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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the clever solution proposed to keep open the Oregon State Police crime lab in Pendleton.

The lab — the only of its kind in Eastern Oregon — has found itself on the chopping block before. With state resources as tight as they are, it's no wonder the ax is being wielded again.

But, as we've written before, having a resource like the lab in Umatilla County is a worthwhile investment. One central lab somewhere in the state may be able to process evidence more efficiently, but getting forensics teams to crime scenes in a timely manner and getting that evidence back to the lab just as quickly is critical.

The solution, which Sen. Bill Hansell and Rep. Greg Barreto both found favorable in their visit last week, is to partner with Blue Mountain Community College to put the lab on the Pendleton campus. It would add educational opportunities for criminal science students at the college and provide a place for the lab to operate. The lab was housed at the college from 1970 to 1986.

There is still much to be worked out, but we think OSP and BMCC would make great lab partners and provide a long-term solution to a recurring problem.

A kick in the pants to Congress.

It seems we could write such a line every week, but the childishness and destructiveness of our legislative branch have hit a new record low.

In arguing the merits of Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, both political parties came across petty and vindictive, trying to best the other side rather than work for the American people.

This all began with Republican stonewalling back in 2016, which kept capable and moderate judge Merrick Garland from having a hearing in the Senate — something that had never been done in our nation's history.

Following game theory, Democrats felt they had to answer that rule-breaking with rule-breaking of their own, filibustering Gorsuch's confirmation on principle despite his excellent résumé. Senate Republicans then broke another rule to break the Democratic rule-breaking, for the first time allowing a simple majority to confirm a Supreme Court judge.

Everything is now broken. It means the Supreme Court and the American justice system will be used even more for political gamesmanship, that vacancies will only be filled when the political winds are blowing in the right direction, and that seriously incompetent or partisan choices will be confirmed on the slimmest of margins.

The American system will suffer for it. The swamp is swamper than ever — collegiality and compromise remain dirty words.

A tip of the hat to Governor Kate Brown for interceding to drop a lawsuit filed by the Psychiatric Security Review Board against the *Malheur Enterprise*.

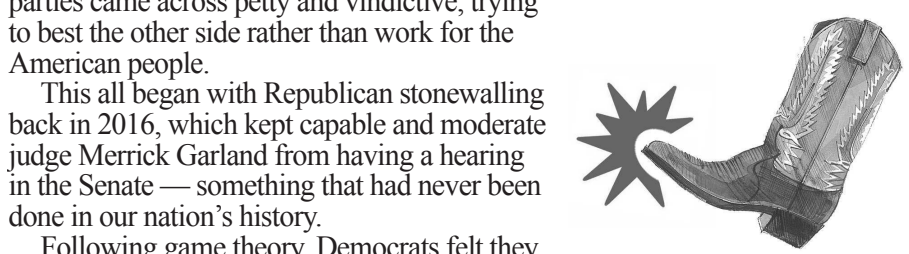
The lawsuit filed against one of the smallest newspapers in the state was aimed at shutting off records that Oregon's attorney general had already ruled should be made public.

The government used taxpayer dollars to hire a lawyer to keep the newspaper from learning more about why the state released a man who claimed he faked mental illness to stay out of prison, and later was accused of stabbing his wife to death and killing a man in a car crash.

"Oregonians deserve a government that is transparent to the fullest extent permitted by law," Brown said in a statement last week. "No one requesting public records should be at risk of being sued by a state agency. I believe that the public is best served by bringing this matter to an end now rather than after a lengthy and costly litigation."

Governments across the country are testing their limits and trying to silence media and keep important information from taxpayers and citizens. It's a good sign when the Oregon governor and attorney general both work to get public information in the hands of the public.

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

My most unpopular idea: Be nice to Trump voters

When I write about people struggling with addictions or homelessness, liberals exude sympathy while conservatives respond with snarling hostility to losers who make "bad choices."

When I write about voters who supported President Donald Trump, it's the reverse: Now it's liberals who respond with venom, hoping that Trump voters suffer for their bad choice.

"I absolutely despise these people," one woman tweeted at me after I interviewed Trump voters. "Truly the worst of humanity. To hell with every one of them."

Maybe we all need a little more empathy?

I wrote my last column from Oklahoma, highlighting voters who had supported Trump and now find that he wants to cut programs that had helped them. One woman had recovered from a rape with the help of a women's center that stands to lose funding, another said that she would sit home and die without a job program facing cutbacks, and so on. Yet every one of them was still behind Trump — and that infuriated my readers.

"I'm just going to say it," tweeted Bridgette. "I hate these people. They are stupid and selfish. Screw them. Lose your jobs, sit home and die."

Another: "ALL Trump voters are racist and deplorable. They'll never vote Democratic. We should never pander to the Trumpites. We're not a party for racists."

The torrent of venom was, to me, as misplaced as the support for Trump from struggling Oklahomans. I'm afraid that Trump's craziness is proving infectious, making Democrats crazy with rage that actually impedes a progressive agenda.

One problem with the Democratic anger is that it stereotypes a vast and contradictory group of 63 million people. Sure, there were racists and misogynists in their ranks, but that doesn't mean that every Trump voter was a white supremacist. While it wasn't apparent from reading the column, one of the Trump voters I quoted was black, and another was Latino. Of course, millions of Trump voters were members of minorities or had previously voted for Barack Obama.

"Some people think that the people who voted for Trump are racists and sexists and homophobes and just deplorable folks," Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has emerged as a surprising defender of Trump voters, said the other day. "I don't agree."

The blunt truth is that if we care about a progressive agenda, we simply can't write off 46 percent of the electorate. If there is to be movement on mass incarceration, on electoral reform, on women's health, on child care, on inequality, on access to good education, on climate change, then progressives need to win more congressional and legislative seats



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

around the country. To win over Trump voters isn't normalizing extremism, but a strategy to combat it.

Right now, 68 percent of partisan legislative chambers in the states are held by Republicans. About 7 percent of America's land mass is in Democratic landslide counties, and 59 percent is in Republican landslide counties.

I asked the people I interviewed in Oklahoma why they were sticking with Trump. There are many reasons working-class conservatives vote against their economic interests — abortion and gun issues count heavily for some — but another is the mockery of Democrats who deride them as ignorant bumpkins. The vilification of these voters is a gift to Trump.

Maybe we need more junior year "abroad" programs that send liberals to Kansas and conservatives to Massachusetts.

Nothing I've written since the election has engendered more anger from people who usually agree with me than my periodic assertions that Trump voters are human, too. But I grew up in Trump country, in rural Oregon, and many of my childhood friends supported Trump. They're not the hateful caricatures that some liberals expect, any more than New York liberals are the effete

paper cutouts that my old friends assume. Maybe we need more junior year "abroad" programs that send liberals to Kansas and conservatives to Massachusetts.

Hatred for Trump voters also leaves the Democratic Party more removed from working-class pain. For people in their 50s, mortality rates for poorly educated whites have soared since 2000 and are now higher than for blacks at all education levels. Professors Angus Deaton and Anne Case of Princeton University say the reason is "deaths of despair" arising from suicide, drugs and alcohol.

Democrats didn't do enough to address this suffering, so Trump won working-class voters — because he at least faked empathy for struggling workers. He sold these voters a clunker, and now he's already beginning to betray them. His assault on Obamacare would devastate many working-class families by reducing availability of treatment for substance abuse. As I see it, Trump rode to the White House on a distress that his policies will magnify.

So by all means stand up to Trump, point out that he's a charlatan and resist his initiatives. But remember that social progress means winning over voters in flyover country, and that it's difficult to recruit voters whom you're simultaneously castigating as despicable, bigoted imbeciles.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, writes op-ed columns that appear twice a week. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

YOUR VIEWS

March for science and evidence over ideology

On April 22, organizers in Pendleton will host a March for Science.

The focus is supporting federally funded evidence-based science, much of which influences our communities, our economies, and our daily lives.

With all the uncertainties in Washington D.C. right now, the Pendleton march coincides with many more across the nation in support of the sciences. Programs and priorities are changing rapidly. While science does not set policy, sound science should certainly inform and influence policy.

Here in our region, we have benefited from federally funded evidence-based science in many ways.

Yields and efficiencies have improved through the work of our local agricultural research stations. Knowledge and effectiveness of management have increased for

forest, rangeland, fish, and wildlife with the help of the U.S. Forest Service research labs throughout the northwest. Funding from the Department of Commerce and the EPA has advanced our knowledge and management of aquatic species throughout the Columbia Basin. The list goes on and on from public health and medical breakthroughs into many other aspects of our daily lives.

In considering the president's budget and some recent actions in Congress, science is being replaced by ideology. When this happens, there are no long-term winners. We define our culture and our quality of life through science, education, our achievements, and the arts. They have been the foundation for civilizations since the beginning of time. So much of our technology and advancements have relied on evidence-based federally funded science.

The March for Science on April 22 throughout the country will be a statement supporting the

importance of continuing federal support for these programs and for science and what it brings to our lives.

Jeff Blackwood
Pendleton

Hermiston schools should sell property

"The good news is, as home owners, we pay only about 48 percent of the schools' bond levy. Businesses and utilities pay 52 percent. Also, as our area continues to grow with more residents and business, the tax rate will be lowered each year since more people and businesses will be included to pay the bond, thus lowering individual tax bills over time." (Dr. Jer D. Prutton, March 28, *East Oregonian*.)

As this comment sounds good, I find a few things with a flaw. As follows:

I have been a Hermiston resident for more than 30 years, and graduated from Hermiston

High School.

My taxes have only gone up; the only time my property tax ever went down is when the county devalued my property by \$25,000 three years ago and in 2016 they devalued my home value again and raised the property tax. So if there is suppose to be an overall reduction, why did my property tax go up?

If the current bond is voted in I will see an increase. So over time, how much time are you talking about — 10, 20, 40 years?

I'm not against growth in the school system. Our family donated 6,000 yards of fill for the new football field and I helped load it into their trucks for free. What I am against is the school district holding on to \$5 million they have now and wanting to spend it on property for future growth, say, 40 years down the road. If expansion is needed, they should spend what they have now to better the community.

Most companies want a

25,000-person base within the city limits. Hermiston's last census was in 2013; at what point will the city update the census? I feel the time is now to allow economic growth.

How about the school board sell off the Highway 395 frontage in front of the Sunset School to develop commercial business and take the \$2-3 million value that I have been told is considered for this. Apply it to the expansion and repair what we have now.

I would vote yes on a bond to help pay for what is needed if they would show good faith in this community and allow Hermiston to grow as well on the commercial side. Sell off one part to pay up to \$8 million total and put up a bond for the remainder. Compromise.

I do not feel we as residents need to carry the whole bond. The retired community of the town will not be able to afford the increase. Maybe a smaller increase would work on both sides.

Troy White
Hermiston