

EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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OUR VIEW

A challenge to choice

This week, instead of quietly marking the 45th anniversary of the passing of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, citizens around our nation are gearing up to fight to protect it.

President Trump's flip-flop from supporting to opposing legal abortions took place some while ago, although he still would allow early terminations in cases of rape and incest. His emotionally charged pronouncements Friday to demand changes in the law were a thinly veiled attempt to solidify his crumbling political base.

His decision to embrace the belief that the federal government knows what is best for any American woman making this difficult choice is disturbing. The revival of the clashing rhetoric is simply a political distraction just when his administration is under fire from all sides.

Abortion long has been a core issue of his vice president, Mike Pence, who brought many hardline evangelicals on board to win the 2016 GOP campaign with his emotionally charged rhetoric against legal abortions and homosexual rights.

The key word in any abortion discussion is "legal." Women who want to have an abortion will have the operation regardless of the law. The question is whether this simple medical procedure is performed in safe, hygienic conditions by trained professionals or in

considerably less healthy circumstances which pose a danger to the women's lives and long-term health.

Roe v. Wade was supposed to settle the matter. Both sides presented arguments in a Texas case that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The battle was fought. And the battle was won. In 1973, justices voted 7-2 in favor of a ruling that overturned state bans and legalized abortion throughout the nation. They did so on privacy grounds, saying government intervention in a woman's medical treatment was an unwarranted and improper intervention in her right to choose what happens to her body.

About 7 in 10 Americans oppose overturning Roe v. Wade, according to the Pew Research Center. About 3 in 10 would like to see it overturned. That split of public opinion has held relatively steady in recent decades.

Abortions, meanwhile, have declined to the lowest levels since 1973.

Abortion opponents have worked hard to impose obstacles to women following through on their own choices.

In states around the nation, such groups have enlisted compliant legislators to pass laws that deliberately make it very difficult for a woman to obtain a legal abortion. Legislation has been introduced to restrict abortion to circumstances of rape, or where the



People participate in the March for Life near the Supreme Court in Washington, Friday, Jan. 19.

AP Photo/Susan Walsh

woman's life is in danger. All these strategies seek to chip away at a woman's natural right to determine whether and when she bears a child.

Roadblocks like waiting periods, mandatory counseling and other restrictions reveal a concerted effort. In recent years, states have sought to insist that clinic doctors have credentials from their local hospitals and require clinics to make expensive modifications to their facilities. These latter two requirements were introduced in 2013, but struck down by subsequent court rulings.

Trump's speech Friday has already been dissected for its mistruths. The false comparisons with other nations

were easy to reveal, just like so many of our chief executive's other dubious statements.

We simply do not need this. This country has enough problems with environmental threats, overwhelming debt, crumbling infrastructure, hunger, poverty and crime without revisiting a fight ended long ago.

One person summed up the issue back in 1999. It remains a statement with which we totally agree.

"I want to see the abortion issue removed from politics. I believe it is a personal decision that should be left to the women and their doctors."

The speaker was Donald Trump.

OTHER VIEWS

The hell of this year's Super Bowl

We purveyors of commentary tend to find multitudes in the teeniest speck and mirrors of the zeitgeist wherever we turn. I grant you that. But grant me this: America really is about to get the pathetic Super Bowl that it deserves.

I don't think that I can even food-bribe myself into watching. There aren't enough Buffalo wings in the world. On account of a wearily familiar come-from-behind victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars on Sunday, the New England Patriots will be playing, and that's about as surprising as sesame seeds on a bun.

The Patriots perfectly embody our income-inequality era and the tax reform that President Donald Trump recently signed. Their good fortune begets more good fortune. They shamelessly hoard glory. And there's frequently a whiff of cheating in their success.

Shockingly, they're Trump's team. This makes no geographic sense: The ZIP codes of his primary castles recommend allegiance to the New York Giants, the New York Jets or maybe the Miami Dolphins.

But those National Football League franchises have reliable losing streaks, and Trump won't suffer that. Also, when he looks at the Patriots' glamour-puss quarterback, Tom Brady, he sees a younger, less quizzically coifed version of himself, complete with a foreign-born model for a wife. Trust me on this. He just squints extra hard, sucks in his gut and begs Melania to answer to "Gisele" for a while.

So he roots for the Patriots. Perversely, they root for him. Well, some of them do. Brady has been his occasional golfing partner and sort of endorsed him for president by imagining aloud that with Trump in the Oval Office, there might be "a putting green on the White House lawn." We've gone from a chicken in every pot to this.

During the 2016 campaign, the Patriots' owner, Robert Kraft, attested to Trump's fine character, while the Patriots' coach, Bill Belichick, wrote privately to Trump to congratulate him for his perseverance, telling him, "Your leadership is amazing." Trump demonstrated his gratitude (and humility) by publicly reading the letter at a rally in New Hampshire. There hasn't been any gushing from Belichick since, but then there hasn't been any retraction, either. And there has definitely been cause.

These titans stick together in the way that many titans do, not because they share some special affection or particular philosophy but because each sees in the others' stature an affirmation of his own. They're a cluster strut.

The Patriots have already played in more



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

Super Bowls (nine) than any other team and will tie the Pittsburgh Steelers for the most victories (six) if they win this year's championship on Feb. 4. They're heavy favorites over the Philadelphia Eagles, who graduated to the big game by trouncing the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday.

Please forgive the mixed bestial metaphor, but these Eagles aren't cuddly underdogs. They have fans so famously obnoxious that after Sunday's rout, some of them threw beer cans at a Vikings team bus as it pulled away from the stadium. Sore winning: I wonder which of our amazing leaders taught them that.

Football, like Trumpism, likes to believe that it's about working-class folks in the heartland. But this year's Super Bowl, like the Trump administration, bows to the Acela corridor. It nearly brought together two teams from underexposed cities, Jacksonville and Minneapolis. Instead it brings together two teams from celebrated theaters of history in the Northeast. So much for the little guy.

It's a downer most of all because the NFL itself is in such a funk. I say that reluctantly. For my money, pro football remains the most exciting of the four major American sports. It showcases the most extraordinary athleticism.

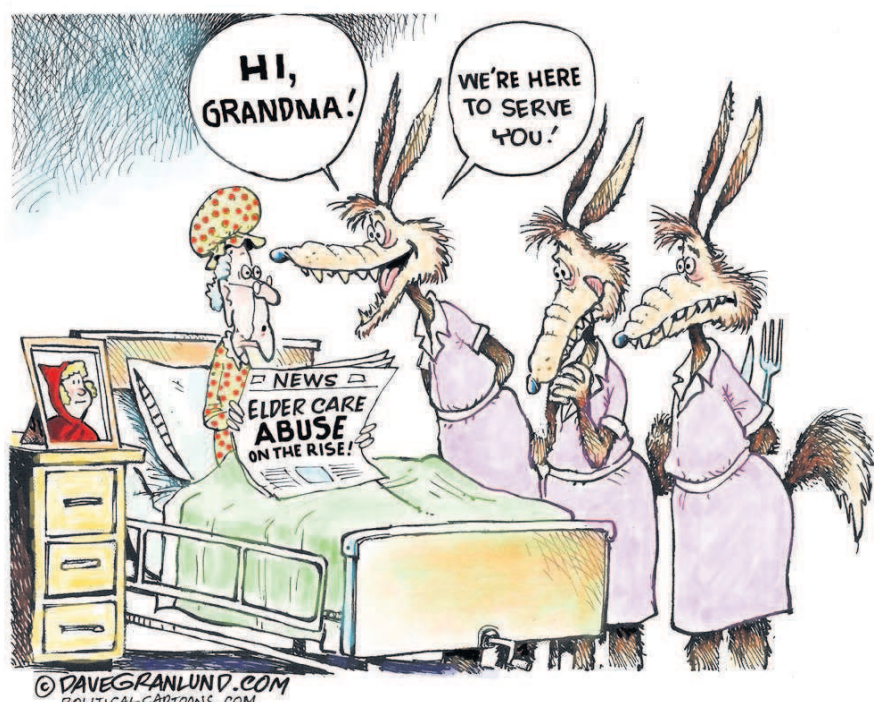
That is, when the athletes aren't sidelined. Injuries are so pervasive that dozens of stars don't participate for long stretches of the season — or for any of it. The Patriots' wide receiver Julian Edelman went down in August and never came back. The Eagles' starting quarterback, Carson Wentz, went down in early December and won't appear in the Super Bowl.

It's weirdly fitting that some of the loudest football buzz this season focused on an oft-injured former player, the quarterback Tony Romo, and his accomplishments off the field. Romo retired from the Dallas Cowboys, went to work as a football announcer and developed a rapt following for his oracular deconstruction of games. By quitting football, he didn't just spare his endoskeleton. He found his destiny.

But even his gifted gab couldn't prevent the sport from continuing to lose television viewers. The sizes of audiences for Thursday night, Sunday night and Monday night games shrank again this season.

The Super Bowl will still be a ratings bonanza. It always is. But beneath all the braggadocio and hoopla, there will be little real uplift and nothing new. It's a tic of my trade to say so, but I spy a metaphor there.

Frank Bruni joined the *New York Times* in 1995.

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YOUR VIEWS

Walden gets failing grades across the board

Fellow District 2 constituents: I'd like to offer a summary of our Rep. Greg Walden's voting record. You can check it out for yourself at votesmart.org, a nonpartisan summary of all politicians' voting records.

National groups assess the voting record of all members of congress and give a score from 1-100. 1 percent is very bad; 60 percent is a D-; 100 percent is an A+.

The NRA and most gun rights organizations give Walden a 93 percent, no surprise. As is the Coalition's Against Gun Violence score of 0 percent.

Planned Parenthood gives Walden a 0 percent. Not an F, which would be 59 percent: a 0 percent. I hope you don't have any women in your life who might need healthcare (abortions are 3 percent of what Planned Parenthood does; the rest is general healthcare, mostly for women and children). In summary, Walden has failed, according to these groups, with their scores of Walden's voting record:

Young Women's Christian Association: 33 percent; League of Women Voters: 17 percent; average score from all veterans' groups: 48 percent; Americans for Fair Taxation: 0 percent; Christian Coalition of America: 60 percent; Alliance for Retired Americans (lifetime score): 8 percent; National Farmers' Union: 0 percent.

His labor unions scores are mostly failing. K-12 education? Mostly failing. In the category of "Children," scored by multiple groups, Walden gets no score above 50 percent. Health insurance: fail. Healthcare: horrible. Foreign affairs: poor. Environment: you're kidding, right? Immigrants? You already know how he feels about immigrants; rest assured that his voting record is consistent with his contempt for people of color.

Rep. Walden's voting record is not good for the Earth. He has hurt veterans, children, the working class, poor folks, women, farmers, teachers (me), nurses, college

students. He has helped rich gun owners and, well, the rich. Is it worth it?

Nan Noteboom, Odell

Can we call EOTEC a money-losing disaster yet?

I remember hearing how the Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center was going to be great. I remember the great idea of the partnership between the city and the county. I remember the support from investors, the Farm City Pro Rodeo, the Umatilla County Fair members and the city. I remember how the EOTEC board was formed. That was 2013. The future seemed bright. It seemed like a great plan was in the making.

But that was then, this is now. The 2017 fair was a success, but afterwards that's where the story goes south. The city will be taking over EOTEC, the county partnership is over. The city says it loses \$1,000 a day on EOTEC. The county fair had a contract to lease the grounds for \$10,000; now it will be \$100,000. No one seems to have planned for the 350-odd days after the fair. Costs skyrocketed, disagreements arose with the residents of Airport Road on noise, water, traffic, and construction problems. No one cared much after the fair was over.

Now, the city has decided to end the 2013 agreement with the county. Did you know that ahead of Monday's meeting between the county and the city? Do you know how much debt EOTEC is in? Do you know that the city is paying \$9,000 a month to a company to run EOTEC? Do you know anything that the city does with your money? Did anyone ask you before they voted if you are OK with this? I don't remember any public hearings, do you, before they voted?

Now I am waiting to see how many tax dollars will be needed to pay to take over EOTEC. Watch out for a new tax. I guess the bottom line is, do any of you care how your money is spent?

Mark F. Gomolski, Hermiston

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