

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Cam Preus, the outgoing president of Blue Mountain College.

Preus has served admirably, following through on the mission of expanding the college’s reach outside of Pendleton.

We won’t soon forget her resolve after failing to get a bond passed early in her tenure. She took the defeat to heart and spearheaded a listening tour to tap into the needs of residents from all corners of the service district.

It’s hard work to sell a \$23 million bond measure in Eastern Oregon, but through Preus’ diligence and leadership the goal was accomplished. The workforce training center in Boardman, precision irrigated agricultural center in Hermiston and expanded agricultural center in Pendleton are all part of that legacy.

But she didn’t stop after the college collected enough votes to levy the tax. Preus was a regular presence on those campuses and in those communities.

She will now take her talents to the Oregon Community College Association, which represents BMCC

and 16 other Oregon community colleges.

Preus said it was her intention to retire at BMCC, but we don’t fault her for leaping at the opportunity to take her talents to a bigger post.

We look forward to seeing her take the same inclusive approach at the state level that she did in Pendleton, and believe even in a new office she’ll help BMCC continue to grow.

A kick in the pants to hunters who kill things before they know what they are.

The latest victim was Porky the pet pot-bellied pig. A Portland-area archery hunter spotted the domesticated animal on a road near Pilot Rock, mistook him for a wild boar and killed him.

We understand honest mistakes. Identifying wildlife isn’t always easy at a distance. And there are wild boars in Oregon, though none that we know of in Umatilla County.

But a good hunter doesn’t pull the trigger until they know for sure what’s



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

BMCC President Cam Preus (second from right) reads the voting results for their bond measure off of the cell phone during an election-night party in 2015 at BMCC in Pendleton.

in the crosshairs. Shooting an animal out of season or on the protected list is poaching. Shooting a pet is devastating to the owners. And there’s always the possibility that the movement in the brush is a person.

Think twice (at least) before taking the shot.

A tip of the hat to Pat Casey, the Oregon State University baseball manager who announced Thursday he’ll retire from the program after 24 years and three national titles.

College baseball may not have the national attention in the same way football and basketball do, but in Oregon, a state with no Major League franchise, we’re proud to have a team that regularly competes in the upper echelons.

We realize it’s just sports, and sports can often distract from more pressing issues in secondary education. But giving Oregon sports fans something to cheer about in June is a welcome gift that our NBA franchise hasn’t been able to provide in recent years.

OTHER VIEWS

The impotent executive

Amid the Resistance-y funeral rites of John McCain, the president’s latest Twitter rants against his attorney general and the wild White House stories being circulated by Bob Woodward’s latest book, it’s a good time to revisit a familiar and crucial subject. To what extent is Donald Trump an extraordinarily dangerous president whose authoritarian style is constantly enabled by his advisers and his party? Or, alternatively, to what extent is he an extraordinarily weak president, constrained by his appointees and his notional allies at almost every turn?



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a version of the trade wars that he touted on the hustings; he’s disrupted summits with allies and fallen prostrate before Putin; he’s conducted diplomacy with North Korea in a reality-television style; he’s attacked the Mueller investigation constantly and hired surrogates to take the attacks all the way to 11; he’s pursued a family-separation policy at the border that’s exactly the kind of cruelty his campaign promised and that many Republicans promised to restrain.

So is it still fair to describe Trump as a hemmed-in weakling, a Twitter terror but otherwise constrained? My answer is still a qualified yes. The president has torn through a few of the restraints that bind him, and some of the stories that Woodward’s book tells (in which Cabinet officials behave like Nixon’s Cabinet in the waning days of Watergate, doing everything possible to sideline their boss) may belong more to the era of Cohn and McMaster than Larry Kudlow and John Bolton.

But Trump is still extraordinarily weak. Some of that weakness is invisible because we simply take it for granted; it’s just part of the scenery, for instance, that this White House has no legislative agenda, no chance of advancing any policy priority on the hill, barely two years into the president’s first term.

Some of the weakness shows up in his attempts to play the tough guy. The child-separation

policy, for instance, was abandoned scant days after it was publicized, because the president lacked the support within his own party and within his own White House to actually see a draconian measure through.

Some of the weakness is implicit in Trump’s attempts to reassert himself against restraints imposed by his allies or advisers. The rants against Jeff Sessions for failing to be his wingman are at once a dereliction of normal presidential duties and an admission that the Senate won’t let him replace his own Cabinet officials. The supine behavior beside Putin was at once a national embarrassment and a reminder that Trump’s obvious desire to be pals with Russia has no discernible influence on his administration’s actual Russia policy.

And some of the weakness is presumably visible only behind the scenes and won’t be revealed until the next tell-all book, when it’s Bolton and Kudlow’s turn to leak — though we get tastes already, as in *The New York Times*’ recent account of how Bolton maneuvered successfully behind the scenes to shield the NATO summit’s final communiqué from his boss’s aggressive NATO skepticism.

All of this points to the case that Trump-skeptical Republican lawmakers can still offer, if pressed, in defense of their own approach to this strange presidency. Yes, they would say, the

president is erratic, dangerous, unfit and bigoted. But notwithstanding certain columnist fantasies you can’t impeach somebody for all that — or for pretending to be a dictator on Twitter, for that matter. And by the standards of any normal presidency we still have him contained.

Sure, the trade wars are bad, but every president launches at least one dumb trade war. We stopped the child migrant business, his other immigration moves are just stepped-up enforcement of the law, we’ve stepped back from the brink (however bizarrely) with the North Koreans, we’re still sanctioning the Russians.

Meanwhile he’s nominated the most establishment Republican jurist possible to the Supreme Court, and we won’t even let him fire his own attorney general, let alone Bob Mueller.

Look, we’re not enabling an American Putin here. We’re just baby-sitting the most impotent chief executive we’ll ever see, and locking in some good judges before the Democrats sweep us out.

I could continue this ventriloquization, but instead I’ll just point to its most substantial flaw: It assumes that Trumpian weakness will never breed Trumpian desperation, and that this president will be content with his impotence even in the face of a Mueller indictment of someone in his inner circle or a Democratic House’s investigation that threatens disgrace and ruin for his family. It assumes that Trump will never, even in a desperate hour, put his party’s attempts to contain him gently to a firmer sort of test.

It’s understandable that Republicans want to make this assumption. It’s understandable that they want to manage their way through this presidency, to prod and press and redirect rather than confronting and resisting. And so far that strategy has worked out better than one might reasonably have feared.

But we still have two years and four months left of this administration. And before it ends, I suspect the harder test will come.

■
Ross Douthat is an Op-Ed columnist for the New York Times.

YOUR VIEWS

Don’t melt ICE

Recent protests to abolish Immigration and Custom Enforcement demonstrate again how low the leftist liberals — and Hollywood elites — are willing to go, and how unbalanced they have become. It is downright scary to imagine the terrible consequences of not having ICE in place to try and have some degree of control over who enters our country.

What they really do is: stop human trafficking (big business to the cartels); find and prevent terrorists from entering our country; intercept large shipments of illegal firearms trying to enter the USA; stop tons of illegal drugs from entering the country; and arrest and deport illegal criminals who are already inside the U.S., along with other important responsibilities.

Trump inherited poor immigration policy left over by several former presidents. Now there are hundreds of thousands of asylum and refugee cases pending in the courts, which will take years to be tried. That is why President George W. Bush invented the infamous “catch and release” program, which allows these illegal immigrants just to escape into the population — with the “promise” they will return to the court several years later when their case finally comes up? Sure.

Did you know ICE currently has to maintain more than 40,000 beds worth of people who crossed the border illegally? That costs the American taxpayer at least \$126/day for every person housed, about \$46,000 each per year.

Big business/big ag are responsible for much of the illegal immigration and these businesses have not been as responsible as they should about verifying identity of all their illegal employees.

In Dallas alone, in the first four months of 2017, arrests of illegal immigrants increased by 40 percent to 4,969. This is thanks to Trump’s crackdown on immigration policy.

I urge the public to not buy into the fake news and liberal protests that are demanding ICE be abolished. Don’t melt ICE!

David Burns
Pendleton

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