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OUR VIEW

Rent control for Oregon is a fool's bargain

Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek threw red meat to her Portland constituents by proposing legislation to create rent control. Portland rents have escalated as the city has become one of the nation's most desirable locations. Kotek extended her rent control proposal beyond Portland's boundaries, to all Oregon communities.

Rent control is now prohibited in Oregon statute.

America's on-again, off-again experience with rent control began during World War II housing shortages.

With almost 70 years of history in various cities such as New York, rent control has generated enormous economic study and literature. Retired Portland State University Professor John Walker said: "The shelves of literature on rent control are bigger than the Astoria Public Library."

Of rent control, one can say two things: it will generate a huge bureaucracy and it is fraught with unintended consequences that are not what hard-pressed tenants hope for.

South of us, in San Francisco, lies one of the most unfortunate conundrums, born of rent control. Writing in *Willamette Week* last June, Aaron Mesh explored the San Francisco example. "Many landlords either evict tenants or keep apartments empty," wrote Mesh.

"Roughly one in 12 housing units in San Francisco sit vacant, according to the U.S. Census Bureau."

Of San Francisco, Tim Duy of the University of Oregon economics department asked: "Has that really been effective at solving

their problems? No. You think you're helping people, but you are constraining the stock of affordable housing."

For Speaker Kotek to propose rent control for all Oregon communities is an especially ridiculous concept.

Asking the Oregon Legislature to embark on consideration of rent control is a fool's bargain. If this comes to serious legislative committee discussion, we hope that economists from Oregon's universities will enlighten the statehouse.

Rent control will generate a huge bureaucracy and is fraught with unintended consequences.

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

John's gospel of Trump's illegitimacy

On Friday, the Georgia congressman, civil rights icon and Donald Trump inauguration-boycotter John Lewis told NBC's Chuck Todd something that I believe millions of Americans are thinking.

"I don't see this president-elect as a legitimate president," Lewis said. "I think the Russians participated in helping this man get elected. And they helped destroy the candidacy of Hillary Clinton."

The release of the clip in which Lewis made his stark assessment came on the same day that the FBI director, James Comey, and other intelligence officials provided a classified briefing to members of the House, no doubt divulging information to which we mere mortals are not privy. After the meeting, Rep. Maxine Waters of California blasted: "It's classified and we can't tell you anything. All I can tell you is the FBI director has no credibility!"

It would be easy to simply claim that emotions are running high or that partisan pain is abnormally acute. But I continue to argue, strenuously and adamantly, that to simply see the extraordinary events unfolding before us as purely ideological blinds us to the very real concern that our sovereignty has been compromised.

Trump, the president-elect tweet stormer, couldn't let this go, particularly Lewis' assessment.

Early on Saturday morning, Trump shot back at Lewis in possibly one of the most ill-advised political social media moments I can recall, publishing two tweets that together read: "Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested) rather than falsely complaining about the election results. All talk, talk, talk — no action or results. Sad!"

Stop and think about what you just read: A lecher attacking a legend; a man of moral depravity attacking a man of moral certitude; an intellectual weakling attacking a warrior for justice. This on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, no less.

Trump attacks Lewis as, "All talk, talk, talk — no action"; Lewis, who repeatedly thrust his body unto the breach for justice, who was arrested, beaten and terrorized, including during the time that young Trump was at his well-heeled schools, receiving draft deferments from the Vietnam War.

In fact, one of Trump's five deferments was in 1965, the same year as the Selma marches and "Bloody Sunday," during which Lewis was struck so violently by a state trooper wielding a billy club that Trooper's skull was fractured.

Coincidentally, Trump finally received his permanent exemption from the draft, a 4-F status, in the year before he and his father were sued by the Department of Justice for violating the Fair Housing Act of 1968 — one of the many justice issues Lewis championed.

As *The New York Times* noted at the time: "The government contended that Trump Management had refused to rent or negotiate rentals 'because of race and color.' It also charged that the company had required different rental terms and conditions because of race and that it had misrepresented to blacks that apartments were not available."

Let's be clear: Donald Trump doesn't even deserve to stand in John Lewis' shadow. The spectacular obscenity of Trump's comment is incomparable and deeply repulsive.

And furthermore, I don't find what Lewis said about Trump's illegitimacy to be outrageous, or off the mark in the least.

I guess for me, it comes down to a rather profound semantic question: Does "legitimate" refer here to the meaning in law or principle?

It is true that Donald Trump is, by all measures of the law, the legitimate president-elect and will legitimately be inaugurated our 45th president on Friday, no matter how much it pains me to write that or pains you to read it.

But there is another way of considering legitimacy, another test that his election doesn't meet: That is when legitimacy is defined as "conforming to recognized principles or accepted rules and standards."

Here, Lewis and his fellow believers are on solid footing. Trump has bucked our conventions; his life is rife with percolating conflicts; Comey outrageously threw a wrench in the works with his meaningless, last-minute letter about Clinton's email (which is now, quite rightly, being investigated); and the intelligence community has determined with high confidence that Russia interfered in our election in an effort to hurt Clinton and help Trump, their desired candidate.

Charles M. Blow has been a New York Times Op-Ed columnist since 2008.



OTHER VIEWS

Trump and pony show

As a professional skeptic, I'm going to remain doubtful that Donald Trump has been a willing Russian tool, masterfully serving the needs of a dangerous American adversary. I'm not going to buy all the sordid details of "that crap," as the president-elect called intelligence reports of his being compromised by nasty people operating out of the Kremlin.

I'm going to believe Donald Trump, for now, which is more than he ever did for the graceful president soon to exit.

Trump has been a garbage conveyor belt, passing along every bit of half-fermented slop that came his way. "An extremely credible source has called my office and told me that Barack Obama's birth certificate is a fraud," he tweeted in 2012, to cite one lie among thousands.

I'm going to believe this same Donald Trump who urged Russia to interfere with an American election, because to believe otherwise, without irrefutable evidence, is a pretty damn horrific thing to imagine. It would mean that in a week, the Russians will have installed a stooge — and done it with the right wing of this country cheering them on.

I'm going to follow the advice an old journalism hand gave me when I started out at City Hall: pay more attention to what a politician does than to what he says. In that sense, Trump's adviser Kellyanne Conway was half-right when she urged people to largely ignore "what's come out of his mouth."

His tweets are a diversion, many of them celebrity-on-celebrity drivel without a dust mite of dignity. They move markets, and ignite news cycles — an addictive power for an insecure man. His Trump Tower perp walks, showing off the latest poor soul to kiss the king's ring, reveal little but the everyday nourishment needs of a narcissist.

In the combustible Wednesday news conference, the skills of a talented charlatan were on display. Trump is a terrific showman, and the press was no match. He belittled, bragged, dodged, told a half-dozen half-truths. His motto should be: stay unclassy! He said he could run the country and his business at the same time. And judging by the paper-thin conflict-of-interest wall he set up, he probably will.

His tax returns could reveal many of those opportunities to enrich himself from the Oval Office. But he refuses to release this vital information. He never answered two essential questions of the transition: What will he replace Obamacare with? And, did anyone in his campaign have contact with Russian operatives working to ensure that Hillary Clinton would



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

not get elected?

Watch. Trump mentioned that over the weekend he was offered a \$2 billion deal with Dubai, which sounds like a bribe. Don't worry, the Trump organization will not do deals abroad while he's president, he said. But he will be making decisions that can fatten his own family holdings at home, and he will be conducting foreign policy with countries where the Trumps have business entanglements.

"This is not a blind trust," said Walter Shaub, the director of the Office of Government Ethics. "It's not even close."

Watch. When Russia preys on a defenseless neighbor, or Trump allows Vladimir Putin, a man Sen. John McCain called "a thug, a murderer, a killer and a KGB agent," to commit war crimes without consequence, we'll have something to talk about. Will Rex Tillerson, the former Exxon Mobil chief picked to be secretary of

state, earn his Order of Friendship Award from Putin, or act like the top diplomat of a nation long committed to defending human rights?

Watch. When Trump's only real infrastructure program is a wall along the Mexican border, saddling taxpayers with a bill that could exceed \$50 billion with no discernible economic benefit at home, then he must answer for something far more consequential than his opinion of the acting skills of Meryl Streep.

Watch. When the executive puts his signature to real policies. First up is likely to be the Obamacare repeal, which would give a huge tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. The 400 highest taxpayers would each get a break of about \$7 million, on average. Soon to follow, gutting the estate tax, which could benefit his Cabinet and his family by upward of \$9 billion total.

Watch. When that same Cabinet, heavy on billionaires and people with no government experience goes to work. In the inner circle, Trump's national security adviser will be Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, who was paid to give a speech by RT, the Kremlin's main propaganda outlet for English-language television.

Watch for a counterweight of sanity, the nominee for defense secretary, retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis. On Thursday, he broke with Trump, saying the United States must confront Putin and should try to make the Iran nuclear deal work. You know we're in trouble when the only reasonable voice during a week of capital chaos is a man whose nickname is Mad Dog.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as a Pacific Northwest correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.

YOUR VIEWS

Communities must be vigilant to animal neglect, abuse

Regarding *East Oregonian* Jan. 10 article: "Investigation finds dead, malnourished cattle"

We're in near total disbelief that these animals were allowed to be abused to this degree. It's obvious that the owner wouldn't or couldn't take care of them properly for some time before they were actually reported, but how many people witnessed the starving things and did nothing about it? The address listed was South Edwards and Columbia roads, two main thoroughfares east of Hermiston.

The article stated that a caller had seen the dead animals from Columbia. Ehen the authorities got there 14 were dead, one more calf had to be put down, and 15 were so malnourished they could not be moved safely. How long had the cattle been in bad shape before somebody finally called? That's a lot of pain and agony that could have been averted because nobody "wanted to get involved."

Surely this terrible travesty had been an

ongoing thing for quite some time, maybe for months when the growing season came to a close and the animals ran out of grass. Apparently they didn't get the feed they so desperately needed to live, especially in the cold weather we've had lately, and was their water frozen, or did they have any? Why didn't the owner do something with his cattle when it became apparent that he couldn't care for them properly? It makes no sense at all from a humane or economic standpoint. Isn't Northwest Sale Yard less than 20 miles away?

And what about the owner's friends, family or neighbors? Where were they while these animals were starving to death? Cattle are pretty vocal animals when something is wrong and we're fairly sure that these animals at some time before they became too emaciated and sick had vocalized their plight collectively that could have been heard for a half mile or more. Are the people who were aware of the condition of these animals that were dying a slow and agonizing death just as guilty of animal abuse as their owner? We think they are.

Greg and Diane Elliott
Pilot Rock

LETTERS POLICY

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