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**OUR VIEW**

# Kids these days

American colleges have long been bastions of learning and growth, where thoughts and ideas are imparted, debated and strengthened. It's only natural that academia gets tied up with politics, where many of our philosophical ideals meet their practical applications.

Donald Trump is unpopular with young people and the college educated, so it is little surprise that supporters of our current president feel outnumbered in many classrooms and college greens. What is surprising and disappointing, however, is the anger and violence that have erupted against those who have professed their support.

**"Whoever is offended has a right to speak also. And they need to know how to do it."**

**—Ed Ray,**  
President of Oregon State University

Right-wing media gleefully runs video of the anarchists mobs that gathered in Berkeley and at Evergreen College to protest right-wing speakers (some, white supremacist and neo-Nazi, others merely conservative Republicans), offering it as proof that the left has gone loony. Recent polling data have shown that an increasing number of millennials — in a recent Pew Study it was 40 percent — believe that speech should be restricted to prevent people from saying offensive things about minority groups.

College presidents know the stakes. They know that their campus is always one incident away from online infamy. Or that an incident a thousand miles away, propelled by social media, may end up in protests on their doorstep in a matter of hours.

The presidents of Eastern Oregon University and Oregon State University, as well as University of Oregon vice president for student services Roger J. Thompson, gathered in Pendleton last month. It was purportedly for the Pendleton Round-Up, but we've always thought they come every September to chat with the *East Oregonian* editorial board.

This year, the conversation turned to issues of free speech, and how their campuses are supporting

the foundation on which higher education is built.

Each said they have updated policies and procedures, and have tried to engage and challenge students during orientation — as soon as they arrive on campus.

"We all hear about how higher education is coddling," said Eastern

Oregon University president Tom Insko.

"At EOU we're not looking to coddle our students ... we want to create a safe environment for you to face these challenging issues head on."

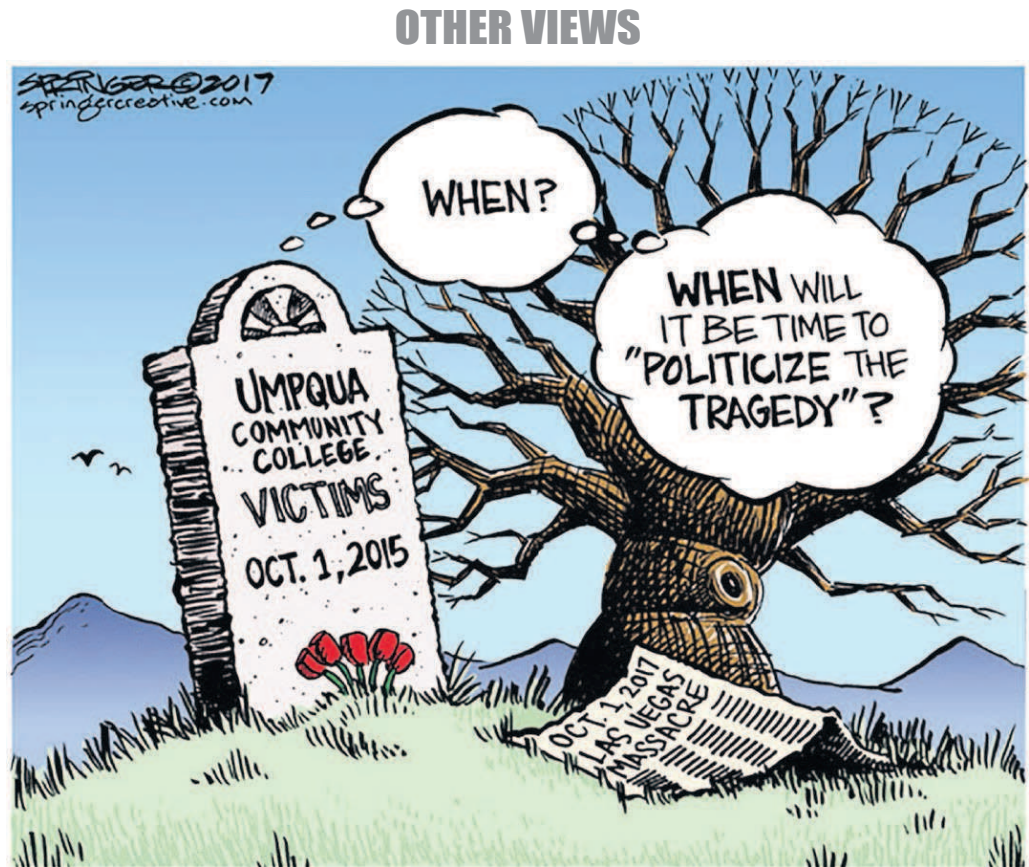
Oregon State University President Ed Ray said his school has also increased discussion.

"You need to be able to engage in conversation that may make you uncomfortable," said Ray. "That's how you harden and develop your own ideas, and learn how to in fact speak up against things that are awful." He said it's worth remembering that "whoever is offended has a right to speak also. And they need to know how to do it, and they need to know how to do it in a civil way."

Thompson said the University of Oregon also has its eye on the free speech/hate speech spectrum. He believes that students — and young people in general — should get more credit than they do. He doesn't see coddled kids wanting protection, he sees young people that want to be involved, invested and committed to improving their lives and communities.

"I see kids that are connected, that want to make a difference ... and they've done it high school already," he said. "They're kind of questioning the gray-haired folks in the room, looking around and wondering 'What kind of world are you leaving us?'"

As newspaper editors, we are by definition supportive of First Amendment and free speech. We are also supportive of the kind of debate required to strengthen that support in others.



## Repeal the Second Amendment

I have never understood the conservative fetish for the Second Amendment.

From a law-and-order standpoint, more guns means more murder. "States with higher rates of gun ownership had disproportionately large numbers of deaths from firearm-related homicides," noted one exhaustive 2013 study in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

From a personal-safety standpoint, more guns means less safety. The FBI counted a total of 268 "justifiable homicides" by private citizens involving firearms in 2015; that is, felons killed in the course of committing a felony. Yet that same year, there were 489 "unintentional firearms deaths" in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Between 77 and 141 of those killed were children.

From a national-security standpoint, the Amendment's suggestion that a "well-regulated militia" is "necessary to the security of a free State," is quaint. The Minutemen that will deter Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un are based in missile silos in Minot, North Dakota, not farmhouses in Lexington, Massachusetts.

From a personal liberty standpoint, the idea that an armed citizenry is the ultimate check on the ambitions and encroachments of government power is curious. The Whiskey Rebellion of the 1790s, the New York draft riots of 1863, the coal miners' rebellion of 1921, the Brink's robbery of 1981 — does any serious conservative think of these as great moments in Second Amendment activism?

And now we have the relatively new and now ubiquitous "active shooter" phenomenon, something that remains extremely rare in the rest of the world. Conservatives often say that the right response to these horrors is to do more on the mental-health front. Yet by all accounts Stephen Paddock would not have raised an eyebrow with a mental-health professional before he murdered 58 people in Las Vegas last week.

What might have raised a red flag? I'm not the first pundit to point out that if a "Mohammad Paddock" had purchased dozens of firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition and then checked himself into a suite at the Mandalay Bay with direct views to a nearby music festival, somebody at the local FBI field office would have noticed.

Given all of this, why do liberals keep losing the gun control debate?

Maybe it's because they argue their case badly and — let's face it — in bad faith. Democratic politicians routinely profess their fidelity to the Second Amendment — or rather, "a nuanced reading" of it — with all the conviction of Barack Obama's support for traditional marriage, circa 2008. People recognize lip service for what it is.

Then there are the endless liberal errors of fact. There is no "gun-show loophole" per se; it's a private-sale loophole, in other words the right to sell your own stuff. The civilian AR-15 is not a true "assault rifle," and banning such rifles would have little effect on the overall murder rate, since most homicides are committed with handguns. It's not true that 40 percent of gun owners buy without a background check; the real number is closer to



**BRET STEPHENS**  
Comment

one-fifth. The National Rifle Association does not have Republican "balls in a money clip," as Jimmy Kimmel put it the other night. The NRA has donated a paltry \$3,533,294 to all current members of Congress since 1998, according to *The Washington Post*, equivalent to about three months of Kimmel's salary. The NRA doesn't need to buy influence: It's powerful because it's powerful.

Nor will it do to follow the "Australian model" of a gun buyback program, which has shown poor results in the United States and makes little sense in a country awash with hundreds of millions of weapons. Keeping guns out of the hands of mentally ill people is a sensible goal, but due process is still owed to the potentially insane. Background checks for private gun sales are

another fine idea, though its effects on homicides will be negligible: Guns recovered by police are rarely in the hands of their legal owners, a 2016 study found.

In fact, the more closely one looks at what passes for "common sense" gun laws, the more feckless they appear. Americans who claim to be outraged by gun crimes should want to do something more than tinker at the margins of a legal regime that most of the

developed world rightly considers nuts. They should want to change it fundamentally and permanently.

There is only one way to do this: Repeal the Second Amendment.

Repealing the Amendment may seem like political "Mission: Impossible" today, but in the era of same-sex marriage it's worth recalling that most great causes begin as improbable ones. Gun ownership should never be outlawed, just as it isn't outlawed in Britain or Australia. But it doesn't need a blanket Constitutional protection, either. The 46,445 murder victims killed by gunfire in the United States between 2012 and 2016 didn't need to perish so that gun enthusiasts can go on fantasizing that "Red Dawn" is the fate that soon awaits us.

Donald Trump will likely get one more Supreme Court nomination, or two or three, before he leaves office, guaranteeing a pro-gun court for another generation. Expansive interpretations of the right to bear arms will be the law of the land — until the "right" itself ceases to be.

Some conservatives will insist that the Second Amendment is fundamental to the structure of American liberty. They will cite James Madison, who noted in the *Federalist Papers* that in Europe "the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms." America was supposed to be different, and better.

I wonder what Madison would have to say about that today, when more than twice as many Americans perished last year at the hands of their fellows as died in battle during the entire Revolutionary War. My guess: Take the guns — or at least the presumptive right to them — away. The true foundation of American exceptionalism should be our capacity for moral and constitutional renewal, not our instinct for self-destruction.

Bret Stephens won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2013. He began working as a columnist at *The New York Times* in April.

**OTHER VIEWS**

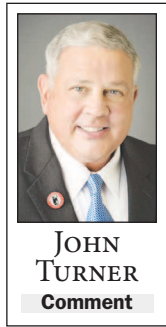
## Showing signs of housing progress

In July 2016, the city of Pendleton concluded the second formal analysis of its housing market in five years.

The study noted that thousands of people commute into Pendleton each day to work, and a large number of jobs stand unfilled. Numerous suggestions for more and better housing were forwarded to the city council, who adopted them into action.

One of the suggestions was to host a housing conference to invite developers to Pendleton and show them the benefits of building more housing units in Pendleton. On August 30, the city — along with 13 sponsoring organizations — hosted a day-long housing conference at the Pendleton Convention Center. The purpose of the conference was to familiarize builders, investors, sub-contractors and property owners with some of the opportunities to build more housing in Pendleton. Each of the 90 participants received a copy of the housing study, maps of developable properties, regulations, contact information for key city officials and development fees.

The city has made a lot of progress in identifying existing lots near utility services that might be used for the construction of housing. While no developer has yet to put forth a plan for a large housing subdivision, a number of things are happening in Pendleton that make city officials believe we are making progress on our housing shortage.



**JOHN TURNER**  
Comment

**90 participated in Aug. 30 housing conference.**

First, a private developer has purchased all of the remaining lots in the Sunridge Estates area and will begin constructing single family homes at the rate of about ten per year. Pendleton Affordable Housing, LLC will also begin constructing 20 new apartments this year at Pendleton Heights, with another 20 planned for next year. The city also participated in a preliminary design meeting with developers interested in building another apartment complex near Southgate, and construction on additional duplexes has already started on SW 12th Street.

The planning commission will begin looking at rules for building along Southwest Court Street in an area called the River Quarter District. The current regulations for this area require multi-level, mixed-use buildings with an emphasis on architectural standards met with the requirement of commercial uses downstairs and residential spaces upstairs.

Since these regulations were adopted in 2010, few developers have shown interest in building in the River Quarter, prompting the city to reassess the existing rules to make new development more realistic. Residents of Pendleton are invited to bring their ideas on housing to the monthly meetings of the housing committee, usually held on the afternoon of the first Tuesday of each month.

John Turner is the mayor of Pendleton.

