

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Oregon, Alabama and the pains of one-party rule

Oregonians would not usually look to Alabama for an example. But during his post-election press conference, Alabama's Senator-elect Doug Jones said something that applies to our state's condition.

Noting his historic win Tuesday — becoming the first Democratic U.S. senator from Alabama in 25 years — Jones said that a state benefits when its two political parties are competitive. Conversely, Jones said, it is not healthy for a state to be dominated by one party.

That observation fits Oregon, because we have become a one-party state. Victor Atiyeh was Oregon's last Republican governor. He was one of Oregon's best governors of the postwar era, serving from 1979 to 1987.

More significantly, the state Legislature is dominated by the Democratic party. That has led to a very unhealthy outcome, with public employee unions carrying outsized and unchecked power in the capitol.

There is more than one reason why we are in this fix. While it is true that metropolitan Portland's phenomenal growth and its overwhelming Democratic party registration is a factor, so is the Republican party's litmus test of abortion, which has scared away good candidates. As a result, the Oregon GOP has not much of a bench from which to call up candidates for statewide races.

It is worth remembering that until 1954, Republicans were Oregon's progressive party, in the Theodore Roosevelt mode. In the words of one historian, Oregon Democrats were "inarticulate" until the 1950s. A state legislator from Portland named Richard Neuberger appeared and the Democrats gained a voice, who happened to be one of America's most prolific writers. Neuberger became Oregon's first Democratic

U.S. senator in 40 years. Subsequent Democrats such as Vera Katz, John Kitzhaber and Barbara Roberts were Neuberger's beneficiaries.

More importantly, Gov. Tom McCall credited Neuberger with being his inspiration. Neuberger was an environmentalist before that word became part of the lexicon.

Republicans today who excoriate Oregon's statewide land use planning statute forget that it was Republicans — McCall, Hector MacPherson and Hermiston's own Stafford Hansell — who moved Senate Bill 100, Oregon's landmark legislation. In other words, it was a time when Oregon Republicans offered big ideas.

The Democrats who hold sway in Salem are also not so inspirational, but perhaps for a different reason. Gov. Kate Brown's tenure

has been a disappointment mainly because she fails to lead on the matter that is killing local governments across Oregon — the growing financial obligation of the Public Employees Retirement System. The public employees unions would disown Brown if she went near a courageous PERS solution. It may be that Brown lacks imagination or it may be that she lacks the guts of a governor such as McCall or Atiyeh.

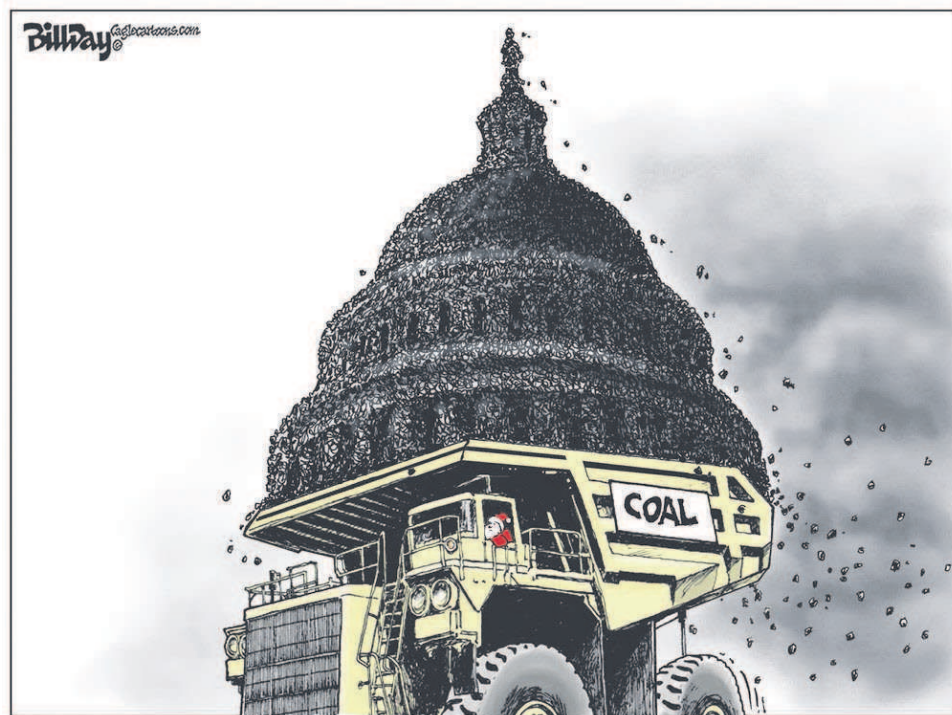
As much as Democrats like to preach the virtue of diversity, you seldom see that coming out of the statehouse on many urban-rural issues.

Alabama's new senator wants to reach across the aisle for bipartisan compromise. He might discover that too many Senate Republicans lack the imagination or guts to let that happen. In politics you never know where inspiration will come from. Doug Jones' improbable election may be one of those moments. Oregon is waiting for its improbable moment.

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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

# Our disrespect for elders

Nancy Root remembers when she vanished.

Not the exact date, but the occasion: She went shopping for a mattress. This was a few years ago. Because the mall was so big and her legs were so weak, she used a wheelchair, which was new to her, and had a friend push her.

Their wait for service was unusually long, and later, as she used the wheelchair more and more, she understood why. In the chair she became invisible. In the chair she turned radioactive. People looked over her, around her, through her. They withdrew. It was the craziest thing. She had the same keen mind, the same quick wit. But most new acquaintances didn't notice, because most no longer bothered to.

She told me all of this recently not in anger but in bafflement. Could I explain why her infirmity and her age — she's 82 — erase her? She has her own theories. Maybe strangers worry that she'll need something from them. Maybe they see in her their worst fears about their own futures.

Probably they extrapolate from her physical diminishment. "They think I'm mentally incapacitated," she said. "I'm sure of that. I'd stake my life on it."

"Doctors' offices are the worst," she added, describing how receptionists address whoever's pushing her. "I'm not acknowledged. 'Does this lady have an appointment?' 'Does this lady have her medical card?' They don't allow this lady to have a brain."

But it's not just receptionists. It's flight attendants. Movie-theater employees. They make dismissive assumptions about people above a certain age or below a certain level of physical competence. Or they simply edit those people out of the frame.

I met Nancy on a Baltic cruise in September, and I couldn't edit her out of the frame because she was smack in the middle of it, right in front of me, asking smart questions and making even smarter observations. I was one of five speakers giving lectures to a group of about 60 passengers, including her, who'd signed up for them. She traveled with two younger friends who helped her negotiate the ship's narrow corridors.

But after chatting extensively with the three of them at an initial cocktail-hour reception in one of the lounges, I didn't spot them at our group's subsequent social gatherings there. An email that she sent me the following month solved that mystery. "On our cruise," she wrote, "I again experienced the uneasiness of people toward us 'physically challenged' types. Even among our educated group, people ignored me." So she parceled out her exposure to them. She and her companions did their own thing.

The more I thought about her experience, the more I realized how widespread it undoubtedly is, and how cruel.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that more than 2 million Americans use wheelchairs for their daily activities and 6.5 million depend on canes, crutches or walkers.

And the country is getting grayer and grayer. There are roughly 50 million Americans age 65 and older, representing about 15 percent of the population. According to projections, there will be 98 million by 2060, representing nearly 25 percent.

Nancy's infirmity is unusual and goes back to when she was a 2-year-old in the Pittsburgh area in the late 1930s. She had polio, though her parents, knowing how ostracized children with the virus could be, kept that a secret.



**FRANK BRUNI**  
Comment

"They destroyed all the evidence," she said, "and they never told me." Only many decades after the fact did she figure out the truth, and only in recent years did post-polio syndrome — a condition that afflicts many childhood survivors of the disease — degrade her muscles to a point where was forced to use a cane, then a wheelchair.

Her health was good for most of her life, as she attended Oberlin College, married, had a daughter and went to work for the National Science Foundation and then the Department of Agriculture, where she was an analyst. Her career, she said, made her as conspicuous in her suburban Washington neighborhood as she is invisible in other settings now. "It was frowned upon," she told me, noting that most of the other mothers back then stayed home. "But I loved it."

She and her husband retired to the Phoenix suburb of Litchfield Park, where she now lives alone in their three-bedroom apartment. About five years ago, he felt a twinge on the treadmill and was found to have pancreatic cancer. Three months later, he was dead.

That sped her decline. Her arms grew feebler, her legs wobblier. Her pain intensified. Vanity be damned, she wore one of those pendants to be pressed if she fell. But she once forgot to put it on, tripped and lay on the living-room floor from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m., when a housekeeper happened to arrive. She recounted the episode to me in a tone of wonder at life's freaky occurrences and at our ability to get through them. There wasn't a scintilla of self-pity in her voice.

She considers herself lucky because her daughter is nearby. She has all the money that she needs. "I have my mind," she said, "and I see where others are losing theirs." She reads for many hours every day.

Books were a big topic for us when I visited her a few weeks ago. It frustrates her that she has never finished "Ulysses" or "Finnegans Wake." We talked about politics, too. About Singapore, where she traveled — with a wheelchair and helpers — about two years ago. About her job with the Agriculture Department and how ethical and underappreciated she always found farmers to be.

Two nights in a row we went out for Italian food, and she insisted on using her cane instead of her chair. She can do that if she takes a Percocet just beforehand and reconciles herself to a snail's pace. Toward the end of the second night, after two glasses of wine apiece, we mulled the vocabulary of her lot. I confessed that I cringed whenever she called herself "crippled," which she does, because she values directness and has a streak of mischief in her.

"Well, 'handicapped' isn't supposed to be OK, and I'm not going to call myself 'differently abled,'" she said. "You're a writer. Give me a word."

"What about 'limited'?" I said. "We're all limited in ways. You're limited in a particular way."

I noticed that our server would stand closer to me than to Nancy and was more voluble with me, even though she could see, if she looked, how vibrant Nancy was.

Nancy increasingly makes peace with such neglect, but told me that an elderly, infirm friend of hers has another approach. "She tells people to go to hell," Nancy said. "I need to take a course from her."

I don't know about that. But the rest of us have a lot to learn.

Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995.

## YOUR VIEWS

### A case for President Trump's great America

The incessant attacks on the character of President Donald Trump by the national press and media and the constant mocking of his promise to Make America Great Again, by pundits (as evidenced in the *East Oregonian*) has divided and polarized our nation and antagonized those that support the president. America elected this president because they wanted their country back, their sovereignty restored, their borders protected, Americans first instead of a foreign global world order.

In the face of 1) a biased politically motivated investigation that has uncovered nothing, 2) compounded by a recently documented corrupt FBI (check out the Bundy trial), 3) a gutless DOJ that mocks justice, and 4) a Republican-controlled Congress that essentially lacks the integrity to support the president, how has this so-called womanizer, uncouth, idiot, charlatan done? Here is the real news you won't read in the

*EO* or any national news outlet: Under Trump the stock market has grown 25 percent with 45 record highs, the economy is growing at a recent record of 3 percent, for a \$5.2 trillion profit for America. Unemployment is at a 17-year low, including African Americans. Illegal immigration is at its lowest level since the Great Depression. Since inauguration there are one million new private sector jobs, manufacturing is at a 20-year high and consumer confidence is at a 13-year high. ISIS has been defeated, the military has been revitalized and our veterans services restored.

How did this happen? Trump kept his promises. He renegotiated NAFTA, withdrew from the job killing Trans-Pacific Partnership, and pulled out of the global carbon tax Paris Climate Accord. Trump is making America great again. Imagine America with an honest national media, press, and the swamp that controls the FBI, DOJ, Congress, and the globalists eradicated!

Stuart Dick  
Irrigon

### Christmas spirit returning to Pendleton

Congratulations for the Christmas spirit, which seems to have been revived to our Pendleton community.

The recent Christmas tree lighting was a wonderful addition to the Christmas Stroll. It was a warm and friendly feeling to see so many of our neighbors and friends out enjoying the afternoon and early evening. Thank you to the businesses who chose to remain open for shopping and visiting.

So often we get into a fast-paced life, and

it was just pleasant to take a break and enjoy a leisurely afternoon. It was heartwarming to see so many people come together with the addition of the Christmas tree decorating and lighting. I am looking forward to the possibility of the return of the Christmas Parade, especially if it would be in the evening and be lighted like the Round-Up parade was so long ago. There is something magical to me about a nighttime lighted parade!

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year Pendleton!

Scot Jacobson  
Pendleton

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