals with Vladimir Putin. Also to be a general or a climate change denier. Romney was always suspicious of Russia, never served in the military, and although he came up with multiple positions on the environment over the years, he would still have been one of the only Trump nominees to have sporadically held an opinion that the globe was warming.

It's not like the list of appointees doesn't have variety. Rick Perry once competed in "Dancing With the Stars." Linda McMahon, the new head of the Small Business Administration, is probably the only one who's performed in a professional wrestling competition. McMahon is among the highest-ranking female nominees.

At the very tiptop, so far, is Elaine Chao, Trump's pick for secretary of transportation. We failed to elect a woman president, but if Chao is confirmed, there will at least be a woman 13th in the line of succession.

On Wednesday, Trump named Romney's niece as head of the Republican National Committee. Do you think that was an attempt to make Mitt feel better — or worse? He had reasons to think he'd get more than a job for his brother's daughter.

It's true that during the campaign he had called Trump "a phony, a fraud," and said some rather unflattering things about Trump University, Trump Magazine, Trump Vodka and Trump Steaks. But after the election, everything seemed fine and dandy. He was getting meetings with the president-elect, being dined (not wine)ed; they're both teetotalers) at a fancy Manhattan restaurant in front of half the national media.

Hard not to feel optimistic when the other apparent top finalists for state were David Petraeus, a man currently on probation for sharing military secrets with his mistress, and Rudy Giuliani, who had so come to resemble a bad-tempered Rottweiler that he did everything but howl at the moon.

After his big public dinner date with Trump, Romney bumbled to reporters that they had a "discussion about affairs throughout the world, and these discussions I've had with him have been enlightening and interesting and engaging. I've enjoyed them very, very



GAIL COLLINS
Comment

much." The man he'd denounced so vigorously during the campaign, he added, had "a message of inclusion and bringing people together, and his vision is something which obviously connected with the American people in a very powerful way." If you had asked Romney at that moment what he thought about Trump University, he'd probably have announced plans to enroll.

But then, whammo. He was passed over for Rex Tillerson, the CEO of Exxon Mobil, who seemed to pop up out of nowhere. Trump was reportedly moved by recommendations from Republican luminaries like former Defense Secretary Robert Gates

and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Rice and Gates have a consulting firm that counts Tillerson's company as a client, but that had nothing whatsoever to do with their miraculous, totally coincidental and spontaneous decisions to drop his name. Roger Stone, a political consultant who frequently presents himself as a Friend of Trump, told a radio talk show host that the whole wooing of Mitt was just an effort to "torture" the former presidential candidate. Another theory is that Romney's problem was a failure to apologize for those campaign insults.

It's possible. Romney did once write a book called "No Apology." However, given his track record, a better title might have been "No Apology Normally, Unless Something Else Happens."

Should we feel sorry for him? He'd have been a more qualified pick than Tillerson. But really, Romney has been such a jerk during this election that it's hard not to giggle.

He made a huge, dramatic profile in courage out of his refusal to support Trump, but he didn't have the spine to say that he'd be voting for Hillary Clinton. Instead, Romney straddled that swamp masquerading as moral high ground where he rejected everybody, took no responsibility for anybody, and therefore was no help at all.

Then, when the man he denounced as a fraud got elected, Mitt was instantly in the employment line, grinning and blowing kisses. Suddenly we were reminded of all the years of political shape-shifting, when Romney's opinions on everything from gun control to health care changed with every twitch of the polls.

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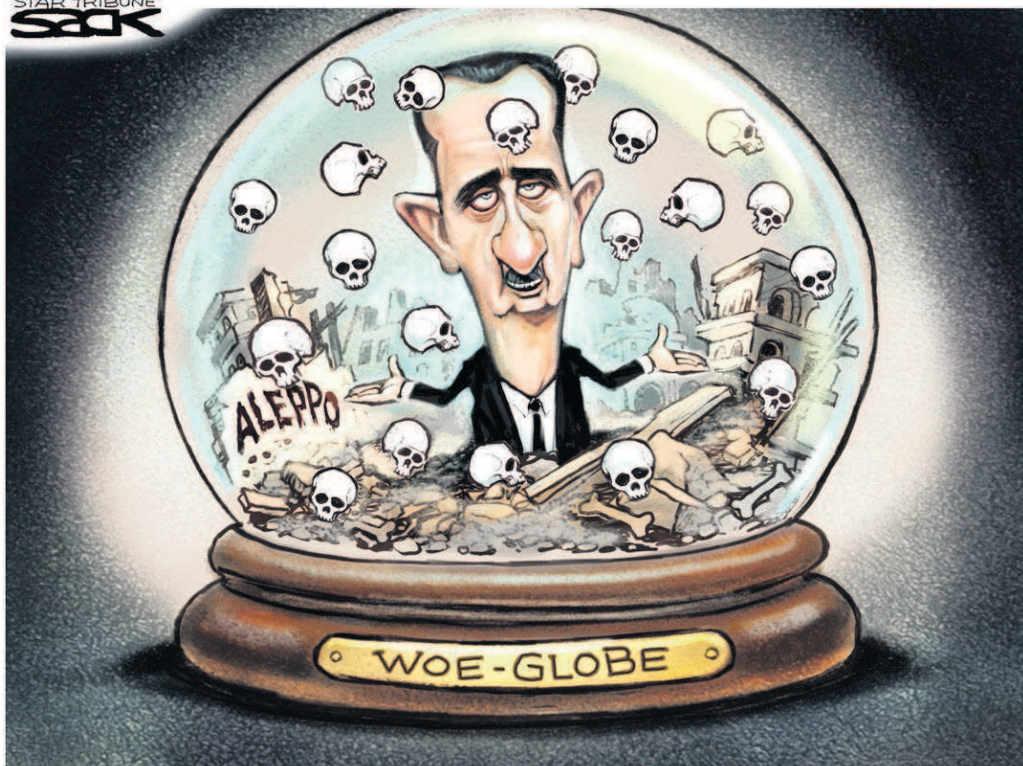
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Gail Collins joined *The New York Times* in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the *Times*'s editorial page.

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LETTERS POLICY

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