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OUR VIEW

Sworn in to the swamp

Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency put many Republicans in a bind.

The billionaire real estate mogul and reality TV star brought flash and fire to the race, but no detailed policy or even conservative philosophy to hang a red ball cap on.

A few noted Republicans signed on early, seeing his populist potential and willing to embrace the chaos that his candidacy would bring. Others signed off publicly, arguing a Trump presidency would be damaging to America.

But many kept their silence and their distance. Those interested in winning an election down ballot from Trump knew it could take a tightrope act to maintain their own Republican voting base while appealing to a wide enough demographic to keep their seats.

The argument was made that Hillary Clinton (or any Democrat) should not be the next president of the United States. And if Trump was elected, then a Republican Congress would keep the often inscrutable president in check and aligned to his newfound ideals.

With 16 days until Trump's inauguration, there is dwindling evidence the body is up to that task.

Late Monday, with less than 24 hours before the new Republican-led Congress was to be sworn in, GOP leaders voted to move the Office of Congressional Ethics under the control of Congress. Instead of having an independent body to investigate

allegations of misconduct, complaints would be handled within a House committee (that would conveniently be controlled by Republicans). A fox would be stationed at the door of the hen house to take complaints from any chickens that felt something was awry.

The change was pushed by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) and backed by legislators who feel they have been unfairly targeted by the office. There have been several high-profile cases of legislators, both Republicans and Democrats, found guilty of bribery and corruption because of the work of the office, which was formed in 2008.

We were pleased to see our own Rep. Greg Walden as well as House Speaker Paul Ryan opposed to gutting the office. But Congress didn't drop the effort until President-elect Trump tweeted against the proposal.

Removing an ethics office didn't fit with his latest slogan, "Drain the Swamp," and would have been a questionable first move by a Congress intent on proving it has both the vision and discipline to "Make America Great Again." Flexing that new Republican muscle to silence a nonpartisan ethics office on Day 1, only to be rebuked by the man they are supposed to be keeping in check, makes us worry that they might not be up to the task.

It also puts that much more pressure on Walden, Ryan and other leaders in the House to deliver a clear message that Republicans are interested in cleaning up D.C. and not adding to the swamp.

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

New city council has a clear sense of direction

On the 3rd of January, a new mayor and two new city councilors were seated in Pendleton. Two other council members have been on the job for just a few months, and there is a feeling of a new beginning at city hall.

I want to emphasize that the leadership of Pendleton's mayor of 12 years, Phil Houk, was directly responsible for many great things that have happened in Pendleton. Your new mayor and city council intend to continue down the path of improving the infrastructure and economy of our city.

During January, the city council is expected to adopt four goals to set our priorities for planning and budgeting for the next two years. These goals were the result of work done by a large committee of local citizens representing businesses, education, the arts, the hospital, finance, construction, and government. After taking a list of 12 proposed goals to more than 20 meetings and getting 245 ballots back from our citizens, the top four goals became quite clear. Those top-priority goals say we should be providing a stable source of funding for infrastructure, expanding the economy, developing quality commercial, industrial, and residential properties, and providing more housing for all levels of income. We are in the process of building measures of effectiveness for each of these goals so we will know when we are making progress on them.

One thing that becomes rapidly apparent when looking at these four goals is that, by nature, they are all linked. We need more housing to support a growing economy, we need solid infrastructure (not just streets) to attract new companies, and we need quality properties for both business and residential uses. Solutions to these issues will take time but I believe it is important for our citizens to know that your city council has a focus and a sense of direction for at least the next two years. The city will continue to provide



JOHN TURNER
Comment

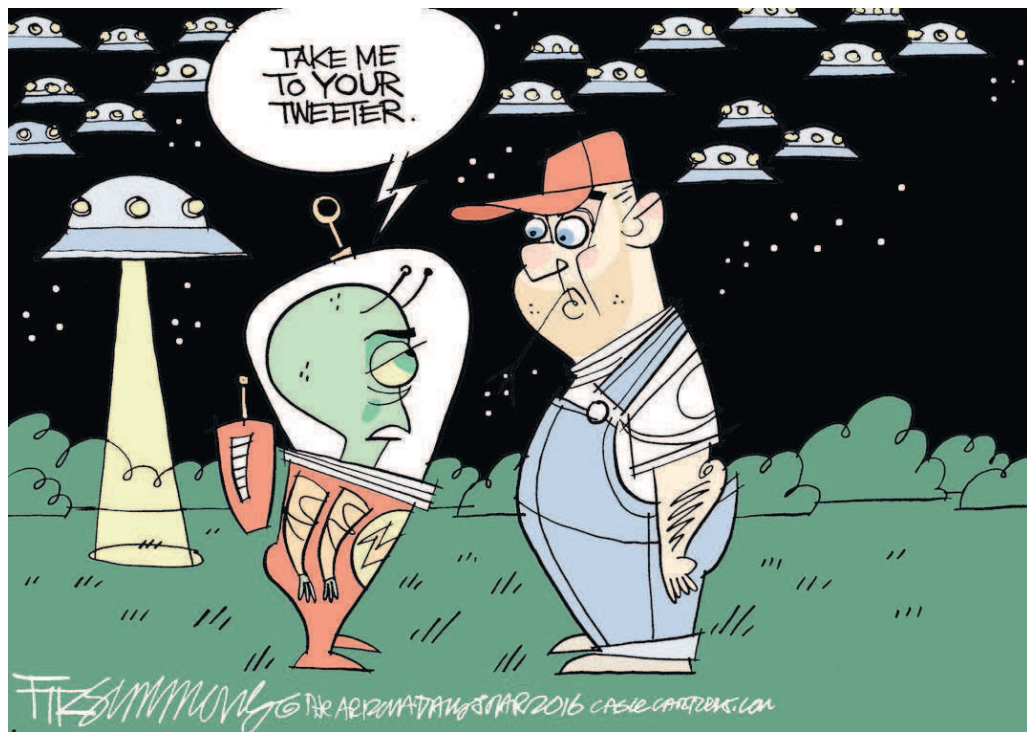
high-quality services from our city staff, police, fire department, public works, parks, library, airport, and convention center. One of our ongoing projects is to improve the public's satisfaction with customer service. Our city manager, Robb Corbett, is already working on improving communications between the city and its citizens on how we provide services. In addition to holding regular meetings with interest groups, he has started a monthly electronic newsletter that currently goes out to more than 600 people. If you are not receiving it, call the city manager's office and get on the list.

Several things that are happening now make me believe we are already on the right track. The UAV test range at our regional airport has produced enough revenue to put our airport operations in the black, and revenues are continuing to grow. The Downtown Association is working hard to make our downtown core vibrant and attractive. Main Street store vacancies are at the lowest point in years. Construction on our schools and at the college, made possible by voter-approved bonds, will result in safe, secure, and effective classrooms that will make us the envy of Eastern Oregon. Travel Pendleton is working closely with volunteers from the Round-Up, Happy Canyon, the Main Street Cowboys and other organizations to increase the number of events that pull large numbers of tourists into our city each year. Our upgraded convention center makes us a uniquely desirable venue in northeast Oregon for these types of large events.

Citizens of Pendleton should be full of confidence that a lot of talented, energetic, and conscientious people are working hard to improve our city. If you want to get more involved, then volunteer. We can always use your ideas and energy.

John Turner was sworn into his first term as Pendleton's mayor on Tuesday.

OTHER VIEWS



The Snapchat presidency

Normal leaders come up with policy proposals in a certain conventional way. They gather their advisers around them and they debate alternatives — with briefing papers, intelligence briefings and implementation strategies.

President-elect Donald Trump doesn't do that. He's tweeted out policy gestures in recent weeks, say about the future of the United States' nuclear arsenal. But these gestures aren't attached to anything. They emerged from no analytic process and point to no implemental effects. Trump's statements seem to spring spontaneously from his middle-of-night-feelings. They are astoundingly ambiguous and defy interpretation.

Normal leaders serve an office. They understand that the president isn't a lone monarch. He is the temporary occupant of a powerful public post. He's the top piece of a big system, and his ability to create change depends on his ability to leverage and mobilize the system. His statements are carefully parsed around the world because presidential shifts in verbal emphasis are not personal shifts; they are national shifts that signal changes in a superpower's actual behavior.

Donald Trump doesn't think in that way, either. He is anti-system. As my "PBS NewsHour" colleague Mark Shields points out, he has no experience being accountable to anybody, to a board of directors or an owner. As president-elect, he has not begun attaching himself to the system of governance he'll soon oversee.

If anything, Trump is detaching himself. In a very public way, he's detached himself from the intelligence community that normally serves as the president's eyes and ears. He's talked about not really moving to the White House, the nerve center of the executive branch. He's sided with a foreign leader, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, against his own governmental structures.

Finally, normal leaders promulgate policies. They measure their days by how they propose and champion actions and legislation.

Trump doesn't think in this way, either. He is a creature of the parts of TV and media where display is an end in itself. He is not really interested in power; his entire life has been about winning attention and status to build the Trump image for low-class prestige. The posture is the product.

When Trump issues a statement, it may look superficially like a policy statement, but it's usually just a symbolic assault in some dominance-submission male rivalry game. It's trash-talking against a rival, President Barack Obama, or a media critic like CNN. Trump may be bashing Obama on Russia or the Mideast, but it's not because he has implementable policies in those realms. The primary thing is bashing



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

enemies.

Over the past weeks, we've treated the president-elect's comments as normal policy statements uttered by a normal president-elect. Each time Trump says or tweets something, squads of experts leap into action, trying to interpret what he could have meant, or how his intention could lead to changes in U.S. policy.

But this is probably the wrong way to read Trump. He is more postmodern. He does not operate by an if-then logic. His mode is not decision, implementation, consequence.

His statements should probably be treated less like policy declarations and more like Snapchat. They exist to win attention at the moment, but then they disappear.

To read Trump correctly, it's probably best to dig up old French deconstructionists like Jean Baudrillard, who treated words not as things that have meanings in themselves but as displays in an oppositional power struggle. Trump is not a national leader; he is a national show.

If this is all true, it could be that the governing Trump will be a White House holograph. When it comes to the substance of actual governance, it could be that President Trump is the man who isn't there.

The crucial question of the Trump administration could be: Who will fill the void left by a leader who is all facade?

It could be the senior staff. Trump will spew out a stream of ambiguous tweets, then the hypermacho tough guys Trump has selected will battle viciously with one another to determine which way the administration will really go.

It could be congressional Republicans. They have an off-the-shelf agenda they are hoping that figurehead Trump will sign, though it has nothing to do with the issues that drove the presidential campaign.

It could be the permanent bureaucracy, which has an impressive passive-aggressive ability to let the politicians have their news conference fun and then ignore everything that's "decided."

I'll be curious to see if Trump's public rhetoric becomes operationalized in any way. For example, I bet his bromance with Putin will end badly. The two men are both such blustery, insecure, aggressive public posturers; sooner or later, they will get in a schoolyard fight.

It will be interesting to see if that brawl is just an escalating but ultimately harmless volley of verbiage, or whether it affects the substance of government policy and leads to nuclear war.

David Brooks has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and he is currently a commentator on "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer."

YOUR VIEWS

City hall, stewards of public property

With the New Year comes a new mayor and city council and hopefully a policy that will address an emphasis on maintaining essential infrastructure and returning excess public property to the private sector and back on the tax rolls. As stated by our former mayor during a meeting concerning the current use of city property by BMCC for a baseball field, the city is the steward of all city property and, as such, responsible for its condition. The failure of this stewardship is apparent in the current condition of Fire Station No. 1, the deterioration of our city-owned parking lots and city streets, and the condition of our water and sewer systems. Our new mayor, apparently hand-picked by our outgoing mayor, has promised to make this his primary emphasis and hopefully an end to potholes and brass plaques.

Cleaning up the blight should also be a priority since the Restore Pendleton Committee has not been a stellar success at this endeavor, its primary mission. It's taken well over a year to get any action on the Old City Hall building, but it's inexcusable that the Edwards Apartments, the two houses behind the Knights Inn Motel, the shanty behind the new Oregon Grain Growers distillery, and

probably others sitting vacant for years haven't received similar attention. Vacant property owned by the city has been a problem in my neighborhood for quite some time. The adjacent property owners use it for a parking area and dump. Though city hall is aware of the problem, there seems to be no interest in cleaning it up.

City hall is again leaning in the wrong direction by promoting a street tree program in the downtown area. Sure they look nice, but there doesn't seem to be any enthusiasm from business and property owners or the city to clean up the resulting mess or repair the broken sidewalks. It just turns into an added expense for taxpayers. Check along the nice paver sidewalk bordering the chamber of commerce parking lot and you'll find cast-iron tree surrounds with stumps or missing trees much like the several on Main Street where trees have been removed. I looked on the approved tree list. Crab apple? You just gotta love that bird poop on your car when you park on Main. Even those new trees in front of the *East Oregonian* are hanging with that luscious fruit.

A new mayor and some fresh thinking on the city council — will it make a difference?

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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