

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH Publisher KATHRYN B. BROWN Owner DANIEL WATTENBURGER Managing Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Ghost of campaign past revisits Walden

By STEVE FORRESTER
EO Media Group

It is amusing that Democrats mounted a “Where’s Walden?” campaign over the Labor Day weekend, targeting U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon.

The congressman has come under fire for his habit of holding semi-private, under-the radar appearances in his district, as opposed



STEVE FORRESTER
Comment

to more traditional town hall gatherings open to all. The activist group Indivisible held rallies in protest, saying it’s been more than 500 days since Walden last held a town hall meeting.

The tactic is also ironic, because the Republican who won the same Eastern Oregon seat in 1980 used a similar strategy.

That candidate — a Willamette Valley newspaper owner named Denny Smith — ran television ads that depicted the Post Office box of the incumbent Congressman Al Ullman — his virtual Oregon residence.

Formerly a Baker City real estate broker, Ullman had been the 2nd Congressional District representative for 24 years. He rose to the rank of chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. From that platform in 1980, he mused aloud about a federal value-added tax. Smith seized on that

concept as tantamount to a national sales tax. The sales tax is anathema to Oregon voters.

Unlike Ullman, Greg Walden sees his Democratic challenger Jamie McLeod-Skinner coming. But he is carrying a load. The yokes around Walden’s neck are twofold: One is the colorless political persona he has built; the second is Donald Trump. Walden’s great asset is the Republican margin of registered voters in the sprawling 2nd District, America’s seventh-largest.

It is an exceedingly long-odds bet that McLeod-Skinner will upset Walden in the November election. But she has been working hard at connecting with far-flung voters.

As a Washington correspondent in the 1980s, I covered Congressman Smith and I met his aide, Walden. I remember vividly the week when two Oregon political novices — Smith and Ron Wyden — showed up in Washington during the spring of 1980. A handicapper would quickly discern that both of these guys, in different ways, had the drive and personal magnetism to be serious contenders. Wyden took out the incumbent Bob Duncan in the Democratic primary and Smith took out Ullman.

The current issue of Portland Monthly carries an article titled “The Strange Rise of Greg Walden, Oregon’s Only Republican Congressman.” Nigel Duara describes Walden’s “... thick glasses, and familiar



EO file photo

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden presents the Nobel Laureate awards to Rep. Greg Smith at the Hermiston Distinguished Citizens Award Banquet on Feb. 21 in Hermiston.

air of hey-how-are-ya folksiness.” Writes Duara: “If you walked into an H&R Block looking for last-minute tax help, you would be thrilled to see such a figure.”

For all of his 20 years in the House, Walden resembles the House staffer I routinely contacted decades ago. As Duara evokes, Walden is there to help you. One cannot imagine Walden expressing outrage or disgust. If Walden has mastered one technique, it is the art of saying nothing in a convincing manner.

He also has been absent at critical moments. When Klamath County was on the verge of an historic compromise on water, Walden acceded to right-wing sentiment and the deal collapsed. And it was Sen. Wyden, not Walden, who patiently

pushed the Forest Service’s economic shot in the arm for Grant County — the 10-year stewardship contract at Malheur National Forest.

If Walden has painted a target on his back, it is health care. The 2nd District is dotted with small rural hospitals that have benefited from Obamacare. When Walden moved the repeal of Obamacare out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee that he chairs, he enabled a mortal threat to those Eastern Oregon hospitals. This was a congressman at odds with his district’s self-interest and welfare.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Daily Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

OTHER VIEWS

For Democrats, believing is enough

What is perhaps most extraordinary about the all-out war over the Brett Kavanaugh nomination is how little the public knows about the accusations of Christine Blasey Ford, the woman who claims that at a high-school party in 1982, when she was 15, a drunken



BYRON YORK
Comment

17-year-old Kavanaugh forced her onto a bed, tried to undress her, and, when she tried to scream, covered her mouth with his hand.

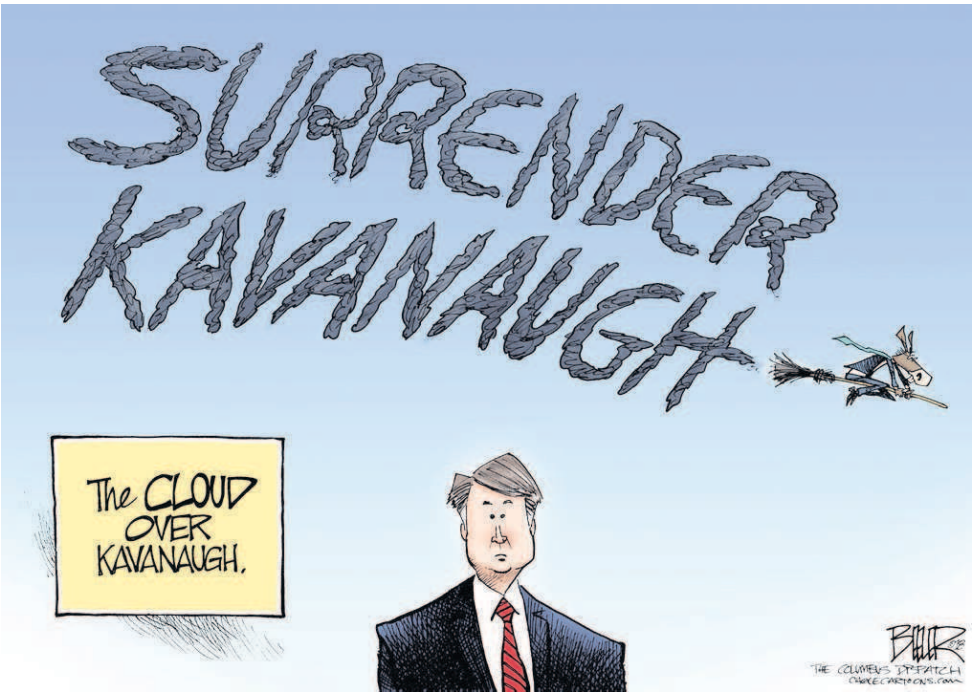
The problem with Ford’s allegation is that she has produced no contemporaneous evidence to support it. The Washington Post, which interviewed Ford, reported

that she “told no one of the incident in any detail until 2012, when she was in couples therapy with her husband.” That was 30 years after the alleged event. (Whether the phrase “in detail” has any significance is impossible to know — did she tell someone in a vague manner? — since the Post article is the only public information about Ford’s account.)

Ford reportedly named a number of people who she said attended the party. None has so far corroborated her story. Recently the Senate Judiciary Committee reached Ford classmate and friend Leland Ingham Keyser, who was said to have attended. “Ms. Keyser does not know Mr. Kavanaugh and she has no recollection of ever being at a party or gathering where he was present, with, or without, Dr. Ford,” Keyser’s lawyer wrote to the committee.

Kavanaugh, of course, has strongly denied Ford’s accusation. “I have never done anything like what the accuser describes — to her or to anyone,” he said.

Contemporaneous accounts of the matter, either from people who were at the



party or people Ford might have discussed it with shortly after, would be enormously valuable in assessing her allegations. That’s why Ford supporters were so excited when a former classmate of Ford’s, Cristina King Miranda, wrote on social media, “The incident DID happen, many of us heard about it in school.” Inundated with questions from reporters, King quickly backtracked, telling NPR, “That it happened or not, I have no idea.”

When Ford did tell her story, to the therapist in 2012, there were some discrepancies between the therapist’s notes and Ford’s present account. It’s unclear whether those discrepancies are significant, since all the public has is the Post story.

So what do Democrats do, with so little to go on? For some, the answer is faith.

“I believe Dr. Ford,” said Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a member of the Judiciary Committee.

“I believe Dr. Ford,” said Democratic

Sen. Mazie Hirono, also a member of the Judiciary Committee.

“We believe Dr. Ford,” said Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, also a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Why do they believe? Democratic lawmakers explain that they don’t think a woman would come forward in such a politically charged atmosphere and expose herself to criticism if she wasn’t telling the truth. They say they’re not disturbed by the 30-year gap in Ford’s story because some victims of sexual assault wait years to reveal what happened to them. And they say flatly that women should be believed when they make an allegation.

But the fact remains: no contemporaneous evidence. And not much since then, either. Maybe the coming days will bring some new information, but for now, Democrats are dedicated to trying to stop the Kavanaugh nomination on the basis of a charge without verification.

Now, out of the Democrats’ faith comes a new argument: It doesn’t matter whether Ford’s charge is true. It is credible. And that is enough, because even a credible allegation — no word on who defines what that means — disqualifies Kavanaugh for a seat on the Supreme Court.

“The truth is, I believe her,” Democratic Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said. “She has a credible allegation against Judge Kavanaugh.”

Some academic Ford supporters lent their scholarly credentials to the credible-is-enough argument. “The existence of credible allegations against Judge Kavanaugh should be disqualifying,” wrote Cardozo Law School professor Kate Shaw in The New York Times. “If members of the Senate conclude that a credible accusation of sexual misconduct has been made against Judge Kavanaugh, that should be enough to disqualify him.”

In The Atlantic, Brookings Institution scholar Benjamin Wittes took the argument to its illogical extreme. Because of the political sensitivity of the situation, Wittes wrote, Kavanaugh “cannot ... seek to discredit a woman who purports to have suffered a sexual assault at his hands.”

“Even if (Kavanaugh) believes himself innocent, even if he is innocent,” Wittes concluded, “the better part of valor is to get out now.” That is, to withdraw his nomination.

So there it is: Ford’s supporters believe in her because they believe in her. They think a credible allegation is enough to disqualify Kavanaugh. And even if that allegation is not, in fact, true — even if Kavanaugh is innocent — he is still disqualified. In the current battle, Kavanaugh’s opposition is essentially faith-based, trying to create an environment in which there is no way he can win.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

YOUR VIEWS

Hypocrisy of the left

Just when I can’t believe that the current radical left can’t disgrace itself more, they not only disgrace the once great party of JFK but they disgrace the entire country with their embarrassing actions. It is bad enough the they have done nothing but try to over turn the elections of 2016, but now, at any cost of civilized behavior, they are trying to destroy the life of a nomination for the Supreme Court of the U.S.

It is sad that the hatred of President Trump has consumed the liberal left so much that they will use sewer politics to derail anything supported by him. Claiming, in a last minute smear of the candidate for the court, that Judge Kavanaugh sexually assaulted someone 35 years ago and is guilty unless he can prove he is not is anti-American values!

I would like to know where the same members of the radical left are on the assaults by both Sen. Cory Booker and former DNC chairman Keith Ellison.

Booker has admitted to assaulting a woman 18 years ago when he was a teenager, Ellison’s ex-girlfriend claims to have proof, including a video, of him abusing her and her son.

One can only hope that even members of the left can see there is a double standard here but that may be asking too much.

Oregon’s two senators, and governor, are part of this shaming of the processes used in this country. All have done everything they can to discourage civility

in politics. They opposed the nomination of an honorable man, Ryan Bounds, to the 9th circus of appeals purely because he is conservative.

Until the people wake up to this push by the left toward making this a socialist country, the current sewer politics of the left will continue. Only at the ballot box can the people that want to keep America a free nation remove these radicals. Vote for America and stop the sewer of the left!

John Harvey
Stanfield

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.