

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
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OwnerANDREW CUTLER
EditorWYATT HAUPT JR.
News EditorJADE McDOWELL
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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to this week's announcement that the state's unemployment rate fell below 4%.

There are always plenty of provisos, and statistics can mean a lot of things to a lot of different people, but the news recently about the state's unemployment rate is a welcome sign as the new year approaches.

It means, essentially, that a lot of people in the state are working and that should mean good things for the future.

The economy is humming, apparently. The unemployment rate for the nation is 3.5%, a historic low.

The key question — as always — is how long will such significant unemployment lows continue, but for now, we all should stop and take a collective breath. The nation, in terms of employment and the economy, is in a good place now.

A tip of the hat to all of the individuals now in the running to replace U.S. Rep. Greg Walden.

Walden announced earlier this fall that he will not run for re-election for the 2nd Congressional District, which covers a huge swath of Oregon, including Eastern Oregon.

Recently, former Union County Commissioner Jack Howard threw his hat into the ring for the position. He joins fellow GOP candidates Jason Atkinson, Cliff Bentz and Knute Buehler.

Three Democrats, John Holm, Raz Mason and Isabella Tibetts, are also running.

Whoever wins, all of these individuals should be lauded for stepping up and getting involved in the political process.

A kick in the pants to the flu. Yes, the familiar malady is back and it has reappeared with a vengeance. So far



EO file photo
Job seekers mingle with potential employers during a job fair in June at the Hermiston Community Center. Oregon's unemployment rate has sunk below 4%, the lowest level in more than four decades, according to state economists.

more than 1,000 Oregonians have been struck down by the virus. None of us can do very much about the flu virus, but we can protect ourselves. That means getting the flu vaccine. Area residents can get the vaccine at a number of places and it is a proven and effective measure to fight off the virus. A few minutes out of the day to get a flu shot will pay off down the road. So, get your flu shot.

A kick in the pants and a familiar reminder that winter weather is here to stay, so that means while we travel this holiday week we should all be extra careful on the roads. Winter weather can arrive unexpectedly and create real-time hazards for all of us. Don't let a winter storm spoil your Christmas-time plans. Keep a watchful eye on the weather forecast and, most of all, slow down.



OTHER VIEWS

Trump's accomplishments can't be impeached

I have empathy for letter writers like Bernie Sanderson (Republicans worshipping Trump, East Oregonian Dec. 11, 2019). Ninety percent of pundits, AP news articles, news media and the entertainment industry excoriate the president of the United States daily and mercilessly. Is it any wonder that Americans that ingest this deceit are angry, bitter, deceived and desperate to support any effort to erase the will of 63 million Americans?

America is bitterly divided, perhaps even greater than pre-Civil War. Instead of calming the anti-Trump/Republican rage and antagonism, the American press and media and Democrat party is fanning the flames of impeachment discord and division. They could care less about Americans.

Since Donald Trump was elected Nov. 8, 2016, America has become the economic envy of the world. The Dow Jones has gained 10,000 points, a 57% increase. The S&P has gained 500 points, up 40%. Nasdaq is up 29%. The U.S. economy grew at 1.6% during Obama's last year.

Under Trump the economy has doubled that output. There were 266,000 new jobs in November alone. Unemployment in America is at a 50-year low and all time low for African-Americans. The press and media — shameful silence.

What has Trump done to facilitate this resurgence that Obama said was impossible? Trump has honored his campaign promise — a novel idea. He has leveraged America's world-best economy to compel trading partners to deal forthrightly with us. Under Trump and against Obama's energy regulations, America is now the world's leading oil and energy exporter. Trump scrapped Clinton's economy-destroying NAFTA and forced Canada and Mexico to agree to a fair trade agreement. Under Obama, China was putting America in debt bondage and stealing our world-leading technology. Trump's policies have

brought China's economy to a standstill, forcing them to renegotiate a fair trade agreement. Obama sold out America with a traitorous nuclear accord with Iran, empowering them to spread Islamic terrorism throughout the world.

Trump saved America and the free world by standing our great enemy down, not through arms but through economic leverage. Who profited from Trump's America first policy? All Americans, especially those who attempted to defame and impeach him.

We voted for Trump because we were sick and tired of traitors that put America last with horrible trade agreements, overtaxation, government regulations and pro-socialist anti-American policies. We are 63 million strong. Try to impeach that.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

The fall of Rome is befalling the U.S.

I suggest that everyone who has an interest in the fate of the United States read "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." One will see the exact same thing is happening in our country today.

Depending on which historian one reads, three factors brought down the Roman Empire — morals, taxes and slaves. Historians don't always have them in that order, however, all three brought them to their demise.

The U.S. has lowered the moral bar. Taxes are punitive; ours is a Ponzi scheme. We do don't have slaves, but we do have illegal immigrants and legal immigrants working in our system for less wages, which will eventually lead to no middle class. The Romans had more slaves than citizens. I am not implying that illegals are slaves, however, they disrupt Americans from working.

Read the book and shed tears. History does repeat itself.

Roesch Kishpaugh
Pendleton

FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Looking to the light this Solstice

Winter Solstice. The darkest day of the year, but also the day the earth will tip once again toward light. Slowly, slowly. In fact, the word solstice means "when the sun stands still." It's a fragile time. Life seems to hang in the balance.

Darkness is important. It's a time to turn inward, be still. Darkness, too, is part of life. But we yearn for light. We coax it to return to us with blazing fires, candles set on windowsills, even fireworks.

The first Solstice lights I ever saw were stars. When I was born at the end of World War II, electricity had not yet come to my family in rural Idaho. December was a dark time, with only a circle of dim light from the kerosene lamp or the kerosene lantern Dad hung in the barn before he climbed the ladder into the pitch-black haymow to toss down forkfuls of alfalfa for the cow and for his beloved team, Shorty and Dolly. Somehow that light made the winter barn feel warm. As the milk frothed in the bucket he squirted some into the barn cats' waiting mouths and then filled their battered pan, while I sat where he had lifted me, on Dolly's wide back, at the edge of the shadows.

But outside, the darkness was lit with those amazing stars, and the Milky Way was a nearly solid path it looked like I could climb.

All that was missing from those lights was color, but my sister and I discovered color, to our great joy, in neon. They were beautiful, those orange and green signs outside Hanson's Garage and Stoddard's Electric. I was just learning to talk when my aunt asked, in what must have been bemused exasperation, "Bette, what are we going to do with you?" I knew exactly what to say. "Take me to town to see the lights."

Then came Christmas. Dad drove us around the snowy streets on the way to our grandparents' so we could see the Peterson's house on the hill above the post office, a big

log home outlined in red and blue and green. We were overjoyed.

My sister is 21 months older than I am — 21 steps ahead, I tell her, to remind her that she has been a guide and that I am still following, the same way I did when she brought home books from her first-grade class. By Christmas that year she had taught how me to read and

words had become purely miraculous.

As we approach this Solstice, she is dying.

All around me I see people waiting for the light to return, children waiting as patiently as they can for Santa Claus. And this year, it feels as if everyone is waiting — to see what kind of country we are, what kind of country

we want to be. As the days pass, we will realize once again that the gift must always move, that sharing is what makes life possible. People will gather with friends and family, and sing, and make festive foods to share. We will all be lighting candles — Christmas candles, Menorah candles, Kwanzaa candles.

And over our heads, those stars my sister and I knew as children will burn brightly as ever. They may be obscured now by the glow of too many city lights, but they are there. We, too, are stardust. Joni Mitchell was right about that. Our bodies are made of the constantly falling dust of stars, our cells changing and replacing themselves with more of the elements that come from stars.

Some cultures teach that not only did we come from stars, we will return there, too. "All goes onward and outward; nothing collapses," Walt Whitman wrote. How exactly this happens is a mystery to me. Will my sister climb the pathway of the Milky Way? She is still my guide.

On this Solstice, once again I watch the skies.

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T'ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



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COMMENT