

O EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

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OUR VIEW

Savings exaggerated in annual clock switchover

If the question could be resolved via citizens’ initiatives, there’s little doubt about the outcome: Pacific Northwest states would follow California in supporting a move toward year-round daylight saving time.

In November 2018, 60 percent of California voters said yes to doing away with switching the time in spring and fall. The legislatures in Washington and Oregon each may consider bills in their current sessions that would seek the same result.

A 1969 hit by rock group Chicago asked, “Does anybody really know what time it is? Does anybody really care?” The answer, clearly, is yes we do.

Nearly everyone agrees the time change is disagreeable — especially in the spring, when we lose a full hour from a weekend. It can leave a person feeling discombobulated for several days in a sort of low-grade version of jet lag. There even is evidence suggesting we experience health problems and have more accidents in the days immediately following the spring



EO file photo
The centennial bell and clock tower at McKenzie Park in Hermiston.

switchover.

Of course the fall change is more popular, offering an extra hour over

2019 TIME CHANGES

Daylight saving time 2019 will begin at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 10
It ends at 2 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 3

the weekend to spend however you choose.

All this is a fairly modern and artificial situation — not that we can get entirely out of it now. There weren’t rigid times until railways required agreed-upon schedules to avoid having two trains racing toward one another on the same track. Most of us now are required to adhere to a common time in order to conduct business, attend classes and make it to dentist appointments. In other ways, we are becoming somewhat more unmoored from time. Thanks to digital video recorders, fewer of us are bound to TV network programming schedules. Those who work at home or on the internet are always on the job, but with flexibility about starting and quitting times.

Now that we’re fully in the modern age, where a train’s every movement

is logged in a database and shopping can be done any hour of the day or night online or at a 24/7 retail location — it’s a good time to consider why we keep hassling with the manual change.

Here in America’s northern latitudes, daylight saving time brings with it the luxury of barbecues and hikes in the woods into the evening. It may be this emotional component that leans more people toward adopting that time, when in fact year-round standard time might make nearly as much sense.

It turns out that switching to year-round daylight saving time isn’t a matter of a simple legislative or initiative process. Reporting California’s vote, the online news source Vox cited a story saying that while federal law allows states to opt for 12-month standard time, Congress would have to OK a switch to permanent daylight saving time.

Nevertheless, it is worth encouraging our legislators to advance this change — to “spring forward” forever.

OTHER VIEWS

Wyden keeping his focus on Oregon

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Most Americans live in states where marijuana is legal, either for recreational use or only for medical purposes. Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden is refreshingly candid about whether Congress will eventually follow the lead of those 33 states.

“It is just a matter of time of time before we get this passed,” he told the *Register-Guard* editorial board in a far-ranging discussion last week. “It’s not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when.’”

The problem is that “when” is unlikely to arrive soon. A strong pro-legalization vote in the Democrat-controlled House could add pressure on the Senate. But Republican senators, who hold the majority in that chamber, are not as open to marijuana legalization as they were to non-psychoactive hemp.

It took Wyden years to win Senate support for hemp, which has a long history in America and predominantly is grown for industrial purposes.

Wyden again introduced federal legislation this month — a Senate bill aptly titled S. 420 — that would decriminalize marijuana and allow it to be regulated and taxed like alcohol. Oregon Rep. Earl Blumenauer is sponsoring similar legislation, H.R. 420, in the U.S. House.

Last year, Democrat Wyden teamed with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell to pass legislation that legalized hemp production, allowed hemp researchers to get federal grants and opened the door for hemp growers to use conventional banking practices.

The two senators recently wrote to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, urging him to expeditiously implement the hemp legislation. Hundreds of Oregon hemp farmers will benefit.

Meanwhile, Congress and the federal government still

officially consider marijuana to be as dangerous as heroin, a notion that has been dis-proved for decades. As a consequence, marijuana businesses that are legal under Oregon law have difficulty obtaining regular banking and other financial services.

On other topics: Wyden continues to lobby the Federal Communications Commission for a three-digit phone number — similar to 911 for police, fire and medical emergencies — to provide suicide prevention and mental health support.

It is an excellent idea but only if the number immediately connects the caller with a mental health and suicide-prevention counselor, instead of merely being a referral service.

Lane County will benefit if Wyden and Republican Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho can make permanent the Secure Rural Schools program. Although often teetering on its last political legs, the money has helped offset the loss of timber revenue for rural counties, especially in Western Oregon.

Funding alone will not solve Oregon’s dismal high school graduation rate. We think congressional intervention seems necessary. We would like to see Wyden and Congress tie funding to the importance of such benchmarks as third-grade reading levels.

Wyden deserves credit for helping write and win congressional approval of massive legislation that protects a number of wild lands and rivers in Oregon and other states. As with much of his work, it was a bipartisan endeavor.

Next up should be added protections for Oregon’s Rogue River.

Unlike many of his Senate colleagues, Wyden is not running for president. Kudos to him for staying focused on Oregon, including holding town halls in all 36 counties each year.

OTHER VIEWS

What’s left of the center-left?

Since at least the middle of the Obama era, all the energy and activity and creativity in the Democratic coalition has been with people pushing the party away from any kind of centrism — with the journals and zines that have resuscitated something they call socialism, with the activists trying to impose the college-campus style of cultural liberalism on the wider country, with the feminists and intersectional types and Bernie Bros who



ROSS DOUTHAT
COMMENT

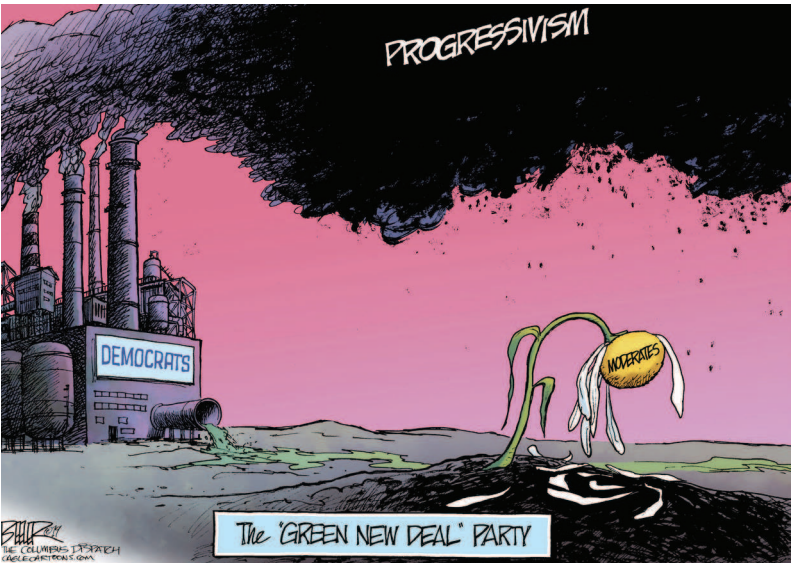
clash and feud and sometimes absolutely hate one another, but still share a common “to the left, march” purpose.

Now that energy has transformed Democratic politics. We have a swelling Democratic 2020 field in which a capital-S Socialist is arguably the front-runner, most of the declared candidates are offering maximal ideological ambition, and the last Democratic vice president is hesitating to run in part because of all his long-gone compromises with conservatism.

In a memorable Twitter thread, center-left economist Brad DeLong argued that the time has come for centrists to become, in effect, junior partners in the Democratic coalition, working to sharpen and smarten up the new socialism rather than seeking Republican partners and bipartisan reforms.

But there is also something missing in DeLong’s self-criticism, a blind spot common to the contemporary center-left, which points to one reason a “durable governing coalition” may continue to elude the Democratic Party’s grasp.

One way to distill the center-left failure that DeLong describes is this: Over the last 15 years, the center-left establishment in the United States separated itself from the Democratic base on two major issues — its support for the Iraq War in the early 2000s, and its support for a bipartisan “grand bargain” on fiscal issues in the early-to-middle Obama years. The first separation was a disaster; the



second one was a mistake. And neither ultimately helped the Democratic coalition win elections.

Another way to distill the failure is to say that in the last decade or so the center-left attempted a series of policy compromises — Obamacare instead of single-payer, cap-and-trade instead of a Green New Deal, modest upper-bracket tax increases instead of big attempts to soak the rich — and then discovered that the Republican Party was either still too far away ideologically or too much of an internally divided mess to make a lasting deal on any issue.

Both of these accounts fit DeLong’s narrative; both make a case for letting the further-left parts of the Democratic coalition try leadership instead, and seeking compromises between socialists and liberals.

But consider a third narrative, in which the center-left’s signal political failure was that it never really sought to preserve a cultural centrism, which meant over time that its party’s approach to social issues has been dictated more and more completely by the left. In this story the political success of Bill Clinton reflected not only his compromises with Republicans on taxes and spending, but also his ability to infuse a centrist liberalism with reassuring nods to various kinds of moderate cultural conservatism.

If Clinton had matched this cultural conservatism with decency in his private life, Al Gore would have won re-election as his heir,

and the larger story of the center-left might have been entirely different. But instead, from the mid-2000s onward, the leftward flank of the Democratic Party looked at the country’s changing demographics and growing social liberalism and decided that Clinton’s compromises with cultural conservatism weren’t as politically necessary as they had been (which was true), and that therefore they were free to become increasingly ideologically maximalist on everything touching gender or race or sexuality or immigration (which was not true).

Because the country as a whole has also shifted left since 2000, that kind of writing-off will not prevent the Democrats from winning elections; it probably won’t prevent them from beating Donald Trump. But it will stand in the way of any dramatic left-of-center consolidation, any kind of more-than-temporary Democratic governance. And if the center-left feels itself irrelevant in an age of socialist ambition, then taking up the task of rebuilding a cultural center, and a Democratic Party capable of claiming it, seems like the task that might actually be suited to the times.

Which suggests that to reckon with the possibility that making liberalism a pseudo-church might be a problem, not an aspiration, we need a very different center-left from the one surrendering today.

Ross Douthat is a columnist for the New York Times.