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OUR VIEW

Brown sets priorities in inaugural speech

Gov. Kate Brown outlined three priorities in her inaugural speech Monday, which — if she and the 2017 Legislature achieve them — could dramatically improve Oregon:

- Create more and better jobs in rural Oregon.
- Expand health insurance so all Oregon children are covered.
- Improve Oregon's dismal rate of high school graduation.

Brown's nearly two-year tenure as governor has been a decidedly mixed record, pleasing to liberal and urban Oregonians and frustrating to conservative and rural residents. Monday's speech could be a welcome turning point for Democrat Brown, who now is an elected governor instead of an appointed one. Her speech was bipartisan, pragmatic and focused, avoiding her penchant for pursuing dozens of ideas.

Much of urban Oregon has recovered well from the recession. As Brown put it, "For those living in urban Oregon, it seems like the economy is growing like a gangly teenage boy: overnight and out of control."

"For the first time in almost two decades, the statewide unemployment rate dropped below the national average. News outlets from Forbes to Fortune to Bloomberg are writing glowing profiles of Oregon's job-producing economy."

Yet, she said, "there is a disturbing gap between the unemployment rate in urban Oregon and rural Oregon."

One antidote is the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center, which is being developed in Scappoose, thanks to the determination of Sen. Betsy Johnson. Twelve large manufacturers have made commitments to the center. Some are interested in opening their

own facilities in Scappoose.

But Brown also sees other opportunities for rural economic development, starting with preparing for the Big One.

At least 100 coastal bridges would be destroyed or severely damaged in that inevitable major earthquake. Seismic retrofitting of coastal bridges and roads would create good, family-wage jobs. So too would improving U.S. 97, which would become the state's major north-south arterial when the big quake makes Interstate 5 impassable.

Brown also spoke of the importance of water projects for agriculture, such as in the Umatilla Basin, and of increased timber harvests on U.S. Forest Service land.

All these projects make sense ... if the governor and Legislature will follow through.

"By leveraging the human, material and natural resources that once made our rural communities the most prosperous in the state, we have a real chance to tackle the economic fault line that has split our state in two," Brown said.

There is a side benefit as well, one that Brown did not dwell on. More jobs and better-paying ones mean more tax revenue for the state, not just economic improvement for families and communities.

State government and schools face a projected \$1.7 billion deficit in 2017-19 — if all programs were to be maintained at their current level. The biggest challenge facing this year's Legislature is to balance that state budget, including paying for health care and education.

A healthy economy throughout rural Oregon would be a blessing for the entire state.

OTHER VIEWS

FBI owes better answers on airport shooting

Sun-Sentinel (Ft. Lauderdale)

Given that he reportedly suffered mental health problems, that he told FBI agents he was hearing voices about ISIS and that he was held for psychiatric evaluation in Alaska just two months ago, how is it even possible that Esteban Santiago was allowed to fly with a gun?

Following the bloodbath he is believed to have caused at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on Friday — killing five and wounding eight in a shooting spree at baggage claim — the FBI said Saturday that Santiago wasn't even on the federal no-fly list.

Why in heaven's name not? How many warning signs, red flags and alarm bells does the agency need to recognize that someone poses a danger, deserves ongoing scrutiny and shouldn't be allowed to possess — let alone fly — with weapons and ammunition?

At least in the case of Omar Mateen, the disturbed young man who pledged allegiance to ISIS as he massacred 49 and wounded 53 at Orlando's Pulse nightclub last June, the FBI had raised its antenna and tracked his routine for 10 months before mistakenly closing the case.

But from what little the FBI is saying in Fort Lauderdale, it appears the agency demonstrated insufficient attention after Santiago walked into its Anchorage, Alaska office in November in a "very agitated state."

According to various reports, Santiago said he wanted to talk about the government having taken over his mind, about being forced to watch propaganda videos on ISIS and about feeling forced to fight for the Islamic State terror group.

You'd think words like ISIS and Islamic State would hit agents in the face. They should have been especially concerned — if they knew — that the Iraqi combat veteran had reportedly been discharged from the Alaska Guard in August "for unsatisfactory performance."

But it appears the FBI handed off the problem and failed to follow up.

Instead, they called local police, who facilitated a psychiatric review. Sources told the Sun-Sentinel that Santiago was

committed to a hospital because he was seen as a danger to himself or others.

But no one is saying how long he was committed, whether he was adjudicated mentally unfit or why nothing in this timeline triggered his entry on the no-fly list, which was created after 9/11 to keep people who present "a known or suspected threat" from boarding commercial aircraft.

We have to believe that had the FBI done a little more digging on the front end, it might have prevented this enormous tragedy on the back end.

More will be said in coming days about airport safety. Already, there's debate about whether new security barriers are needed at ticketing and baggage claim areas, or whether alternative screening methods could work equally well without clogging the system. Already there's more sheriff's deputies on patrol, and talk of more federal officers and drug-sniffing dogs, too. The Florida Legislature is considering a misguided proposal to let people carry concealed weapons into airport public areas, like baggage claim.

For the moment, let's remember that Santiago reportedly followed the law in coming to Fort Lauderdale to commit mass murder. He locked his unloaded gun in a hard-shell case and sent it through checked baggage. His ammo was inside, too.

After retrieving his case at baggage claim, he allegedly retreated to a nearby bathroom, loaded his gun and came out shooting. Witnesses say the nightmare lasted about 45 seconds. Broward Sheriff Scott Israel says deputies were on the scene within 60 to 70 seconds.

Israel is right when he says no one can stop every "lone wolf" intent on doing harm, but one of the lessons of Fort Lauderdale baggage claim should be the need for a different process to reunite traveling gun owners with their ammunition. Wasserman Schultz is interested in exploring that challenge, too.

But today, as our grief turns to anger, we want a better answer.

We want to know why this lunatic was allowed to fly with a weapon.

The FBI has some explaining to do.

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OTHER VIEWS

Deficits matter again

Not long ago prominent Republicans like Paul Ryan, the speaker of the House, liked to warn in apocalyptic terms about the dangers of budget deficits, declaring that a Greek-style crisis was just around the corner. But now, suddenly, those very same politicians are perfectly happy with the prospect of deficits swollen by tax cuts; the budget resolution they're considering would, according to their own estimates, add \$9 trillion in debt over the next decade. Hey, no problem.

This sudden turnaround comes as a huge shock to absolutely nobody — at least nobody with any sense. All that posturing about the deficit was obvious flimflam, whose purpose was to hobble a Democratic president, and it was completely predictable that the pretense of being fiscally responsible would be dropped as soon as the GOP regained the White House.

What wasn't quite so predictable, however, was that Republicans would stop pretending to care about deficits at almost precisely the moment that deficits were starting to matter again.

Those apocalyptic warnings are still foolish: America, which borrows in its own currency and therefore can't run out of cash, isn't at all like Greece. But running big deficits is no longer harmless, let alone desirable.

The way it was: Eight years ago, with the economy in free fall, I wrote that we had entered an era of "depression economics," in which the usual rules of economic policy no longer applied, in which virtue was vice and prudence was folly. In particular, deficit spending was essential to support the economy, and attempts to balance the budget would be destructive.

This diagnosis — shared by most professional economists — didn't come out of thin air; it was based on well-established macroeconomic principles. Furthermore, the predictions that came out of those principles held up very well. In the depressed economy that prevailed for years after the financial crisis, government borrowing didn't drive up interest rates, money creation by the Fed didn't cause inflation, and nations that tried to slash budget deficits experienced severe recessions.

But these predictions were always conditional, applying only to an economy far from full employment. That was the kind of economy President Barack Obama inherited; but the Trump-Putin administration will, instead, come into power at a time when full employment has been more or less restored.

How do we know that we're close to full employment? The low official unemployment rate is just one indicator. What I find



PAUL KRUGMAN
Comment

more compelling are two facts: Wages are finally rising reasonably fast, showing that workers have bargaining power again, and the rate at which workers are quitting their jobs, an indication of how confident they are of finding new jobs, is back to pre-crisis levels.

What changes once we're close to full employment? Basically, government borrowing once again competes with the private sector for a limited amount of money. This

means that deficit spending no longer provides much if any economic boost, because it drives up interest rates and "crowds out" private investment.

Now, government borrowing can still be justified if it serves an important purpose: Interest rates are still very low, and borrowing at those low rates to invest in much-needed infrastructure is still a very good idea, both because it would raise productivity and because it would provide a bit of insurance against future downturns. But while candidate Trump talked about increasing public investment, there's no sign at all that congressional Republicans are going to make such investment a priority.

No, they're going to blow up the deficit mainly by cutting taxes on the wealthy. And that won't do anything significant to boost the economy or create jobs. In fact, by crowding out investment it will somewhat reduce long-term economic growth. Meanwhile, it will make the rich richer, even as cuts in social spending make the poor poorer and undermine security for the middle class. But that, of course, is the intention.

Again, none of this implies an economic catastrophe. If such a catastrophe does come, it will be thanks to other policies, like a rollback of financial regulation, or from outside events like a crisis in China or Europe. And because stuff does happen, and a lot depends on how the U.S. government responds when it does, we should be concerned that the incoming administration only seems to take economic advice from people who have consistently been wrong about, well, everything.

But back to deficits: the crucial point is not that Republicans were hypocritical. It is, instead, that their hypocrisy made us poorer. They screamed about the evils of debt at a time when bigger deficits would have done a lot of good, and are about to blow up deficits at a time when they will do harm.

Paul Krugman is a New York Times columnist and the 2008 recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his work on international trade theory.

YOUR VIEWS

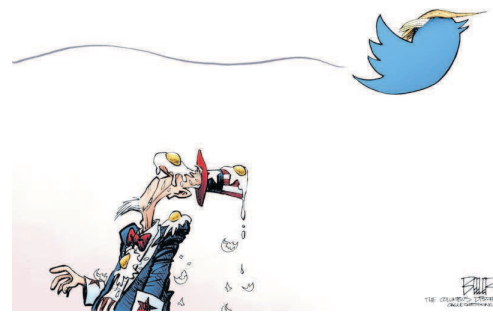
Anti-Trump bias on EO editorial page

I guess the old saying: "the straw that broke the camel's back" applies to me!

For me it was the *East Oregonian's* political cartoon, the one of a bird with a Trump hairstyle, flying over Uncle Sam and defecating all over him. What thought process selected that for our local, Umatilla County, northeastern Oregon, newspaper? If I thought I was the only one offended by this paper's liberal abuse of power I would shrug my shoulders. But I'm not! Nearly to a person the people in my circle are abhorred by the treatment the *EO* has given this presidential campaign and the posture the *EO* editors have taken in crafting and selecting editorial items.

The continued selection of the material published in this newspaper, that we rely upon for fair and balanced news, has been slanted by the personal posture of the editorial staff. Without the *EO* we would have no local news. The *EO's* liberal treatment of this past campaign and the selection of other opinions is akin to an abuse of power.

You, the editorial staff, can shrug and say: that, not-among-the-elite man doesn't believe in a free press. Not true, I just don't believe



your continued loading of our local paper with your personal liberal views does your readership justice. We don't need a checkout-line tabloid; we need a newspaper with a fair and balanced content. Surprise! We can formulate our own conclusions!

The *EO* has, in recent issues, tried to assuage itself by throwing a weakly crafted crumb.

Again a quote from history: "Me thinks you protest too much!"

Rather than throw crumbs to camouflage your abuse of power — do better for your remaining readership.

Ron Linn
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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