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OUR VIEW

Congress must act to fix immigration laws

The decades-old debate on illegal immigration has been renewed with President Trump's executive order of Jan. 25 — "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements."

The order sets administration policy on illegal immigration. In short, it seeks to detain those suspected of violating immigration law, to expedite their claims and to quickly remove those whose legal claims have been rejected.

While they work hard at jobs "Americans" often don't want, by their numbers the undocumented workers have changed the dynamics of the entire U.S. workforce. Their repatriation would have a sizable impact on our economy, leaving many industries without viable replacements.

Presidents have wide discretion as to how to enforce immigration laws passed by Congress. Trump's order indicates he intends to enforce the statutes. The administration says it will prioritize the deportation of criminal aliens, the 300,000 or so who have committed crimes either in the United States or in their home countries. But the order does not make that distinction.

Trump needs no additional authority to deport illegal immigrants. He might need additional money to fully implement his order, but existing law provides a process for the repatriation of anyone who has entered the country illegally or violated a visa.

Driven by crushing poverty, immigrants seeking opportunities impossible at home have illegally flooded across the border — 12 million by most counts. They have placed strains on public education,

healthcare and law enforcement.

Once here and armed with forged papers they have found ready employment on farms and construction sites, and in hotels, restaurants, processing plants and other places eager for cheap, reliable labor.

While most are not violent or dangerous, all have violated federal law by entering and remaining in the country. Millions have further submitted fake papers to employers, and have assumed other identities for the sake of employment.

They are also real people — real families — with real ties to the United States. They have children, many who are citizens born in the United States, who have never known another home.

We return to what we've always seen as the two legal options facing their dispositions: Make them go, or let them stay.

Only Congress can change the law. And it's time it did.

Congress must offer illegal immigrants temporary legal status and a path to permanent residency, but not citizenship, after 10 years if they can be properly vetted and meet strict requirements — no prior felony convictions, no violations while awaiting residency and pay a fine and back taxes.

The border should be secured. A viable guestworker program must be established, and employers must verify the work status of their employees.

We respect the rule of law, and do not lightly suggest rewarding those who have flouted it. But we are reluctant to disrupt the lives of otherwise harmless people who have done what we would do — whatever it takes to ensure the safety and welfare of our families.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Fire bond more expensive than advertised

I do support our Pendleton police and fire departments. I am in favor of improvements to the existing fire station or a less-expensive solution. The city has a lot of things that need repaired or fixed. We cannot afford to spend \$10 million on only one problem.

There is a fact sheet put out that has the Pendleton Fire Department emblem on it. The fact sheet says "the net increase would be 14 cents per \$1,000." This is not true. The real increase on your property tax would be 62 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. The average assessed value of a home in Pendleton is \$155,000, which would mean an increase of \$96.10 per year for 20 years.

How can this be if two bond issues were paid off? The answer is both bond

issues were paid off in May 2016. The tax for the fire bond will show up on your tax bill starting in November 2017. Both bond issues are not on your taxes for 2016-2017. I know property taxes are confusing, which makes it easier to fool the taxpayers.

With the college bond issue, school district bond, school district override levy and the 3 percent raise taxing districts can levy on your assessed valuation every year, your property taxes will go up way more than \$96.10 if the fire bond passes in May 2017.

The city council could review this bond now that there are new members. They could come up with a better plan. If the council does not revise the bond, the best course of action is to vote no on this bond in May 2017.

Rex Morehouse
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

A gift for Trump

If you could give Donald Trump the gift of a single trait to help his presidency, what would it be?

My first thought was that prudence was the most important gift one could give him. Prudence is the ability to govern oneself with the use of reason. It is the ability to suppress one's impulses for the sake of long-term goals. It is the ability to see the specific circumstances in which you are placed, and to master the art of navigating within them.

My basic thought was that a prudent President Trump wouldn't spend his mornings angrily tweeting out his resentments. A prudent Trump wouldn't spend his afternoons barking at foreign leaders and risking nuclear war. "Prudence is what differentiates action from impulse and heroes from hotheads," writes the French philosopher André Comte-Sponville.

But the more I thought about it, the more I realized prudence might not be the most important trait Trump needs. He seems intent on destroying the postwar world order — building walls, offending allies and driving away the stranger and the refugee. Do I really want to make him more prudent and effective in pursuit of malicious goals?

Moreover, the true Trump dysfunction seems deeper. We are used to treating politicians as vehicles for political philosophies and interest groups. But in Trump's case, his philosophy, populism, often takes a back seat to his psychological complexes — the psychic wounds that seem to induce him into a state of perpetual war with enemies far and wide.

With Trump we are relentlessly thrown into the Big Shaggy, that unconscious underground of wounds, longings and needs that drive him to do what he does, to tweet what he does, to attack whom he does.

Thinking about politics in the age of Trump means relying less on the knowledge of political science and more on the probings of D.H. Lawrence, David Foster Wallace and Carl Jung.

At the heart of Trumpism is the perception that the world is a dark, savage place, and therefore ruthlessness, selfishness and callousness are required to survive in it. It is the utter conviction, as Trump put it, that murder rates are at a 47-year high, even though in fact they are close to a 57-year low. It is the utter conviction that we are engaged in an apocalyptic war against radical Islamic terrorism, even though there are probably several foreign policy problems of greater importance.

It's not clear if Trump is combative because he sees the world as dangerous or



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

if he sees the world as dangerous because it justifies his combativeness. Either way, Trumpism is a posture that leads to the now familiar cycle of threat perception, insult, enemy-making, aggrievement, self-pity, assault and counterassault.

So, upon reflection, the gift I would give Trump would be an emotional gift, the gift of fraternity. I'd give him the gift of some crisis he absolutely could not handle on his own. The only way to survive would be to fall back entirely on others, and then to experience what it feels like to have them hold him up.

The gift I would give Trump would be an emotional gift, the gift of fraternity. I'd give him the gift of some crisis he absolutely could not handle on his own.

Out of that, I hope, would come an ability to depend on others, to trust other people, to receive grace, and eventually a desire for companionship. Fraternity is the desire to make friends during both good and hostile occasions and to be faithful to those friends. The fraternal person is seeking harmony and fair play between individuals. He is trying to move the world from tension to harmony.

Donald Trump didn't have to have an administration that was at war with everyone but its base. He came to office with a populist mandate that cut across partisan categories. He could have created unorthodox coalitions and led unexpected alliances that would have broken the logjam of our politics.

He didn't have to have a vicious infighting administration in which everybody leaks against one another and in which backstairs life is a war of all against all.

He doesn't have to begin each day making enemies: Nordstrom, John McCain, judges. He could begin each day looking for friends, and he would actually get a lot more done.

On Inauguration Day, when Trump left his wife in the dust so he could greet the Obamas, I didn't realize how quickly having a discourteous leader would erode the conversation. But look at how many of any day's news stories are built around enmity. The war over who can speak in the Senate. Kellyanne Conway's cable TV battle du jour. Half my Facebook feed is someone linking to a video with the headline: Watch X demolish Y.

I doubt that Trump will develop a capacity for fraternity any time soon, but to be human is to hold out hope, and to believe that even a guy as old and self-destructive as Trump is still 0.001 percent open to a transformation of the heart.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, and is currently a commentator on PBS.

OTHER VIEWS

The possibility and importance of making changes to PERS

The (Corvallis) Gazette-Times

There was a promising sign last week out of Salem as the Legislature settled down to work: Lawmakers appear to be serious this session about trying to find money-saving options to the state's troubled public-pension system.

PERS issues grabbed the spotlight as the Senate Workforce Committee met on Wednesday, the official first day of the 2017 session.

And the committee's chair, Portland Democrat Kathleen Taylor, made it clear that the committee would entertain any PERS proposal from legislators.

"All bills will be treated equally," Taylor was quoted as saying in a story in *The Oregonian*, "and all will be brought out into the public light so everyone can see what we're grappling with."

In fact, Taylor and her Republican co-chair, Sen. Tim Knopp of Bend, have invited legislators to submit any of their own PERS proposals by the end of the month. In a memo they issued last week, they even listed the nine criteria they would use to evaluate the proposals: They include items such as constitutionality, cost savings, impact on employer contribution rates, the impact on the public workforce, and so on. (The online version of this editorial includes a copy of the memo.)

The idea is that the committee's staff will evaluate each proposal and prepare a summary.

For his part, as we've noted in

previous editorials, Knopp already has filed a pair of PERS bills, Senate Bill 559 and 560. One of the bills would change the calculation of members' final average salaries used in benefit calculations to an average of five years instead of three.

The other would redirect employees' 6 percent retirement contributions, which now go into supplemental retirement accounts owned by the employee, to pay for their pensions. The committee also heard the first of two scheduled presentations by Steve Rodeman, the executive director of the Public Employees Retirement System, that served notice that substantial PERS reform won't be an easy task.

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which now go into supplemental retirement accounts owned by the employee, to pay for their pensions.

The committee also heard the first of two scheduled presentations by Steve Rodeman, the executive director of the Public Employees Retirement System, that served notice that substantial PERS reform won't be an easy task.

Rodeman emphasized that the 2015 Supreme Court decision that invalidated most of the PERS reforms approved by the Legislature in 2014 made it clear that benefits can only be changed going forward. And, he noted, any changes the Legislature makes to PERS in this session are certain to be challenged in court.

All that, obviously, increases the degree of difficulty legislators face in coming up with meaningful PERS reform. And, as we have noted before, it's becoming increasingly clear that there likely is no magic bullet solution — one answer to all of our PERS issues.

Still, it was gratifying to see the committee take up the PERS issue on the session's first day, especially in light of the Legislature's general reluctance to tackle the topic at all in its last couple of sessions. Proposals to reform the system didn't get

much traction at all in the 2015 and 2016 sessions, as the PERS deficit ballooned to \$22 billion and state and local governments dealt with the prospect of steep rate increases that will take a bigger and bigger bite out of their budgets. Legislative leaders seemed to think that they had taken their best PERS shot, and it had been rejected by the Supreme Court, so there was really nothing they could do.

Of course, it still could be that these new legislative efforts, promising as they seem today, still could come to naught. These sessions are long and twisty affairs, and we still don't sense much enthusiasm among Democratic legislative leaders to tackle PERS reform. But the Senate Workforce Committee appears to be off to a good start, and the committee's efforts could well be one key to a successful session.