

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A kick in the pants to President Trump's decision to fire yet another member of his cabinet.

This time the axe fell on David Shulkin, who led the long-troubled Department of Veterans Affairs. Yet according to most veterans organizations, Shulkin was doing good work in the position — certainly the behemoth bureaucracy was not going to be turned around in a little more than a year.

But the continual palace intrigue of whether or not he would remain in place — and unclear answers for months from the White House — was devastating to the VA leadership.

And that has negatively affected veterans, who have been ill-served by the VA for decades.

It makes us wonder if there is a better way to care for our vets than a \$200 million bureaucracy with more than 340,000 employees. The VA's budget has grown by 56 percent in the last 15 years — which, no surprise, coincides with how long veterans have been returning from service in

Afghanistan. The struggles and bloating of the VA are a reminder that the costs of war are long lasting — and are both emotional and financial.

That the president decided to promote his personal doctor — who has no management experience — to lead the organization, is not good news for American veterans who deserve better from their government.

A tip of the hat to Hermiston's Dylan Westfall, who was elected this week as vice president of the Oregon FFA.

The election took place at the state FFA convention, which brought nearly 1,500 FFA members from around the state to Redmond. In addition to electing officers, FFA members competed in career events, attended workshops and networked with colleagues.

A leadership position in such a venerable organization is a great honor, and will be helpful to Westfall as he preps for college and career. We congratulate him and wish him the best of his luck during his year helping to lead the organization.



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, file
Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin speaks at a news conference on March 7 at the Washington Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Washington.



OTHER VIEWS

Facebook's problem — and ours

There is so much news these days that it's hard to distinguish one big story from another. But for me the most consequential story of late was that a self-driving car operated by Uber — with an emergency backup driver behind the wheel — struck and tragically killed a woman on a street in Tempe, Arizona.

I could only look at that deeply unsettling story and say: Welcome to the second inning — the second inning of one of the world's great technological leaps, the implications of which we're just beginning to understand.

But first, let's acknowledge one thing: The first inning was amazing.

It was an inning full of promise, discovery and marvel. In the early 2000s, a set of technologies came together into platforms, social networks and software that made connectivity and solving complex problems fast, virtually free, easy for you, ubiquitous and invisible. Suddenly, more individuals could compete, connect, collaborate and create with more other people, in more ways, from more places, for less money and with greater ease than ever before. And we did!

We became our own filmmakers and reporters; we launched political and social revolutions from our living rooms; we connected with long-lost family and friends; we found the answers to old and new questions with one click; we searched for everything from spouses to news to directions to kindred spirits with our phones; we exposed dictators and branded ourselves. With one touch, we could suddenly call a taxi, direct a taxi, rate a taxi and pay a taxi — or rent an igloo, rate an igloo and pay for an igloo in Alaska.

And then, just as suddenly, we found ourselves in the second inning. The cool self-driving car killed a pedestrian; the cool Facebook platform enabled Russian troll



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

farms to divide us and inject fake news into our public life; the uncool totalitarian government learned how to use the same facial recognition tools that can ease your way through passport control to single you out in a crowd for arrest.

And Mark Zuckerberg, who promised to connect us all — and that it would all be good — found himself on the cover of *Wired* magazine, with his face cut, bruised and bandaged, as if he'd been hit by a fastball.

He wasn't alone. In inning two, we started to feel beat up by the same platforms and technologies that had enriched, empowered and connected our lives.

Silicon Valley, we have a problem. What to do? For problems like this, I like to consult my teacher and friend Dov Seidman, CEO of LRN, which helps companies and leaders build ethical cultures, and the author of the book "How: Why How We Do Anything Means Everything."

"The first inning's prevailing ethos was that any technology that makes the world more open by connecting us or makes us more equal by empowering us individually must, in and of itself, be a force for good," Seidman began. "But, in inning two, we are coming to grips with the reality that the power to make the world more open and equal is not in the technologies themselves. It all depends on how the tools are designed and how we choose to use them. The same amazing tech that enables people to forge deeper relationships, foster closer communities and give everyone a voice can also breed isolation, embolden racists, and empower digital bullies and nefarious actors."

Equally important, Seidman added, these "unprecedented and valuable of connection" are being used with accuracy and potency "to assault the foundations of what makes our democracies vibrant, capitalism dynamic and our societies healthy — namely,

truth and trust."

And they have begun to be used "to assault our personal foundations — our privacy and sense of identity," Seidman said: "It is one thing to use our data to enable better shopping experiences, but when my beliefs and attitudes are mined and manipulated for someone's political campaign, a campaign that may be antithetical to my beliefs, that is deeply harmful and unmooring." So what to do? "Precisely because we are in just the beginning of a technological revolution with a long, uncertain, up-and-down road ahead, we need to start by pausing to reflect on how our world, reshaped by these technologies, operates differently — and on the kind of values and leadership we will need to realize their promise."

Values are more vital now than ever, Seidman insisted. "Because sustainable values are what anchor us in a storm, and because values propel and guide us when our lives are profoundly disrupted. They help us make the hard decisions." Hard decisions abound, because everything is now connected. "The world is fused. So there no place anymore to stand to the side and claim neutrality — to say, 'I am just a businessperson' or 'I am just running a platform.'"

No way. In the fused world, Seidman said, "the business of business is no longer just business. The business of business is now society. And, therefore, how you take or don't take responsibility for what your technology enables or for what happens on your platforms is inescapable. This is the emerging expectation of users — real people — who've entrusted so much of their inner lives to these powerful companies."

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist, was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting in Beirut and Israel and one for commentary.

YOUR VIEWS

Innes the best choice for Pendleton city council

I am writing this letter to urge residents of Ward 1 to elect Carole Innes to the Pendleton City Council.

I have known Carole since 1979. I know she will be a positive addition to our city government. She has spent her more than 50 years in Pendleton as a caring and involved citizen. As a member of a third-generation family, I know it takes effort to keep things moving forward while respecting the past.

Carole's support of civic and educational programs, her mental health advocacy, her board involvement in multiple groups and her memberships in community service organizations speaks volumes about her commitment to our town and our citizens.

She is energetic and fun to work with and is not afraid to do the hard, hands-on work it takes to get a job done. She has spearheaded Chamber of Commerce Round-Up RV parking for several years. She has participated in painting and decorating rooms at the local domestic violence shelter and in preparing a room at the DHS building so families have a safe and pleasant place to have supervised visits.

I could cite many more examples. Carole cares about people and about our community. She is supportive via generous donations and of her time and her money. It takes work to resolve issues and conflicts. Carole has good "get to the root of it" problem-solving skills. She is open minded but not afraid to explain her decisions using reason and logic. Her background in finance will serve us well.

We need Carole on our city council. Please cast your vote for Carole Innes.
Jill Swearingen
Pendleton

McLeod-Skinner stood out in Democratic debate

Recently, Pendleton had a campaign visit from Jamie McLeod-Skinner, candidate for U.S. Congress in Oregon's District 2. After visiting with her, we believe that Jamie McLeod-Skinner is the best person to send to Congress from our district.

McLeod-Skinner has a strong legal background in water rights and water law, which she will use to protect Oregon's water quality and water interests.

Jamie believes in caring for our air quality and natural resources, while making the best use of our land assets, including ranching, wildlife and tourism. She understands the need for quality forest management, including thinning the forests to prevent catastrophic wildfires. She deeply cares about the health of our natural resources, as well as the people who live and make their livelihoods in our huge rural district.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner also believes in supporting our military troops while deployed, and supporting them when they come return home, including our many veterans struggling with PTSD.

We could list many more excellent qualities Jamie McLeod-Skinner has; these are just a few.

Martin and Shirley Gail Westfall
Pendleton

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