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OUR VIEW

Harassment much too common in halls of power

The allegations of sexual harassment in the Oregon Capitol are disturbing, though not surprising.

Sexual harassment occurs in too many workplaces, and capitols seem a prime breeding ground because of the inherent power imbalance. Victims of sexual harassment — whether lawmakers, lobbyists or legislative employees — often are reluctant to speak out for fear of losing their political influence or their jobs.

It took courage for two female state senators — Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, and another unnamed senator — to report what they considered sexual harassment by a colleague, Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg.

Kruse has denied the allegations, which are under investigation by legislative officials. What we do know, from a letter by Senate President Peter Courtney stripping Kruse of his committee assignments, is that legislative officials in 2016 instructed Kruse “not to touch women at work. Period.”

Some Oregonians may argue that sexual harassment is an example of political correctness run amok. Or that changing generational standards make it difficult for people, men especially, to know how to act. Not so. Harassment or intimidation in the workplace is never OK.

For anyone who is uncertain about what to do, here are tips: If you're unsure whether a remark will be heard

as sexist, demeaning or harassing, don't speak it. If you wonder whether a hug is appropriate, ask the person. If you want to compliment someone's shirt, do so nicely — without praising the person's body or letting your eyes linger.

Sexual harassment is never acceptable, never understandable, never tolerable, and certainly not at the Oregon Capitol. Of all people,

lawmakers have a responsibility to know and heed the rules and laws they create.

The Oregon Legislature's personnel rules clearly state that sexual harassment

can constitute “unwelcome conduct in the form of a sexual advance, sexual comment, request for sexual favors, unwanted or offensive touching or physical contact of a sexual nature, unwanted closeness, impeding or blocking movement, sexual gesture, sexual innuendo, sexual joke, sexually charged language, intimate inquiry, persistent unwanted courting, sexist insult, gender stereotype, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature ...”

Before each legislative session, every legislator and every legislative employee — hundreds of people — must attend mandatory training on maintaining a harassment-free workplace and other policies. No one is exempt from that training.

Yet sexual harassment still occurs. And it's still inexcusable.

Harassment and intimidation in the workplace is never OK.

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

National leadership needed to combat the opioid crisis

The (Memphis, Tenn.) Commercial Appeal

After months of delay, President Donald Trump has promised to declare America's opioid abuse epidemic a national emergency, offering a brief and faint glimmer of hope that something might at last be done about the crisis.

The White House's attention is long overdue. The epidemic claimed the lives of at least 64,000 people in 2016, including 1,631 in Tennessee, which ranks second in the country in opioid prescriptions per capita and ninth in drug-related deaths per 100,000 people.

Unfortunately, what appeared to be progress on the opioid front was tempered by a report by *The Washington Post* and CBS' “60 Minutes” that Rep. Tom Marino (R-Pennsylvania), Trump's nominee to head the Office of National Drug Control Policy, had been instrumental in pushing through the drug industry-backed Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act. The legislation stripped the Drug Enforcement Agency of the ability to freeze shipments of opioids to doctors and pharmacies believed to be fueling the addiction problem.

Marino quickly withdrew his name from any consideration as the drug czar. U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn, (R-Tennessee) who has declared her candidacy for retiring Sen. Bob Corker's seat in 2018, conceded that the bill might have had “unintended consequences.”

Still, at least for the moment, it appears that Trump's presidential campaign promise to solve the opioid crisis might finally have been moved up on the president's priority list. But the president's commitment must go beyond lip service.

If opioid abuse is a national emergency, why has the administration

proposed budget cuts for federal agencies and programs that could be brought to bear on the crisis, including Medicaid, which pays for about one-fourth of all substance-abuse treatment?

How to justify the president's petulant attempts to allow or force Obamacare to “implode,” which would take insurance coverage away from millions of Americans with substance abuse disorders?

In Congress, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington), are working on a bipartisan agreement that could delay Obamacare's demise by providing critical subsidies to health insurers that Trump has threatened to cut off.

A hearing by Alexander's Senate Health Committee focused on the opioid epidemic, which, the senators said, is “tearing our communities apart, tearing families apart, and posing an enormous challenge to health providers and law enforcement officials.”

Credit the law enforcement community with approaching the opioid crisis from a new angle: Bringing murder charges against the people suspected of supplying a deadly dose of drugs.

Much more needs to be done to combat the over-prescription of opioids by medical practitioners, insufficient treatment programs for addicts, and find alternative methods of controlling pain. Police officers need to be supplied with the anti-overdose remedy naloxone.

The opioid epidemic is, indeed, a national emergency. It is a health care crisis that is deadlier than any hurricane, fire or terrorist attack. This national crisis must be addressed by strong, committed and consistent national leadership that goes beyond formal declarations and the recitation of grim statistics.

OTHER VIEWS



Donald Trump wants to raise your taxes

The old formula for passing a big tax cut for the rich was simple: Package it with a modest tax cut for the middle class — and talk endlessly about the middle-class part.

President Donald Trump and Congress are following the formula in some ways. Their plan would deliver an average tax cut of \$700,000 to the nation's 175,000 richest families. That's enough for each to buy a new 50-foot yacht, annually. Meanwhile, Trump and other Republican leaders keep repeating “middle class,” “middle class,” “middle class.”

Yet there is also a major difference between the current plan and George W. Bush's tax cut or Ronald Reagan's. Trump's plan would not actually cut taxes for many middle-class families. It would raise them.

These families are in the minority, yes. But there are a lot of them. About 17 percent of households earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 would see their taxes rise immediately, according to the only rigorous analysis so far, by the Tax Policy Center. Among households earning between \$150,000 and \$250,000, the share is about 35 percent.

These numbers would grow over time, for reasons I'll explain. Ultimately, the plan would be likely to hurt the finances of the vast majority of Americans. No wonder it is starting to look politically vulnerable. Last week, a precursor bill barely passed the House, receiving 20 no votes from Republicans, many worried about the tax increases.

Republican leaders certainly have a path to passing a tax bill, because nothing unites modern Republicans the way a tax cut does. But the opposition to the recent health care bills also started as an underdog and managed to prevail, by relentlessly talking about the bills' effects. When enough Americans understood the truth, enough members of Congress felt pressure to vote no.

The same could happen on taxes. It is starting to. Recent polls suggest the plan's approval rating is only about 30 percent.

To understand the Trump tax increases, you should first acknowledge the most admirable feature of his plan. It doesn't aspire to be merely a tax cut. It aspires to be tax reform — both cuts and increases. Some deductions shrink, while rates fall, in the name of simplifying the tax code.

But after this promising start, the plan commits its cardinal sin. It places the highest priority on huge tax cuts for the very wealthy. They get lower rates and get to keep cherished tax breaks, like the “carried interest” loophole. Herbert Hoover's Republican Party wanted



DAVID LEONHARDT
Comment

to put a chicken in every pot. Donald Trump's wants to put a yacht at every private dock.

Having lavished so much money on the wealthy, the tax package — or at least the vague framework that the administration has released — doesn't have much remaining to spend on middle class and poor families. For them, the package is a mix of pluses and minuses. Many face a lower tax rate, but some face a higher one, and many families lose deductions.

The combination creates a lot of losers. Reduced deductions for children, for example, hurt large families, notes NYU's Lily Batchelder. And the deduction for state and local taxes — also a target for cuts — now

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benefits 30 percent of households nationwide. It was the main reason for last week's House defections, and the tensions over it haven't been resolved.

Then there are the long-term problems I mentioned earlier. First, Trump's plan takes a skimpy approach to inflation adjustments, which will push many families into higher tax brackets over time. Second, the plan would radically increase the federal deficit, and when it comes to the deficit, what goes up must eventually come down. At some point, the government will need to pay

its bills, through a combination of tax increases and spending cuts.

Virtually any future deficit-reduction plan — except for a repeal of the Trump tax plan — would hurt most families more than his plan helps them. This chain of events has happened before. The Reagan and Bush tax cuts may have at first seemed to help the middle class and poor. But the deficits led to later cuts in education, medical research, transportation and anti-poverty programs that almost surely erased the benefits of a modest tax cut. Already, today's congressional leaders are talking about sizable cuts to Medicare and Medicaid.

Trump and his allies are feverishly trying to claim their plan really would benefit the middle class. Their latest talking point is the notion that corporate tax cuts will create an indirect windfall for workers. Funny, though, how the wealthy get most of the direct benefits, while everyone else has to hope for indirect ones somehow to materialize.

The main lesson of this year's health care battle was the political power of facts. They don't always win the day, but it's better to have them as an ally than an enemy. Right now, facts are the biggest problem for Trump's tax plan.

David Leonhardt is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*.

YOUR VIEWS

U.S. should close borders to legal and illegal immigration

We have a crisis in the U.S. that is not being discussed in the press. This has to do with the rapid increase in immigration. It's important to note I mean “legal” immigration where people actually go through the process of becoming U.S. citizens. The Center For Immigration Studies' recent report is alarming, and no one seems to be discussing it.

We gained 1.5 million immigrants in 2014 and added 914,000 just in the first six months of 2015. As of September 2017 the U.S. had 43.7 million immigrants (this does include illegal immigrants). That is an increase of 3.8 million since 2010, and up 12.6 million since 2000. One in five U.S. citizens are now immigrants.

The USA population will be 438 million by 2050. It was 286 million in 2005. Eighty-two percent of this increase will be due to “legal” immigration. The entire country will be drastically different by then as it attempts to adjust to this huge increase. Keep in mind, once again, this does not account for the “illegal” immigration, which has added at least 11 million to our population in recent times.

Just imagine the burden that will be placed on agriculture, the need for clean water, the huge increase in housing required, schools, hospitals, law enforcement, sewage treatment, air quality — the list goes on and on and on.

Do you enjoy the clean air, wildlife, fishing or your national parks? You can forget those as they will be converted to mobile home parks by then. Do you enjoy the wide open spaces in our national forests? Those will be malls and high rise apartments crowded next to each other by then.

It is not popular to say, but in addition to controlling “illegal” immigration, we have to do something to slow down legal immigration as well. The desire for people around the world to have a better life and escape poverty, poor diets, lack of freedoms, etc., is understandable.

But everything has to have a limit. The U.S. just can not continue to absorb this huge increase in humanity forever. The U.S. simply does not owe every immigrant who wants to come here the right to move in, even if they are legal. Are we really willing to leave this unsustainable burden to our kids and grandkids?

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