

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

KATHRYN B. BROWN
PublisherDANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing EditorTIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

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OUR VIEW

Multiple opportunities for spring cleaning

When spring weather blows into our area, many Oregonians find time to spruce up their homes and their neighborhoods.

A good spring clean after a long winter with the doors and windows shut tight can be a joyful and pleasing experience — good for the health of our bodies and minds, as well as the financial health of our pocketbooks.

Luckily, local groups are helping support the cleanup efforts.

Here are a few ideas:

Hermiston: Residents can bring up to 454.5 pounds of their own trash (except tires) to Sanitary Disposal at 81144 N. Highway 395 for free this week, and receive discounts on larger loads. Then on April 14, everyone in Umatilla County can take their recycling, including tires, electronics, paints and batteries, to Umatilla Electric Co-Op, 750 W. Elm. And on April 21, a city-wide “I Love My City” cleanup project will sweep several neighborhoods. Show

up at McKenzie Park at 9 a.m.

Umatilla: The city will host a cleanup day April 7. McNary area volunteers can meet at the Port of Umatilla offices, 500 Willamette St., and downtown and south hill volunteers should meet at Umatilla City Hall, 700 Sixth St. Dumpsters also will be placed around the community free of charge for disposal of yard waste, junk, debris and general garbage. A barbecue at Village Square Park will follow.

Pendleton: The annual S.U.R.E. (Stewards of the Umatilla River Environment) cleanup of the river levee is set for May 19. That cleanup is a fun way to gather with friends and organization members to pitch in and clear trash from the parkway and riverbank. To ensure there are enough gloves, trash bags, refreshments and food for lunch, RSVP to kbbrown@eastoregonian.com.

There is also the opportunity to clean up historic cemeteries, of which



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

John Spomer picks up trash as Tom Ditton throws a bag of garbage into the back of his pickup during a volunteer cleanup on Theater Lane in Hermiston.

northeast Oregon has plenty.

The Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries is partnering with SOLVE to create the first statewide Oregon Historic Cemetery Cleanup Day on May 12.

Volunteers across the state will attempt to spruce up historic cemeteries — many established in the 1800s — that have become littered with invasive

weeds, woody debris, dirty headstones and other problems.

The commission is helping to organize volunteers for the statewide event. To have your cemetery included as a selection for volunteers, contact Monica Gunderson at monica@solveoregon.org or over the phone at 503-844-9571 ext. 336. Volunteers can sign up now.

OTHER VIEWS

Trump-Russia and the rule of law

Recently, I took part in a debate on the question “Does the Russia investigation endanger the rule of law?” I said yes.

First, a caveat. If “endanger the rule of law” means “destroys our legal order and threatens our democracy,” then no, I don’t think the Trump-Russia investigation does that. But if it means “involves our nation’s most powerful law enforcement and intelligence agencies in reckless political conduct that undermines our system of elections and the orderly transfer of power,” then yes, the Trump-Russia investigation does, in fact, endanger the rule of law.

Two incidents from 2016 and early 2017 point to the danger posed by overzealous Trump-Russia investigators.

The first is that the Justice Department used the Logan Act, which bars private Americans from conducting foreign policy, as a pretense to pursue an investigation against the Trump team.

The Logan Act was passed in 1799 and has never been used to successfully prosecute anybody. No one has even tried since the 19th century. It is, by any practical measure, dead — look up the legal concept of “desuetude.”

And yet, in the summer of 2016, some prominent Democrats began accusing Trump of violating the Logan Act.

They said he broke the law by sarcastically encouraging Russia to release Hillary Clinton’s famous deleted emails. Several called for hearings.

Then, after Trump’s victory, stunned and angry Democrats watched him prepare for the presidency — and prepare to undo many of Barack Obama’s policies.

Democratic Rep. Jared Huffman introduced the “One President at a Time Act of 2016,” which would specifically subject presidents-elect to the Logan Act. Rep. John Conyers, then the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, asked the Justice Department to investigate Trump for a possible violation of the Logan Act.

All of that was just political posturing — not a threat to the rule of law. But unbeknownst to the public, the Obama Justice Department was using the Logan Act as a pretext to take action against the incoming

administration.

When intelligence intercepts picked up Michael Flynn, the incoming national security adviser, talking to the Russian ambassador in late December, the Obama Justice Department saw that as a possible violation of the Logan Act. (It wasn’t; many foreign policy experts saw

nothing wrong with that.)

Nevertheless, four days into the Trump administration, Sally Yates, the Obama holdover leading the Justice Department, sent agents to the White House to question Flynn, ostensibly on the suspicion that he might have violated the Logan Act.

It was that interview that ultimately resulted in Flynn pleading guilty to one count of lying to the FBI.

The bottom line is, the Flynn saga, which is at the heart of the Trump-Russia investigation, appears to have hinged on a trumped-up suspicion that a new administration had broken a centuries-old law that has never been prosecuted before — when, in fact, the new administration’s real transgression was to make clear it would throw away many of its predecessor’s policies.

The second incident that suggests the Trump investigation threatens the rule of law is the FBI’s use of the Trump dossier — a Clinton campaign opposition research product — as a part of its counterintelligence investigation into the Trump campaign.

To compile the dossier, a Democratic law firm hired the opposition research group Fusion GPS, which hired a former British spy named Christopher Steele, who paid a number of Russian “collectors,” who then talked to other Russians, who provided gossip about Trump. The most spectacular gossip in the dossier’s description of Trump, in a Moscow hotel room in 2013, watching as prostitutes played out a kinky sex scene.

Steele took his material to the FBI, and the bureau agreed to pay Steele to keep gathering dirt on Trump — an astonishing development in the midst of a presidential election.

And even though the pay-for-dirt deal fell through, the FBI still incorporated the dossier into its Trump-Russia investigation. It was used as the basis to ask a secret court to grant a warrant to wiretap an American, Carter Page, in October 2016.

Now fast-forward to the

transition.

In early January 2017, intelligence chiefs James Comey, John Brennan, Mike Rogers and James Clapper traveled to Trump Tower to brief the president-elect on Russian efforts to interfere with the 2016 campaign.

After the briefing, by a plan they had devised earlier, three of them left the room, leaving Comey alone with Trump. Comey gave Trump a summary of the dossier, including the Moscow sex scene.

Imagine that. The very first time the incoming president met the FBI director face-to-face, the FBI’s message was: We know about you and those hookers in Moscow.

In their new book “Russian Roulette,” authors Michael Isikoff and David Corn report Trump thought the FBI was blackmailing him:

“Trump had seen this sort of thing before,” they write. “Certainly, his old mentor Roy Cohn — the notorious fixer for mobsters and crooked pols — knew how this worked. So too did Comey’s famous predecessor J. Edgar Hoover, who had quietly let it be known to politicians and celebrities that he possessed information that could destroy their careers in a New York minute.”

The intel chiefs’ briefing of Trump soon leaked to the media. And the fact that top officials had seen fit to tell the incoming president about the dossier made it a legitimate news story.

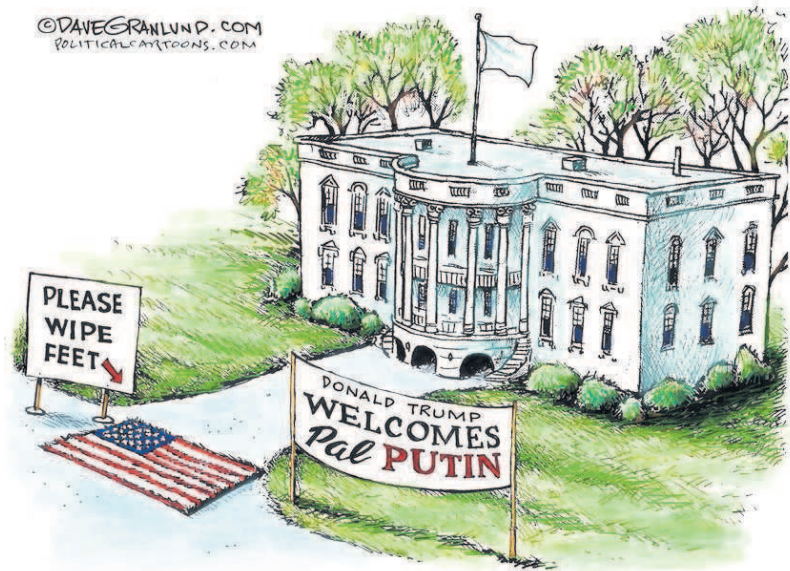
Within hours, BuzzFeed published the entire dossier on the internet.

As Sen. Charles Schumer said as all this was happening: “You take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday of getting back at you.”

With the Logan Act, Obama holdovers used a dead law as a pretense to push the Trump investigation. With the dossier, they used unverified opposition research not only to investigate the Trump campaign, but to execute a clever maneuver to make the dirt public.

And this was all done by the nation’s top law enforcement and intelligence officials, targeting a new president. So yes, it is reasonable to say the Trump-Russia investigation endangers the rule of law.

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

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YOUR VIEWS

Show some compassion for the homeless

I am a mother, a grandmother, an artist, 63 and disabled. I don’t do drugs, nor do I drink alcohol. But I am also — not by choice — a homeless person. I cry, I laugh, I love, I feel, I care. It seems there is no one out here who will speak for all of us homeless people.

There are a few places that we can go. When the temperature drops below 32 we have the warming station. We can have a hot meal once a day Monday through Saturday at the Salvation Army church. We used to eat breakfast, but that church no longer lets us have that. The kind caring people who fixed and served us breakfast are searching for a new location, but none so far has been found.

Some of us sleep under blankets, some in lean-tos or tents, some in campers, travel trailers and some in RVs. Some have jobs they go to, others like me are disabled and on a low fixed income, others gather bottles and cans to make money. We

lost our homes for many reasons: some because the rent got too high for them to pay and still survive; others because their health was in danger; yes, a few are drug users or drinkers; some just got out of jail.

We are human beings and we do buy from a lot of stores, yet we are hated, harassed, shunned, and looked at as if we are nothing but trash. We are run out of town. Why can’t there be a place where we can go to camp? There are men, women and children out here; most of us wish and dream of being able to find our own home to live in, a yard our children can play in. But everywhere I go I get chased out. Where I think it’s safe to park and stay turns out to be another place it’s forbidden.

We just want to live, love, laugh, cry like every homebound person gets to do. There is land that could be turned into a place that we can go to. But who cares? I believe in God — in his Holy Bible it says to help and care for the elderly, the poor and the homeless, not shun us.

Linda Kuppenbender
Pendleton

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. SENATORS

Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office: 541-962-7691

Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Greg Walden
185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

GOVERNOR

Kate Brown
160 State Capitol

900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582

REPRESENTATIVES

Greg Barreto, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-38
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

SENATOR

Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-423
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us

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