

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Much to learn from every veteran

There are more than 300,000 veterans in Oregon. That's about 7 percent of the state's population.

They are not all from the same military branch or the same war.

They are not all the same age, gender or ethnicity.

They do not all share the same political, religious or philosophical ideology.

Some were drafted, others chose to enlist.

Some made it into a career, others moved back into civilian life.

Some came home with deep physical or psychological wounds. Some never saw a battlefield.

But every man and woman who served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard was willing to put their life on the line for this country. That's a big deal, and it's right that we have a day dedicated to

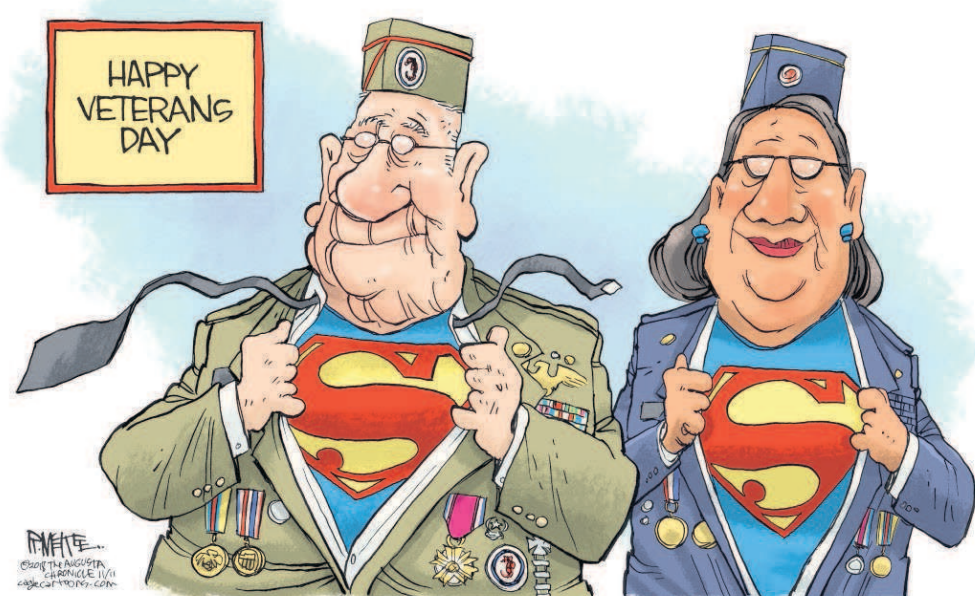
honoring their service.

It's even more critical in 2018, as we have less regular contact with veterans than we did a generation ago. The first and second world wars, Korea and Vietnam took young men from nearly every family and home to fight overseas. The number of returning veterans today is far fewer, making it easier to overlook their service. Our all-volunteer service has made active military personnel a less visible part of our society and their sacrifice no longer equally touches a cross-section of American households.

That's dangerous — some families bear the brunt of the burden while others remain unaffected.

It also leads us to forget the true power and importance of the flag, the symbol of this country and all the sacrifice required to maintain it.

Our disconnect from military service



allows patriotism to become a game or a contest instead of an honor and duty.

It allows us to overlook the actual human beings and instead focus on the artifice.

It's part of the reason there are an estimated 1,300 homeless veterans in Oregon this Veterans Day while we spend our energy debating whether kneeling in front of the flag is an acceptable form of protest.

It's important to listen to veterans,

and not just to the war stories. They give us real perspective on what freedom means, and what it costs.

It's also important to realize not all veterans are the same. They each bring a unique perspective on service and country, and while they're united in their sacrifice we appreciate that they have different ways of thinking.

This is our country's 100th Veterans Day. We're grateful to those who have stepped up and thank them for that service.

OTHER VIEWS

What the working class is still trying to tell us

I was ready for massive Democratic turnout for the election on Tuesday. But I was surprised how massive the Republican turnout was in response.

The Republicans who flooded to the polls weren't college-educated suburbanites. Those people voted for Democrats this year.

They weren't tax-cut fanatics. Half of the Republican members of the House Ways and Means Committee either left Congress, ran for other offices or were defeated.

They weren't even small-government Republicans. The same red states that elected conservatives to office also — in Nebraska, Idaho and Utah — approved ballot initiatives to expand Medicaid. The same red states that elected conservatives also approved initiatives — in Arkansas and Missouri — to raise the minimum wage.

These were high school-educated, working-class Republicans.

A lot of us pundits said Donald Trump should run a positive campaign bragging about all the economic growth. But Trump ran another American carnage campaign. That's because American life still feels like carnage to many.

This is still a country in which nearly 20 percent of prime-age American men are not working full time. This is still a country in which only 37 percent of adults expect children to be better off financially than they are. This is still a country in

which millions of new jobs are through "alternative work arrangements" like contracting or consulting — meaning no steady salary, no predictable hours and no security.

Working-class voters tried to send a message in 2016, and they are still trying to send it. The crucial question is whether America's leaders will listen and respond.

One way to start doing that is to read Oren Cass' absolutely brilliant new book, "The Once and Future Worker." The first part of the book is about how we in the educated class have screwed up labor markets in ways that devalued work and made it harder for people in the working class to find a satisfying job.

Part of the problem is misplaced priorities. For the last several decades, American economic policy has been pinioned on one goal: expanding gross domestic product. We measure GDP. We talk incessantly about economic growth. Between 1975 and 2015, American GDP increased threefold. But what good is that growth if it means that a thick slice of America is discarded for efficiency reasons?

Similarly, for the last several decades, American welfare policy has focused on consumption — giving money to the poor so they can consume more. Yet we have not successfully helped poor people produce more so that they can take control

of their own lives. We now spend more than \$20,000 a year in means-tested government spending per person in poverty. And yet the average poverty rate for 2000 to 2015 was higher than it was for 1970 to 1985.

"What if people's ability to produce matters more than how much they can consume?" Cass asks.

The bulk of his book is a series of ideas for how we can reform labor markets.

For example, Cass supports academic tracking. Right now, we have a one-size-fits-all education system. Everybody should go to college. The problem is that roughly one-fifth of our students fail to graduate high school in four years; roughly one-fifth take no further schooling after high school; roughly one-fifth drop out of college; roughly one-fifth get a job that doesn't require the degree they just earned; and roughly one-fifth actually navigate the path the system is built around — from school to career.

We build a broken system, and then ask people to try to fit into the system instead of tailoring a system around people's actual needs.

Cass suggests that we instead do what nearly every other affluent nation does: Let students, starting in high school, decide whether they want to be on an apprenticeship track or an academic track. Vocational and technical schools are ubiquitous across the developed world, and yet that model is mostly rejected here.

Cass also supports worker co-ops. Today, we have an old, adversarial labor

union model that is inappropriate for the gig economy and uninteresting to most private-sector workers. But co-ops, drawing on more successful models used in several European nations, could represent workers in negotiations, train and retrain workers as they moved from firm to firm and build a safety net for periods of unemployment. Shopping for a worker co-op would be more like buying a gym membership. Each co-op would be a community and service provider to address a range of each worker's needs.

Cass has many other proposals — wage subsidies, immigration reforms. But he's really trying to put work, and the dignity of work, at the center of our culture and concern. In the 1970s and 1980s, he points out, the Emmy Award-winning TV shows were about blue-collar families: "All in the Family," "Taxi," "Cheers," "The Wonder Years." Now the Emmy-winning shows are mostly about white-collar adults working in Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, New York and Washington.

We in the college-educated sliver have built a culture, an economy and a political system that are all about ourselves. It's time to pass labor market reforms that will make life decent for everybody.

David Brooks has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and he is currently a commentator on "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer."

DAVID BROOKS
Comment

YOUR VIEWS

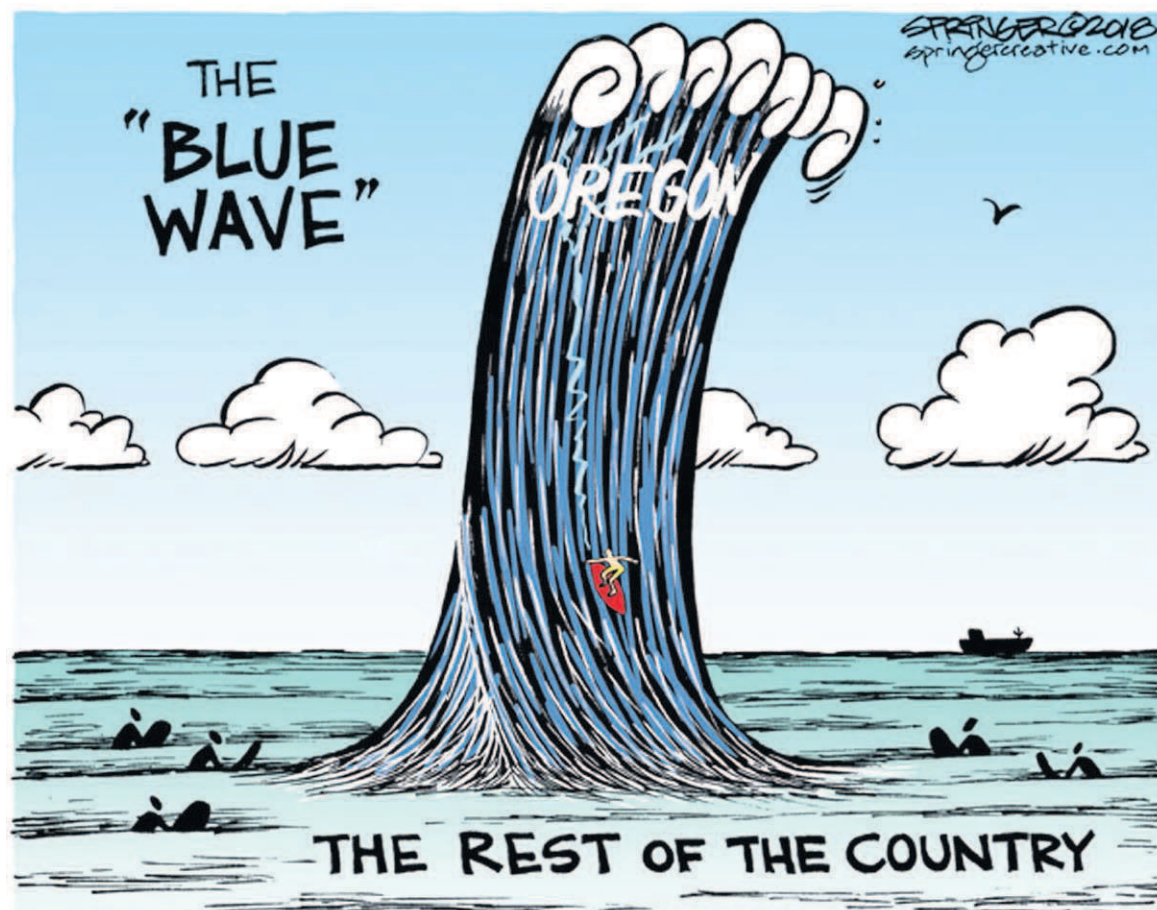
Positivity is the key to building a better future

Divisive attitudes and actions are tearing our country apart. We have to look closely at our actions and words to begin building a consensus again that includes all citizens.

Your political party of choice is but a flag bearer for the politicians who run for office. It shouldn't interfere with civic responsibility and community interactions, yet in our current state of publicity of any and all things ridiculous, we have developed cracks within our society that both elephants and donkeys can fall through. A recent example was the photo by E.J. Harris with the man sitting in his truck holding a sign that said "Vote Republican." That is fine and not inflammatory, but then he is quoted and "poof," the flames of divide are fanned by his words against Democrats.

We have always had deep differences of political beliefs, but now we must frame them in terms of "anti" the other party. That says nothing positive about the party you support, it only shows the divisive state of mind that is at the forefront of our society.

I think it would be good if people only promoted their candidates and political beliefs with positive statements on their behalf and dropped the need to criticize. It has become redundant and quite boring. We can do better and we must do better for the future of a civilized nation.

Colleen Blackwood
Pendleton

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