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OUR VIEW

Walden off the wall

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden has become very good at walking a fine line during his town hall meetings in Eastern Oregon. A tight-rope, even.

He is adept at reading the room, picking his steps to find a unifying message and staying on balance even as some constituents attempt to knock him off.

In 2017 he was questioned hard for his support of repealing the Affordable Care Act, an attempt that ultimately failed in the U.S. Senate. Now the pressure is coming from the other direction as he split with the Republican president and much of the party on the emergency wall declaration, a stand that also may ultimately fail. He admitted as much during the town hall in Hermiston on March 15.

In both cases, Walden has defended his position as being the best for the United States.

When it comes to President Trump's emergency declaration to secure funding for a border wall, we commend Walden for his commitment to keeping executive powers in check. It's a task we hope every member of the U.S. House takes seriously, though in general we see little appetite for it



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden congratulates Pendleton High School senior Kirk Liscom on being accepted into the United States Naval Academy during a town hall meeting Friday in Hermiston.

when the member's party matches the president's.

The resolution was to nullify the emergency declaration on the grounds that the funding hadn't been approved or appropriated by Congress. As Walden put it, no one knows exactly where the funding will come from, and that's not only bad policy but an

ugly precedent.

Walden's vote — along with 12 other Republicans in the House and 12 in the Senate — wasn't enough to override Trump's veto, which he delivered shortly before Walden spoke to the audience in Hermiston.

One constituent grilled Walden on why he would turn his back on

the president. Walden was careful in his answer, but ultimately admitted he disagreed with the president and, frankly, the constituent.

Near the end of the meeting, another constituent stood up to tell Walden his explanation had changed his mind on the matter. Count that as a win for any politician.

Politics and personalities aside, we hope this clash drives change in executive power and privilege. It is imperative that presidents have the ability to make fast decisions in a true emergency, when Congress is not in session.

Trump failed to secure the funding when both the House and Senate were in Republican control. He again failed to secure the funding through negotiation with Democrats, even after a 35-day government shutdown. Testing his presidential powers is not a surprising move for Trump, who advocates for fewer checks on his power.

Congress must show resolve. No president should be allowed to go around the proper and democratic channels to further their pet beliefs, whether it's border security, climate change, gun control or any other campaign promise.

YOUR VIEWS

Lay responsibility where it's due

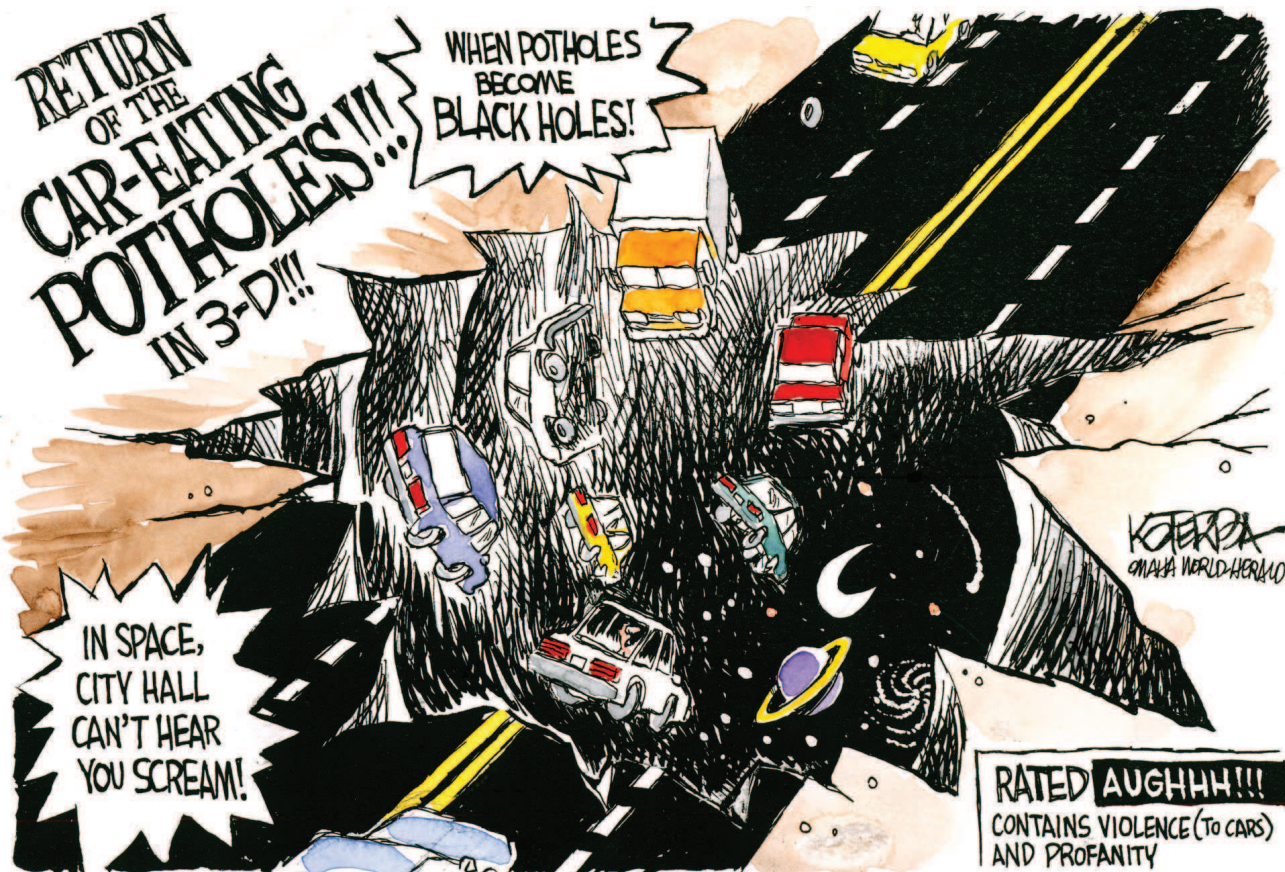
Regarding the March 19 column, "Playing the Blame Game," I'd like to offer an alternative to the word "blame": responsibility. While it doesn't lend itself as well to catchy headlines, it's an apt way to frame the conversation.

The actions of the shooter in New Zealand (it's not necessary to name him unless one is trying to thumb their nose at the survivors and officials who specifically requested that he not be named) didn't happen in a vacuum. The rhetoric of our public officials absolutely shapes our environment — and the words of world leaders travel the world, even to the "opposite side."

By definition, leaders are people we look up to. They have a responsibility to call out white nationalism and white supremacy for what it is. It's not an idea that "many fine people" on one side of a balanced argument hold. It's not "less than sensitive candor." It's racism and religious intolerance — neither of which are American values. Both need to be condemned clearly and unequivocally. It's not about being "politically correct," it's about being a decent human being. Doing anything less creates an atmosphere where people with white nationalist and white supremacist views feel emboldened.

Yes, the shooter is responsible for his actions. But each of us is responsible for helping create a civil society that encourages the better actions of its citizens. Standing up against racism and religious intolerance isn't a "myopic narrative," it's something we should demand of our leaders and of ourselves.

Roberta Lavadour
Pendleton



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OTHER VIEWS

Truth comes to light in Bezos spectacle

Sometimes stories are simpler than they're made out to be. That appears to be the case with Jeff Bezos.

When the National Enquirer reported that Bezos, the Amazon founder who is the world's richest man, was having an extramarital affair and had sent racy texts, including photos of his penis, to his girlfriend, Bezos assembled a high-priced legal and PR team to mount an aggressive defense.

All of a sudden, sympathetic commentators began suggesting Bezos had been hacked. There was word that a "government entity" had gotten hold of the texts and photos. There was dark speculation of international intrigue, that Saudi Arabia might have used the Enquirer to target Bezos, who owns *The Washington Post*, in retaliation for the *Post*'s coverage of the murder of the columnist and Saudi regime critic Jamal Khashoggi. And of course, President Trump played some sort of behind-the-scenes role.

Bezos orchestrated it all, using his security consultant to feed information to his newspa-



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per, and also writing a much-discussed personal statement published on Medium.

"This statement that (Bezos) has released tonight is absolutely extraordinary," MSNBC's Lawrence O'Donnell said on Feb. 7, "and I think it is a gigantic moment, actually in this history of our digital communication, which everyone has known has been at risk for quite a while, that any one of us could be hacked. We could have private things revealed through stolen emails, stolen texts, that sort of thing. And here is someone who stands up and says, I'm not going to take it anymore."

"The Saudi connection aspect of the allegation from Jeff Bezos," said CNN's Chris Cuomo, also on Feb. 8. "Bezos says ... that you had (National Enquirer chief David) Pecker go to the White House with a Saudi guy that he was trying to raise money from. The dinner was a reward from the president. The Khashoggi reporting that *The Washington Post* did would really bother the Saudis, the Saudis wound up giving Pecker the

money. Pecker's now going after Bezos, who owns *The Washington Post*, maybe this has something to do with the Saudis, maybe even the president."

And so on. The Bezos team spun quite a story. But holes quickly appeared in their handiwork.

In early March, *The New York Times* published a detailed look at how the long-married Bezos came to be involved with his girlfriend, former Los Angeles local news anchor Lauren Sanchez. As the two got together, the paper reported, Sanchez was not shy about sharing intimate details of the relationship with her friends.

"By last year, they were having an affair," the *Times* wrote. "Three people in Ms. Sanchez's extended social circle said she was giddy and in love, showing amorous texts to a number of Brentwood and Beverly Hills moms."

Sanchez was not particularly discreet in handling the revealing texts and photos Bezos sent to her. And then there was, in the *Times*' description, Sanchez's "fame-hungry brother-manager," Michael Sanchez, described as a "loose cannon" and an "incorrigible gossip even in a town full of them."

Now, *The Wall Street Journal* reports that Michael Sanchez, "a talent agent who has managed television pundits and reality-show judges," sold the Bezos texts to the Enquirer for \$200,000.

Imagine that. Mogul sends deeply private texts to gossipy L.A. girlfriend who has gossipy, fame-hungry brother, and somehow it gets out! No Saudis required.

It is not unusual for men caught sexting with women not their wives to claim they have been hacked, or that their texts have been stolen. Remember that Anthony Weiner tried the same thing. But few have the resources of Jeff Bezos, and few could rely on so many media commentators to spread the story.

At the same time, the Bezos spectacle also attracted the attention of more serious journalists, who found out that the real Bezos story is much simpler than all the Saudi speculation. It is, in fact, an old story, of people acting foolishly in the course of an extramarital affair. All the money in the world couldn't change that.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.