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OUR VIEW

Improving data security must be a top priority

Russian meddling in the U.S. election certainly should make all Americans angry, no matter our political differences. Moving forward, it's important to learn from it and incorporate these lessons throughout our personal, professional and political lives.

Despicable as it was to hack into Democratic National Committee computers and selectively leak information in a way that undercut the party's candidate, such shenanigans couldn't have been effective if the DNC had not engaged in embarrassing acts and stockpiled damaging data in its files.

Three keys points to note about this:

- The DNC and, presumably, the Republican National Committee are guilty of trying to skew the presidential selection process in ways that support favorites already anointed behind the scenes. Many in the DNC believed Hillary Clinton was owed her party's nomination by acclamation. They resented Bernie Sanders' spirited opposition. To the extent they are capable of doing so, the national political committees must resolve to be honest brokers that provide a level playing field for all credible candidates. Citizen resentment about being force-fed political dynasties — in the form of the Clintons and Bushes — partly precipitated the Trump surprise.

- If the DNC was incapable of withstanding or resisting efforts by Clinton stalwarts to skew the selection process, it should at a minimum have been much smarter about protecting its inner workings.

For would-be world leaders, they were blindingly stupid. Unlike the Watergate burglary that required physically entering an office and trying to steal papers, we live in an age when electronic information is spread throughout the world on computer servers, protected (and unprotected) in ways few of us understand. Nothing should ever be sent in an email or stored electronically that you would not want to have read aloud in a court deposition or news report. For ordinary citizens, the corresponding lesson is to zealously safeguard financial information, credit card numbers and passwords. Any time such data is exposed in an email

or other unencrypted form, it is susceptible to being skimmed off and misused.

- Government and corporations owe an enormous responsibility to better protect electronic information. Our democracy, economy and security hang in the balance. Far more important than a physical fence along a peaceful international border, defending our electronic frontier ought to be at the forefront of the U.S. national agenda. If the world tips into chaos — as it has often done in the past — in today's world it may be because a madman, tyrant or criminal enterprise deliberately or accidentally crashes the information systems on which we rely for so many vital services in modern life.

We've been delivered a stinging rebuke about sloppy data management. Let's never allow it to be repeated.

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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

Retirement foresight is lacking, but default contributions unfair

The (Bend) Bulletin, Dec. 31

The Oregon Retirement Savings Plan, created by the 2015 Legislature, is supposed to be up and running by July 1, rolled out in stages by the treasurer's office.

While the state is still in the process of creating the final rules for the plan, part of the law that created it should be changed. That rule requires businesses to enroll employees in the plan unless those employees take the trouble to opt out of it. It's expected to apply to roughly 64,000 employers in the state.

There's no doubt too few Oregonians are saving for their retirement years. In fact, about 60 percent of those working for pay in this state have no retirement plan available to them at their workplace, according to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. That's about 1 million Oregonians who, if nothing changes, will retire with only their Social Security checks to keep them warm. That's a thin blanket, indeed.

The Oregon plan should change that. Governed by the new Oregon Retirement Savings Board, the plan

will allow uncovered workers to put money into professionally managed investment accounts regularly. Employers must make it possible for employees to participate, and that will mean some cost of employee time, if nothing else.

But as it's now written, the law governing the plan has a flaw.

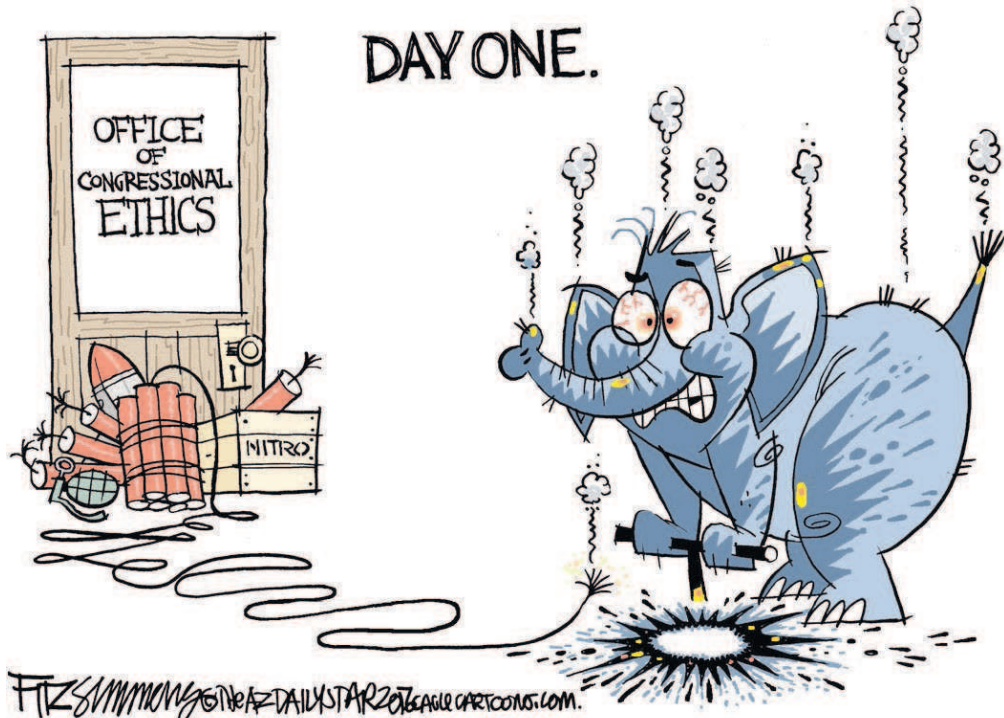
Uncovered Oregonians will be enrolled automatically, and 5 percent of their paychecks deducted as contributions to the plan. They may choose to leave, but it will take action on their part to do so. The automatic enrollment provision is there, no doubt, to ensure that as many Oregonians as possible participate.

The 2017 Legislature should make enrollment optional. It's one thing to require employers to make the plan available to workers. It may also be reasonable to require them to actively inform workers of the option. It's another thing to make participation the default option, no matter what the workers themselves might think.

The Legislature should treat working Oregonians as the adults they are, and give them the option to choose to take part in the plan.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

From hands to heads to hearts

Software has started writing poetry, sports stories and business news. IBM's Watson is co-writing pop hits. Uber has begun deploying self-driving taxis on real city streets and, last month, Amazon delivered its first package by drone to a customer in rural England.

Add it all up and you quickly realize that Donald Trump's election isn't the only thing disrupting society today. The far more profound disruption is happening in the workplace and in the economy at large, as the relentless march of technology has brought us to a point where machines and software are not just outworking us but starting to outthink us in more and more realms.

To reflect on this rapid change, I sat down with my teacher and friend Dov Seidman, CEO of LRN, which advises companies on leadership and how to build ethical cultures, for his take.

"What we are experiencing today bears striking similarities in size and implications to the scientific revolution that began in the 16th century," said Seidman. "The discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, which spurred that scientific revolution, challenged our whole understanding of the world around and beyond us — and forced us as humans to rethink our place within it."

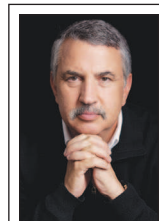
Once scientific methods became enshrined, we used science and reason to navigate our way forward, he added, so much so that "the French philosopher René Descartes crystallized this age of reason in one phrase: 'I think, therefore I am.'" Descartes' point, said Seidman, "was that it was our ability to 'think' that most distinguished humans from all other animals on earth."

The technological revolution of the 21st century is as consequential as the scientific revolution, argued Seidman, and it is "forcing us to answer a most profound question — one we've never had to ask before: 'What does it mean to be human in the age of intelligent machines?'"

In short: If machines can compete with people in thinking, what makes us humans unique? And what will enable us to continue to create social and economic value? The answer, said Seidman, is the one thing machines will never have: "a heart."

"It will be all the things that the heart can do," he explained. "Humans can love, they can have compassion, they can dream. While humans can act from fear and anger, and be harmful, at their most elevated, they can inspire and be virtuous. And while machines can reliably interoperate, humans, uniquely, can build deep relationships of trust."

Therefore, Seidman added, our highest self-conception needs to be redefined from "I think, therefore I am" to "I care, therefore I am; I hope, therefore I am; I imagine, therefore I am. I am ethical, therefore I am."



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

I have a purpose, therefore I am. I pause and reflect, therefore I am."

We will still need manual labor, and people will continue working with machines to do extraordinary things. Seidman is simply arguing that the tech revolution will force humans to create more value with hearts and between hearts. I agree. When machines and software control more and more of our lives, people will seek out more human-to-human connections — all the things you

can't download but have to upload the old-fashioned way, one human to another.

Seidman reminded me of a Talmudic adage: "What comes from the heart, enters the heart." Which is why even jobs that still have a large technical component will benefit from more heart. I call these

STEMpathy jobs — jobs that combine STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) skills with human empathy, like the doctor who can extract the best diagnosis from IBM's Watson on cancer and then best relate it to a patient.

No wonder one of the fastest-growing U.S. franchises today is Paint

Nite, which runs paint-while-drinking classes for adults. Bloomberg Businessweek explained in a 2015 story that Paint Nite "throws after-work parties for patrons who are largely lawyers, teachers and tech workers eager for a creative hobby." The artist-teachers who work five nights a week can make \$50,000 a year connecting people to their hearts.

Economies get labeled according to the predominant way people create value, pointed out Seidman, also author of the book "How: Why How We Do Anything Means Everything." So, the industrial economy, he noted, "was about hired hands. The knowledge economy was about hired heads. The technology revolution is thrusting us into 'the human economy,' which will be more about creating value with hired hearts — all the attributes that can't be programmed into software, like passion, character and collaborative spirit."

It's no surprise that the French government began requiring French companies on Jan. 1 to guarantee their employees a "right to disconnect" from technology — when they are not at work — trying to combat the "always on" work culture.

Leaders, businesses and communities will still leverage technology to gain advantage, but those that put human connection at the center of everything they do — and how they do it — will be the enduring winners, insisted Seidman: "Machines can be programmed to do the next thing right. But only humans can do the next right thing."

Thomas L. Friedman became the New York Times' foreign affairs columnist in 1995 and has been awarded three Pulitzer prizes.

