

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

## OUR VIEW

### Fighting news fatigue

It can be exhausting trying to keep up with the news, especially about our President and his Cabinet, as they chart a dramatically different course for the country.

It can make you seasick trying to concentrate on everything speeding by the transom, whether it be updates from overnight meetings with a nuclear-armed dictator, stories of financial malfeasance and corruption at the EPA, President Trump's continuous pokes-in-the-eye via his Twitter feed, or the nasty thing some dumb actor has yelled from his rooftop garden.

It's enough for many people to throw their hands in the air. A new malady has been coined — "news fatigue" — this feeling that you cannot keep up with the steady stream of important information emanating from journalists the world over. The news is depressing and nausea-inducing, and that's no way to start the day. To combat the symptoms, many citizens are finding themselves pushed to make a choice.

First, they can convince themselves that the firehose of news isn't important — you can check out and not care about it and all will be fine.

Or they can take the route of believing there are vitally important updates and critical things happening every day that they must stay apprised

of, but their own mental and physical wellbeing requires them to take a step back and clear their head.

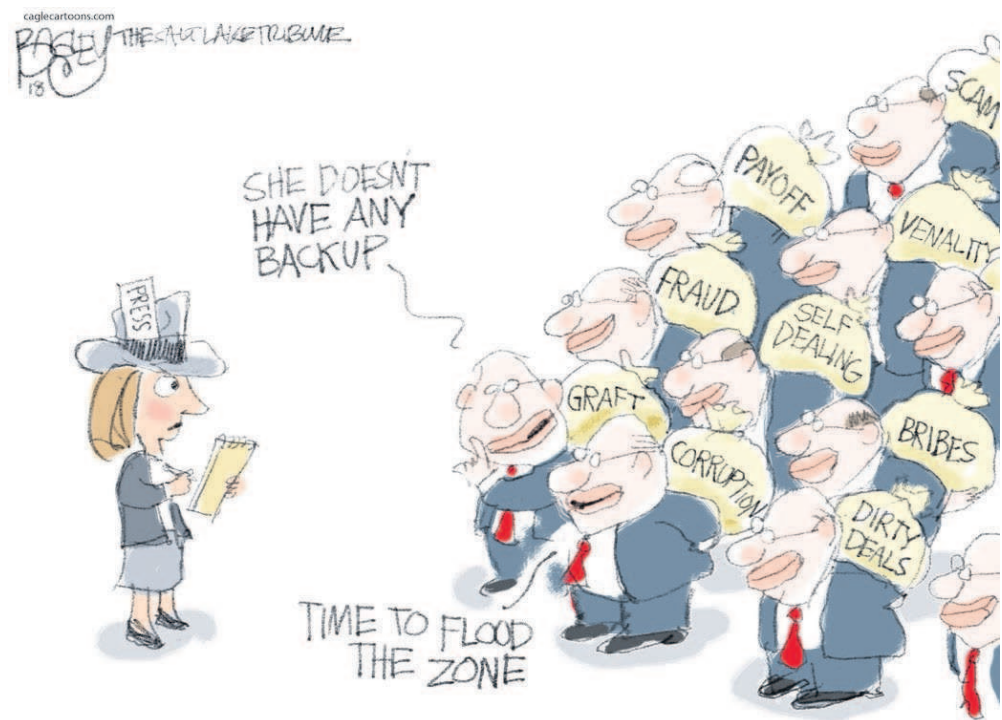
Or, they can just take the tack that everything else is fake, except for what the head of our government says, allowing only one person and their supportive media outlets to dictate the terms of reality. That's the laziest and simplest route, but to many it offers the veneer of peaceful understanding.

Sure, we're in the news business — it benefits us for people to pay attention.

But we're first and foremost citizens. And we know the danger that comes when powerful people and institutions attack the news, purposely try to confuse and overwhelm their constituents, and try to numb them with scandal after scandal until none are remarkable enough that they incite the public to demand accountability. It's a way to get away with anything, this slow spread of news fatigue disease.

As David Frum, the political commentator and former speech writer for George W. Bush, said recently in an interview: "If your child is feverishly ill, it can be very fatiguing to take care of her. But it's what you do, because that's your duty ... if your country is ill you have the same responsibility."

Part of the reason why "news"

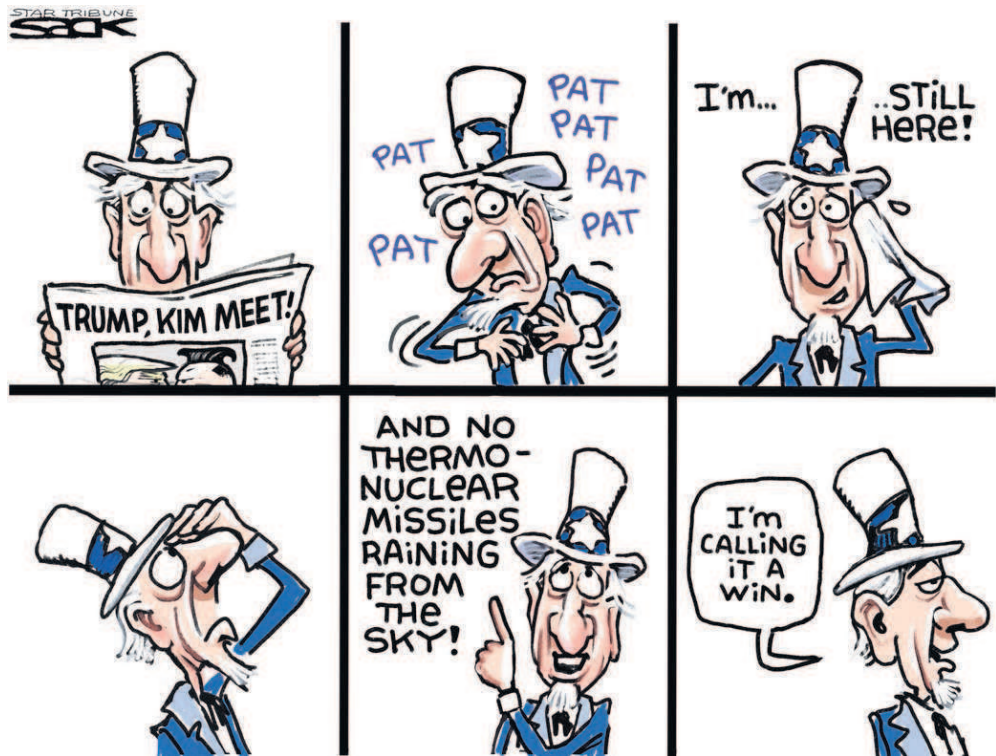


seems overwhelming, and some are trying to shirk the responsibility of understanding it, is that many people no longer agree on what "news" is. A recent poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs and the American Press Institute noted that most readers and journalists agree on what they want from journalism — news stories that are factual and offer context and analysis. Yet most of what people absorb, via social media or partisan talking heads on television, or via 140-character tweets, does not offer clear facts and clear context. Absorb too much of that and the brain decides to close down and give up.

There is a real joy of a few days

of vacation, to check out of the news stream. That may be necessary to our mental health, and it is also a point of privilege — a North Korean, a bourbon executive trying to navigate the president's tariffs, an illegal immigrant, or a person with pre-existing medical conditions does not have the ability to check out for a few days. They must fight and lobby, and work hard to understand the context of their action and those of others.

We know time away from the fusillade is important, and useful. But we urge you to jump back in, to remain vigilant and knowledgeable about the problems affecting our nation and the progress made by it.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Pendleton chief's departure was not appropriate

We live in community, and many things affect the community. It is a certainty that [city manager Robb] Corbett and [Pendleton fire chief Mike] Ciraulo clashed before his abrupt retirement. Silence, when an injustice is committed, is complicity and perpetuates complicity.

When Mike Ciraulo was hired as Pendleton fire chief in 2015 he came to us with 30 years of firefighting and emergency medical services experience, as well as 12 years as a Battle Ground, Washington, city councilman and mayor.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts wrote in an email at the time of hiring: "Obviously, such experience is unique, there is tremendous value in having someone who understands governmental expenditure, challenge, political navigation."

Ciraulo came in and restored fire department credibility and led the effort to pass the 2016 Pendleton fire department bond to build a new, and needed, fire station.

What was the reason for Ciraulo's

sudden leaving now in 2018? Simply put, personal issues. The failure appears to lie directly with City Manager Robb Corbett. The city manager was to have reevaluated the chain of command in the first few months of Mike's hire and reestablished that the fire chief would report to the city manager rather than the police chief. This Corbett failed to do, thus laying the groundwork for potential personal conflict between the fire chief and the police chief.

Secondly, there was a difference in management style between the city manager and the fire chief, which the city manager was unwilling to resolve. All of this was cause for someone to admit making a mistake. The city manager admits to no error.

I believe, with others, Mike Ciraulo would have walked the extra mile were that at all possible. Mike's leaving was certainly not an appropriate result no matter what may have happened.

What's done is done, but Ciraulo's departure leaves a real feeling that the city of Pendleton has lost a committed professional. It need not have been so.

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## OTHER VIEWS

### Trump outfoxed in Singapore

It sure looks as if President Donald Trump was hoodwinked in Singapore.

Trump made a huge concession — the suspension of military exercises with South Korea. That's on top of the broader concession of the summit meeting itself, security guarantees he gave North Korea and the legitimacy provided to his counterpart, Kim Jong Un.

Within North Korea, the "very special bond" that Trump claimed to have formed with Kim will be portrayed this way: Kim forced the U.S. president, through his nuclear and missile tests, to accept North Korea as a nuclear equal, to provide security guarantees to North Korea, and to cancel war games with South Korea that the North has protested for decades.

In exchange for these concessions, Trump seems to have won astonishingly little. In a joint statement, Kim merely "reaffirmed" the same commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula that North Korea has made since 1992.

"They were willing to de-nuke," Trump crowed at his news conference after his meetings with Kim. Trump seemed to believe he had achieved some agreement, but the concessions were all his own.

The most remarkable aspect of the joint statement was what it didn't contain. There was nothing about North Korea freezing plutonium and uranium programs, nothing about destroying intercontinental ballistic missiles, nothing about allowing inspectors to return to nuclear sites, nothing about North Korea making a full declaration of its nuclear program, nothing about a timetable, nothing about verification, not even any pledge to permanently halt testing of nuclear weapons or missiles.

Kim seems to have completely out-negotiated Trump, and it's scary that Trump doesn't seem to realize this. For now Trump has much less to show than past negotiators who hammered out deals with North Korea like the 1994 Agreed Framework, which completely froze the country's plutonium program with a rigorous monitoring system.

Trump claimed an "excellent relationship" with Kim, and it certainly is better for the two leaders to be exchanging compliments rather than missiles. In a sense, Trump has eased the tensions that he himself created when he threatened last fall to "totally destroy" North Korea.

There's still plenty we don't know and lots of uncertainty about the future. But



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Comment

for now, the bottom line is that there's no indication that North Korea is prepared to give up its nuclear weapons, and Trump didn't achieve anything remotely as good as the Iran deal, which led Iran to eliminate 98 percent of its enriched uranium.

There was also something frankly weird about a U.S. president savaging Canada's prime minister one day and

then embracing the leader of the most totalitarian country in the world.

Trump praised Kim in the news conference and, astonishingly, even adopted North Korean positions as his own, saying that the U.S. military exercises in the region are "provocative." That's a standard North Korean propaganda line. Likewise, Trump acknowledged that human rights in North Korea constituted a "rough situation," but quickly added that "it's rough in a lot of places, by the way."

Incredibly, Trump told Voice of America that he had this message for the North Korean people: "I think you have somebody that has a great feeling for them. He wants to do right by them and we got along really well."

All this is to say that Kim Jong Un proved the more able negotiator. North Korean government officials have to limit their computer time, because of electricity shortages, and they are international pariahs — yet they are very savvy and shrewd, and they were counseled by one of the smartest Trump handlers of all, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea.

My guess is that Kim flattered Trump, as Moon has, and that Trump simply didn't realize how little he was getting. On my most recent visit to North Korea, officials were asking me subtle questions about the differences in views of Mike Pompeo and Nikki Haley; meanwhile, Trump said he didn't need to do much homework.

Whatever our politics, we should all want Trump to succeed in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and it's good to see that Trump now supports engagement rather than military options. There will be further negotiations, and these may actually freeze plutonium production and destroy missiles. But at least in the first round, Trump seems to have been snookered.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. He has been a columnist for The New York Times since 2001.

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