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OUR VIEW

DACA and legislative failure

Earlier this week, Donald Trump rescinded DACA, an Obama-era policy that gave short-term relief to about 800,000 residents who illegally entered the United States as children.

Nicknamed “Dreamers,” those young people temporarily protected by DACA are among the most widely supported groups of illegal immigrants in the country. According to most recent surveys, 75-80 percent of Americans approve of keeping them in the U.S., either via some sort of avenue to citizenship or under special government protection from deportation. After all, these are children who arrived here without really having a choice, have known no other home and have committed no crimes while in this country.

Still, there are immigration hardliners who won’t budge, and those 20-25 percent of Americans and their representatives have stopped any meaningful immigration reform from being enacted, even on a lay-up like the Dreamers.

For decades our national legislative bodies have failed in their duties. In order to protect their own hides from that vocal minority, members of those bodies have disregarded the will of a large majority of Americans. And in covering their own behinds, those Congressmen are hanging

Americans — and should-be Americans — out to dry.

This country has long needed comprehensive immigration reform, but Congress hasn’t got it done. This country has long needed massive infrastructure investment, but Congress hasn’t got it done. This country has long needed comprehensive tax reform, but don’t hold your breath.

This puts presidents in a poor position. Being a constitutional law scholar, Barack Obama admitted that his DACA program was on shaky legal ground from the beginning. He made no bones about that, but felt he had no other choice because Congress had abdicated its duties by doing nothing and leaving a critical problem festering and unresolved.

President Trump claimed this week that DACA was sure to be challenged in court — and it would likely fall. Perhaps he is right. But the announcement of his decision was nearly universally panned by Congressmen both Republican and Democratic. Yet how hypocritical of them. They are the people who can solve this mess, yet they choose to criticize rather than create.

A wide majority of Americans want to protect Dreamers. Congress should do their job and create a reasonable, legal system for doing so. Then get on to the next problem on the list.

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

Strength in unity

The Daily Astorian

For many Americans, the unimaginable images of 16 years ago today are burned into our national fabric, never to be forgotten.

Those searing memories of mass death and destruction resulted from coordinated attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda aboard four hijacked airliners.

Two hijacked jets toppled the Twin Towers of New York’s World Trade Center while a third slammed into the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia. Aboard the fourth hijacked plane, which initially changed course toward Washington, D.C., passengers bravely fought the terrorists and the plane crashed into a vacant field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

In all, the attacks killed 2,997 people, injured more than 6,000 others, and caused at least \$10 billion in infrastructure and property damage. The deaths tragically included more than 325 responding law enforcement officers and nearly 100 firefighters.

The 9/11 legacy, however, goes far beyond the attacks. It rattled our national consciousness, our sense of security and it changed our lives in ways we previously took for granted. A generation of children born that year are now teenagers entering their final years of high school, about to enter adulthood in a world far different than before their birth. They have never experienced our nation at peace.

What they have seen is that the attacks spurred the War on Terrorism, which continues to this day, the longest war in our history. They have learned the 9/11 events also spawned increases in hate crimes, overarching government surveillance and profiling. They have observed that as the war progressed it created bitter political partisanship and has cost billions of tax dollars. They

have watched as it has divided those who believe the money should have been spent to cure deep domestic ills with those who say the far-away fighting is protecting our freedom, security and values.

As citizens and taxpayers, we must consider it all as we try to set a positive example for the future. While we need to oppose those who engage in hate and violence and uphold the principles our nation was founded upon, we must always hold government directly accountable when it oversteps or misleads.

Importantly, we must also never forget the pain and loss of life from 9/11, and we must never lose sight of the incredible heroism and sacrifice it provoked or the national unity that surfaced in its wake. On that day and those that immediately followed, we weren’t Democrats and Republicans, we weren’t divided by race and cultural issues. We unified as one nation, people helping people, sacrificing when necessary, all Americans.

It’s not the first time we’ve had that national unity, and it won’t be our last. It’s in our blood and dates to our nation’s birth. It heroically rises like the American flag hoisted by three firefighters at ground zero in the 9/11 aftermath, and it proudly flies like the Star-Spangled Banner over Fort McHenry in Baltimore 203 years ago this week during the War of 1812.

Each time our freedom is threatened, and whenever the country or a region suffers a calamity, Americans always respond. The outpouring of national support for the victims of hurricanes Katrina, Sandy and Harvey provides recent examples. Our history is filled with countless others.

What we must do is to continue to learn from these lessons. They teach us all that our strength as a country is in our unity, not in our divisiveness.

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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



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OTHER VIEWS

How the far right came to love hippie food

Some time ago, I found myself in a buffet line around piles of inedible looking grains, greens and grassy-smelling gratins at an alternative food cooperative’s Sunday dinner. No part of this meal, I was assured, had been touched by the corporate food chain, the Big Ag puppeteers with their taxpayer-subsidized toxins.

The evening was all very yeasty and dreadlocky, as you would expect. The food was — I’m sorry — wretched. I didn’t see it then, but I understand now that many social movements start on the fringe frontier, where earnestness ultimately wins out over the skepticism of people like me.

It’s no secret that Whole Foods, the \$13.7 billion acquisition of Amazon, took the “business” model I found in a leaky old loft in Port Townsend, Washington, long ago, and gave it a profitable corporate sheen.

But what’s less well known and somewhat surprising is how that same food ethic drifted over into the paranoid world of the far right, where no truth is self-evident and the apocalypse is always imminent. At the dark confluence of hippie and Hitler, you can buy a year’s supply of Earth-friendly quinoa.

What’s sad, and indicative of the wretched Trump era, is how something that started in a wave of hope and optimism migrated to closed-minded, mercenary quarters.

You can trace a bit of this transition to John Mackey, the Texas co-founder of Whole Foods. A libertarian and admirer of Ayn Rand, he once lived in a vegetarian collective. “I thought I’d meet a lot of interesting women,” he told The New Yorker. “And I did.”

By the time Whole Foods had purchased Wild Oats, the communal ethic had been overtaken by imperial ambition. But that was nothing compared with some of the current peddlers of alt-foods.

So, in between rants about how Ku Klux Klan members are “just Jewish actors,” Infowars conspiracy theorist Alex Jones sells an exhaustive line of strange food. His market is “preppers,” people who’ve been preparing for the End, for some time.

Jones’ website urges fellow knuckle-draggers to “secure your food independence” with his organic-sounding Patriot Pantry. From “fluoride-free mouthwash” — the better to secure precious bodily fluids, one assumes — to “strawberry fields cream of wheat,” he assures his followers that his “non-GMO meals have a 25-year shelf life.” Plus, no added MSG!

Over at The Blaze, Glenn Beck’s soft-rock version of the hard right, a targeted demographic is the grumpy Trump supporter who wants to Grow Your Own. The site’s story diet is heavy on the threat of transgender kindergartners. But with food, Beck is closer to that co-op I visited.



TIMOTHY EGAN
Comment

One of Beck’s sponsors promotes “better ideas for off-the-grid living.” Another offers “next level gardening with a geodesic greenhouse.” These items would have fit, years ago, into the Whole Earth Catalog, a must-read for the no-deodorant set.

One side, now, is heavily armed, and the other seems friendlier, the products named for Burt and Annie, Ben and Jerry. A consistent thread through the years is distrust of institutions, of the Man. Another shared belief is self-sufficiency.

The 1969 Whole Earth Catalog heralded the “power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment and share his adventure with whoever is interested.”

This sentiment heavily influenced Steve Jobs. The catalog, he said, “was one of the bibles of my generation.” In his famous 2005 Stanford commencement address, Jobs compared the Whole Earth Catalog to an early version of Google — “idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools.”

There was a brief, shining point when we seemed to have reached a national consensus in the politics of natural food: Michelle Obama’s vegetable garden. It was simple, instructive and

Jeffersonian, backing the notion that there’s an easy alternative to all the awful additives at the American table.

But even something as wholesome as a healthy diet message got dragged through the right-wing swamp, prompting a defiant Sarah Palin to offer sugar cookies to students living through an obesity epidemic.

One of the first acts of President Donald Trump’s administration was to reverse an Obama era proposed ban of chlorpyrifos, a pesticide shown to cause brain damage in children. Trump has also rolled back new food rules designed to reduce sodium levels in schools and give consumers more nutritional information.

Trump’s supporters live, disproportionately, in the Diabetes Belt, as the Centers for Disease Control labels parts of the country with highest percentage of people made ill by an excess of the awful American diet.

And while Trump’s most fervent supporters in the hard right are preparing for End Times with chemical-free freeze-dried and other pseudo organics, their man gorges himself on Big Macs and slabs of well-done steaks and tries to keep the rest of us in the dark. The food message from this White House: Eat your poisons, and don’t ask where they came from.

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

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