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OUR VIEW

End the scam of college football

Oregonians love our college football, especially since the University of Oregon Ducks rose to prominence in recent decades. We've created good-natured dividing lines between Ducks and Beavers, and some of us make treks across the state to support our teams from the stands and the sidelines.

And it's not just our two big-time state schools that earn our allegiance. Plenty of us root for Washington State, Boise State, Eastern Washington and Eastern Oregon, too. A few even side with Alabama or Ohio State, UCLA or Notre Dame. The fandom gives us joy, something to believe in and hope for, as well as a way to pass cold Saturday mornings in the comfort of our warm couches. Some even have degrees from the schools they root for, and victories on the field give a sense of pride and accomplishment for the old *alma mater*.

College football is a morally repugnant system that must be dismantled.

But this week has cemented what many have long known to be true: College football is a morally repugnant scam that must be dismantled. A safer and more equitable system needs to be rebuilt in its place, somewhere far from America's higher education system.

Ducks coach Willie Taggart has flown the coop, just a year after he was wooed to Eugene with a big contract, a \$68 million athletic facility, and Phil Knight's unlimited pocketbook and jersey colors. Taggart lasted a year, having made promises to recruits, the local community and his own family that he did not keep.

Taggart will replace former Florida State coach Jimbo Fisher, who in turn took a job with Texas A&M, for which he will be paid \$75 million as a state employee. That is patently absurd on the face of it — then add in the fact that he will be coaching a bunch of teenagers who are the reason the stands are packed, in some cases bringing millions of dollars to the university and the athletic department.

The NCAA says they pay these athletes with a college degree, an expensive piece of paper nowadays. But even that is barely true when it comes to football players. About 55 percent of FBS (top level college

football) players earn a degree, according to the NCAA. And many of the athletes that do graduate are clustered into "easier" majors that allow them to focus on their sport, but don't set them up to succeed later in life when the dream of the NFL disappears.

Even if they do graduate, that diploma is not free for many football players — many pay mightily in medical expenses, both in the short term and long term.

The NCAA allows schools to set their own policies when it comes to paying their players' medical expenses. While some schools do pay, it is not a requirement. Many small schools require athletes to shell out up to \$10,000 from their own pocket before the university steps in.

If we're not yet ready to blow up the system — and end college football for

good and remake it as a for-profit, developmental league — then we have a few small changes that should be the very least the NCAA can do for its football athletes.

Each student who secures an athletic scholarship should receive free tuition to that school until they earn a degree — even if it takes them an extra year or two or three due to their disrupted schedule.

And secondly, each should have full-coverage medical insurance paid for by the school. If these young men are putting their bodies on the line, universities should be on the hook for the cost of injuries that occur in the line of duty.

Perhaps that will make college football too expensive. So be it. Let the best players make a buck in another league, and let colleges concentrate on what they should be doing: educating our nation's young people.

Football is a dangerous sport, but all societies have had gladiator games and likely always will.

The NFL must do what it can to make the game safer, but in the end its athletes are paid handsomely for the risks they take. That is not the case in the NCAA. Its athletes are treated like chattel while its coaches and athletic directors accept millions and millions in taxpayer dollars.

End it. Rework the NCAA soon, but end college football now.



AP Photo/Chris Pietsch, File

In this 2014, file photo, Nike's Phil Knight acknowledges the crowd on Uncle Phil Appreciation Night at Matthew Knight Arena.

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YOUR VIEWS

Condolences, thanks to officer who shot suspect

Condolences to the Pendleton police officer who neutralized the crime suspect near Walmart and his or her family for

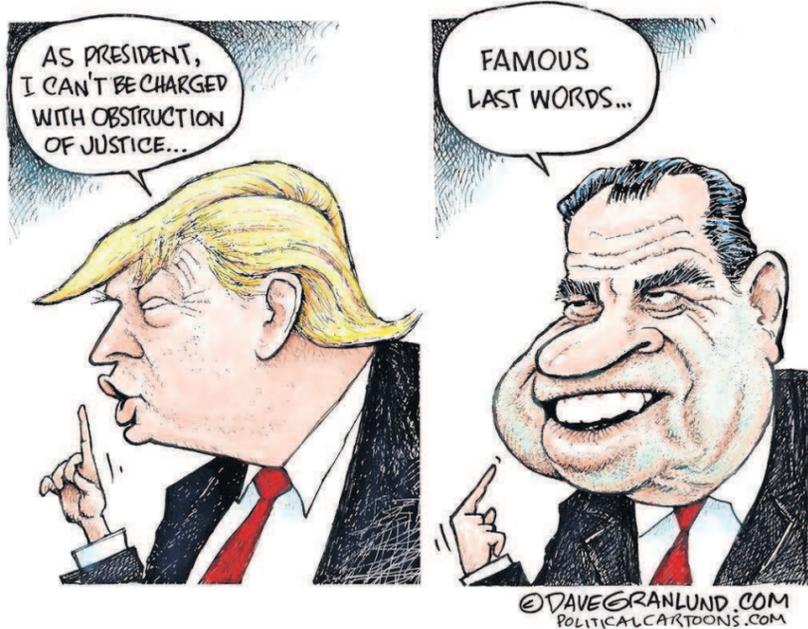
having to go through what they are going through now for doing what he/she is paid to do for us.

Also, thanks.

Gary Roberts
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

Why the Alabama Senate race is shifting in Moore's favor

After all that has happened, the Alabama Senate race appears to be reverting to a fundamental political truth: A state that is one of the most Republican in the nation is likely to vote Republican.

Of course, there is still the possibility of some new and devastating sexual misconduct revelation about GOP candidate Roy Moore. But there is an increasing sense that the old and devastating sexual misconduct revelations are receding into the distant past of two weeks ago. Now, Moore is recovering in the polls and more Alabama voters seem comfortable with the idea of voting for him.

Moore was six points ahead of Democratic opponent Doug Jones in the RealClearPolitics average of polls before the first allegations. By Nov. 21, Moore was eight-tenths of a point behind Jones. Now, Moore is back in the lead, but by just 2.6 points.

It appears the improvement in Moore's fortunes is being driven by a gradual change in the Alabama electorate's view of the allegations against him. In a Morning Consult poll taken in mid-November, 43 percent said they found the sexual misconduct allegations against Moore to be credible, while 19 percent said not credible, and 37 percent said they did not know or had no opinion.

In a newer poll by the same company, taken in the last week of November, 41 percent said they found the allegations credible, 21 percent said not credible, and 41 percent said they did not know or had no opinion.

That's not a huge change, but it's a total six percentage point increase in the group of people who say the allegations are not credible or who say they don't know.

In the poll, the number of Republicans who said they don't believe the Moore allegations stayed roughly the same. But there appears to have been a pretty significant shift from those who earlier said they believed the allegations to those who now say they don't know.

Among Democrats, the number who said they did not believe the allegations ticked upward. The same occurred with independents.

Part of the change — perhaps a large part — seems to reflect the idea that many voters don't view Moore's accusers in the same way that many media figures do. A number of media reports portray overwhelming evidence against Moore. "He's pitting his word against the word of nine women who accused him of varying degrees of sexual misconduct," CNN reported recently. The message is that the sheer number of accusers means at least some must be telling the truth.

But it seems likely that some Alabama voters don't see nine accusers. They see one.

That one accuser is Leigh Corfman, who says Moore sexually assaulted her in 1979, when she was 14 years old. Published in the *Washington Post*, Corfman's was the first and most serious allegation against Moore,



BYRON YORK
Comment

and it remains the most serious today. Corfman has seemed credible in media appearances, and Moore has not been able to refute her story. The Moore campaign realizes Corfman's is the most compelling allegation against him.

But the *Post* account also included the stories of three other women who said Moore asked them out when they were 16, 17 and 18 years old, and whose cases against Moore did not involve any physical abuse or coercion.

Then there was Beverly Young Nelson, who said Moore assaulted her in 1977, when she was 16. Nelson made the mistake of retaining celebrity lawyer Gloria Allred when she made her allegations, and she also mishandled Moore's contention that a signature in a yearbook she produced, ostensibly by Moore, might be a fake. Both moves reduced her credibility.

So that is five accusers right there. It is likely that voters pushed four of them to the side, leaving Corfman. Then there was a woman who said Moore grabbed her behind in 1991, when she was 28. A woman who said Moore asked her out in 1982, when she was 17. A woman who said Moore asked her out repeatedly in 1977, when she was 18, and gave her an unwanted, "forceful" kiss. And finally, a woman who said Moore asked her out several times in 1977, when she was 22.

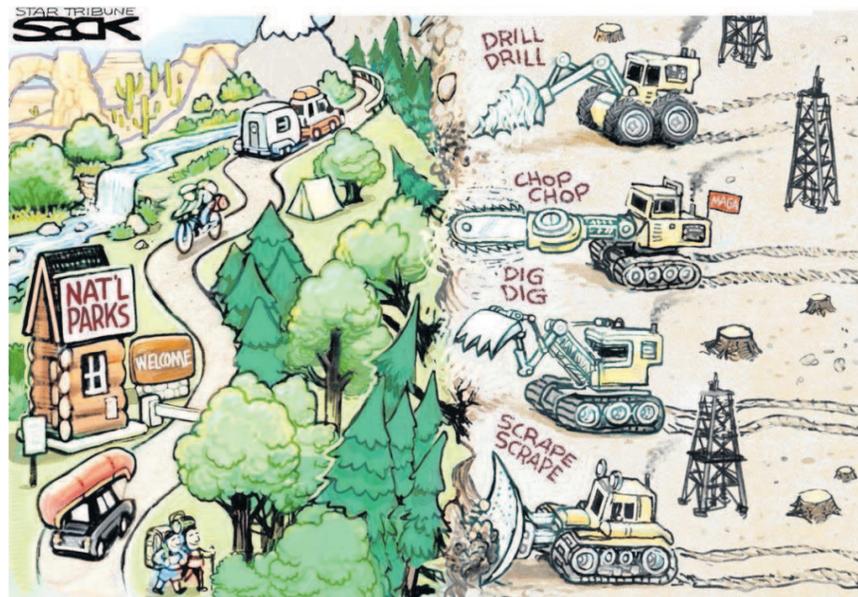
Asked her out several times when she was 22 years old? That's not the most outrageous allegation in the news these days. Four more accusers, some with very thin stories. That makes nine. The point is not that none of the accusers is telling the truth. Perhaps some, or all, are. What appears to have happened is that one very serious allegation was followed by a series of less serious, or less credible, accusations that in the end did not have the cumulative effect that Moore's opponents perhaps hoped.

The bottom line is, instead of Roy Moore versus nine accusers, in many voters' minds, the story is Roy Moore versus one accuser, Leigh Corfman. And that is where the mental calculations begin.

Corfman's allegation is serious; she was, after all, 14 years old. But it's not airtight. And it was in 1979 — 38 years ago. Memories fade, or change. And even if it is all true, has Moore changed in the nearly four decades since? Is there a statute of political limitations? Thoughts like that can change minds.

Finally, many conservative voters see Jones as a doctrinaire liberal whose pro-choice views on abortion would likely be enough to ensure defeat in an Alabama race. And so Alabama Republicans are more and more assessing the situation as Alabama Republicans. It would be no surprise if they vote that way on Dec. 12.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



PARKS..... AND WRECK