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**OUR VIEW**

# Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

In the spirit of the season, we will leave our kickin' boots by the front door this week and offer nothing but praise in this space. Merry Christmas.

**A tip of the hat to the organizers and volunteers** working to put on holiday meals to be served up this weekend.



The draw to spend a long holiday weekend in a nice warm living room surrounded by loved ones is tempting. Exchanging gifts, sharing holiday baked goods and watching "It's a Wonderful Life" on a loop make us all merry.

But many people have made serving and sharing a local meal their annual tradition, and would love to have you join them.

In Pendleton the meal is 4-6 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center and put on by the Blue Mountain Community College student government.

In Hermiston the meal is 12:30-3:30 p.m. at the senior center, 435 W. Orchard Ave.

**A tip of the hat to everyone who has donated goods, services or cold, hard cash** to charity this holiday season.



In Thursday's paper we published a column from Max Williams, the president and CEO of The Oregon Community Foundation, sharing some best practices when it comes to donations.

We're all for directing goodwill to the place it will be best utilized. But we also know that generosity comes from the heart, and we wouldn't suggest letting fear of missing a better donation option keep you from sharing your bounty with others.

**A tip of the hat to the humming local economy** this Christmas season.



Pendleton's Main Street is as full as it has been in a decade and even in the cold weather has had plenty of foot traffic in and out of the stores.

In Hermiston a new hotel, tool store, pet supply store and pair of sushi restaurants are all signs of an ever-growing economy.

We don't expect a shopping mall to locate here anytime soon, but having varied options for buying Christmas gifts and eating meals and inviting our family to stay (that's not in our living room) is nice.

**A tip of the hat to Boutique Air**, with a week of service between Pendleton and Portland under its wing and plenty of good reviews coming in. We appreciate the three flights a day, seven days a week schedule.



The leather seats of the Pilatus PC-12 make for a comfortable ride (though turbulence can be an issue, as with all small planes, especially near the Cascades), the off-PDX terminal makes for a quicker transition from air to road and the low introductory rate makes it a no-brainer for getting to Portland and back in short order.

And, the self-serve beverages and snacks in the terminals and on board are a nice touch.

There is still some work to be done. The interior of the Boutique Air terminal in Portland is still being furnished and the exterior is unsigned and poorly lit, making it an uncomfortable place to wait and a difficult place to find if you haven't been there before.

It is a great benefit for both locals and visitors to have this quick air transportation option to and from Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

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**



## Populism, real and phony

Authoritarians with an animus against ethnic minorities are on the march across the Western world. They control governments in Hungary and Poland, and will soon take power in the United States. And they're organizing across borders: Austria's Freedom Party, founded by former Nazis, has signed an agreement with Russia's ruling party — and met with Donald Trump's choice for national security adviser.

But what should we call these groups? Many reporters are using the term "populist," which seems inadequate and misleading. I guess racism can be considered populist in the sense that it represents the views of some non-elite people. But are the other shared features of this movement — addiction to conspiracy theories, indifference to the rule of law, a penchant for punishing critics — really captured by the "populist" label?

Still, the European members of this emerging alliance — an axis of evil? — have offered some real benefits to workers. Hungary's Fidesz party has provided mortgage relief and pushed down utility prices. Poland's Law and Justice party has increased child benefits, raised the minimum wage and reduced the retirement age. France's National Front is running as a defender of that nation's extensive welfare state — but only for the right people.

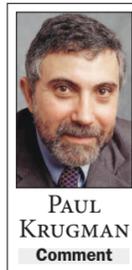
Trumpism is, however, different. The campaign rhetoric may have included promises to keep Medicare and Social Security intact and replace Obamacare with something "terrific." But the emerging policy agenda is anything but populist.

All indications are that we're looking at huge windfalls for billionaires combined with savage cuts in programs that serve not just the poor but also the middle class. And the white working class, which provided much of the 46 percent Trump vote share, is shaping up as the biggest loser.

True, we don't yet have detailed policy proposals. But Trump's Cabinet choices show which way the wind is blowing.

Both his pick as budget director and his choice to head Health and Human Services want to dismantle the Affordable Care Act and privatize Medicare. His choice as labor secretary is a fast-food tycoon who has been a vociferous opponent of Obamacare and of minimum wage hikes. And House Republicans have submitted plans for drastic cuts in Social Security, including a sharp rise in the retirement age.

What would these policies do? Obamacare



**PAUL KRUGMAN**  
Comment

led to big declines in the number of the uninsured in regions that voted Trump this year, and repealing it would undo all those gains. The nonpartisan Urban Institute estimates that repeal would cause 30 million Americans — 16 million of them non-Hispanic whites — to lose health coverage.

And no, there won't be a "terrific" replacement: Republican plans would cover only a fraction as many people as the law they would displace, and they'd be different people — younger, healthier and richer.

Converting Medicare into a voucher system would also amount to a severe benefit cut, partly because it would lead to lower government spending, partly because a significant fraction of spending would be diverted into the overhead and profits of private insurance companies. And raising the retirement age for Social Security would hit especially hard among Americans whose life expectancy has stagnated or declined, or who have disabilities that make it hard for them to continue working — problems that are strongly correlated with Trump votes.

In other words, the movement that's about to take power here isn't the same as Europe's far-right movements. It may share their racism and contempt for democracy; but European populism is at least partly real, while Trumpist populism is turning out to be entirely fake, a scam sold to working-class voters who are in for a rude awakening. Will the new regime pay a political price?

Well, don't count on it. This epic bait-and-switch, this betrayal of supporters, certainly offers Democrats a political opportunity. But you know that there will be huge efforts to shift the blame. These will include claims that the collapse of health care is really President Barack Obama's fault; claims that the failure of alternatives is somehow the fault of recalcitrant Democrats; and an endless series of attempts to distract the public.

Expect more Carrier-style stunts that don't actually help workers but dominate a news cycle. Expect lots of fulmination against minorities. And it's worth remembering what authoritarian regimes traditionally do to shift attention from failing policies, namely, find some foreigners to confront. Maybe it will be a trade war with China, maybe something worse.

Opponents need to do all they can to defeat such strategies of distraction. Above all, they shouldn't let themselves be sucked into cooperation that leaves them sharing part of the blame. The perpetrators of this scam should be forced to own it.

**OTHER VIEWS**

## United States nears record for fewest death sentences

The Los Angeles Times, Dec. 21

A San Bernardino County judge is expected to follow a jury's recommendation next week and sentence Gilbert Sanchez to death for the 2001 rape and murder of Sylvia Galindo, a 30-year-old Fontana bakery worker. That sentence will set, inconspicuously enough, a welcome national milestone. His would be the 30th death sentence imposed in the U.S. in 2016, the lowest annual total since the Supreme Court revived the death penalty more than 40 years ago.

The 2016 ebb point is not just a little bit lower than previous years, but down 39% from the 49 death sentences issued last year, and down 90% from the peak of 315 two decades ago, according to an annual report released today by the Death Penalty Information Center. The reasons for the decline are not crystal clear, but one factor is the general nationwide decrease in homicides, according to Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

What's probably more significant, though, is that prosecutors are seeking death sentences less often, which could signal a crucial change in attitudes among those who hold significant power in determining who gets executed and who does not. Juries make that decision in nearly all



states (Alabama is an outlier), but not unless they are asked to by the prosecutor filing the case. In fact, the Death Penalty Information Center report found that only 27 counties nationwide sentenced someone to death this year. The leader, unfortunately, was Los Angeles County, where four of the state's eight death sentences — also the highest in the nation, reflecting the state's most-populous status — were handed down. Alameda, Kern, Orange, Riverside counties issued one each; Sanchez will be the state's ninth (and San Bernardino's only one) this year.

And the landscape for capital punishment is changing. As national surveys have found

a general decrease in public support for capital punishment in recent years, four high-profile, pro-death-penalty district attorneys in Florida, Texas and Alabama lost recent reelection bids in campaigns that centered on criminal justice reforms, including the death penalty. Executions themselves are also down, though that has less to do with mercy in the criminal justice system than with states having trouble buying lethal-injection drugs — pharmaceutical companies won't sell their products for use in executions — and with legal holds placed by courts or governors grappling with questions about the constitutionality of execution methods.

The year wasn't all good news for death penalty abolitionists, however. Despite the broad national trend away from popular support for capital punishment, voters here in California rejected a ballot initiative last month that would have banned it. Instead, they approved a competing initiative that will speed up the appeals process in ways that will likely violate the constitutional rights of the accused, increase the chances of an innocent person being executed and usurp the authority of the state court system. (The state Supreme Court put the measure on hold Tuesday while it considers a legal challenge.) Elsewhere, voters in Nebraska overturned a state law banning the death penalty, and Oklahoma voters preemptively adopted a constitutional amendment recognizing capital punishment.

So where does that leave the fight to end the death penalty? In an odd, but somewhat optimistic, place. Several federal judges

have in recent years questioned the constitutionality of the way California and other states conduct the death penalty. And in recent dissents, Supreme Court Justice Steven Breyer has called for his colleagues to reconsider the constitutionality of the death penalty itself. Whether the justices will strike it down once and for all is the big question, especially with the empty Scalia seat still waiting to be filled.

But there is always hope that even a conservative legal mind will recognize that the mood of the country is shifting away from executions. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in a 1958 decision that the 8th Amendment's definition of cruel and unusual punishment "must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society." We hope the court infers from the steady decline in death sentences that American society is maturing, and leaving capital punishment behind.

**LETTERS POLICY**

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