

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

CD2 voters deserve better from Cliff Bentz

Last week on this page we wrote that we believed newly elected U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz had a bright future in the halls of the Congress. We still believe that to be true, but it's clear the freshman congressman didn't get off on the right foot last week in the wake of a seditious storming of the U.S. Capitol by a mob.

After the mob dispersed, Bentz — who represents Oregon's 2nd Congressional District — joined more than 130 GOP lawmakers who voted to object to Pennsylvania election results. The vote was based on shaky data that has been proven wrong. The objection, rightly, failed.

Later, Bentz told the *Malheur Enterprise* newspaper in Malheur County — where Bentz worked for decades as lawyer — that he doesn't believe President Trump should resign and he shouldn't be impeached after the insurrection at the Capitol last week.

Bentz arguably represents one of the more conservative areas of Oregon, if not the nation, so his vote on the Pennsylvania results was no surprise. At the end of the day, he is an elected member of the Congress and can vote the way he feels best represents his constituents.

The only problem with such logic is that the Pennsylvania results were never really in question and legal protests to it were soundly defeated. To still vote in protest of the results after such legal proceedings calls into question the new congressman's judgement and just exactly whom he believes he is representing.

If he believes he must only listen to his ultra right-wing constituents, then he must rethink his outlook. The 2nd Congressional District is home to a good share of ultra right-wing voters, but it is also filled with middle-of-the-road Republicans and many Democrats. Their views and concerns matter too.

Bentz's views on what should occur after the president essentially incited a mob to storm the Capitol building are head scratchers. On a purely pragmatic road, he is probably correct that an impeachment of the president would be a waste of time. The president leaves office within the next two weeks, so spending valuable time in impeachment proceedings won't move things along, especially since the U.S. Senate also plays a role in such matters.

But his comments the president will be held accountable for last week's mob "in the proper way" is also mystifying. What does that mean?

Bentz made major missteps last week — miscues that raise questions about his political judgement. The voters of his district deserve better.



YOUR VIEWS

City development needs new leadership

In a recent article in the *East Oregonian* titled "Buildable land needed for new housing," it was stated that the city of Pendleton's No. 1 priority is housing. If you check the section on the city's website under "Mayor and City Council," it lists four goals: (1) Sustainable Infrastructure Funding for Buildings, Roads, and Utilities, (2) Increase Economic Development Activities and Blight Reduction, (3) Development of Quality Commercial, Industrial, and Residential Properties, (4) Increase Available Housing.

After hearing for months that rebuilding our streets was the top priority, has City Hall changed course?

At the last city council meeting on Dec. 15, a booster pump project that would open up residential development in the Goad Road area was purposed. The city would cover all the engineering costs at roughly \$350,000, but no actual construction. This sounds suspiciously similar to the city's approach taken with the Barnhart Road extension, affectionally known as the "road to nowhere."

City officials assumed businesses would jump at the chance of development. Once it became apparent that utilities were not available, interest evaporated. The success of the city's drone program at the airport spawned the idea of a new dedicated industrial park. The city picked up the tab for new infrastructure and construction has flourished. For the first time in years, the airport has not been a drain on city resources.

When it comes to sponsoring new major housing development projects, the city has had a pretty dismal record that in the end has cost taxpayers a bundle. Chasing developers and offering free property as an incentive for rapid development set a bad precedent. City negotiators, desperate and lacking any practical business experience, allowed contractors to demand even better terms. The results? Inaction by the city manager and council on the Pendleton Heights and other projects brought development to a standstill, costing the city lost property tax revenue.

If it is in fact true that housing has supplanted infrastructure as the city's No. 1 priority, perhaps it's time to get a management team in place that's the same caliber as the airport "Chrisman Team," the team that's done such a remarkable job reversing the fortunes at the airport.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Bentz has betrayed his oath of office

Two critical tests that any elected representative must pass are that he or she make sound decisions for the good of their constituents, and that they seek the truth. On Wednesday, Jan. 6, and

Thursday, Jan. 7, freshman Congressman Cliff Bentz, representing Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, failed both tests.

Going into the special joint session of Congress — wherein the results of the recent presidential election would be certified — Mr. Bentz chose to side with a fringe group of Republican representatives that intended to oppose the certification based upon lies and baseless accusations the election had somehow been rigged — lies and accusations that were born and perpetuated by a defeated president. The evolution of these lies within the supporters of President Donald Trump formed the catalyst that led to armed insurrection and storming of the Capitol building by Trump supporters on Jan. 6.

Following this terrifying attempted coup that threatened the fabric of the U.S. government, Bentz still chose to continue to perpetuate these lies by voting with his cronies against the certification of the presidential vote. Bentz is complicit with the president and his Republican colleagues in attempting to undermine the foundation of American democracy by seeking to scuttle a free and fair election.

Bentz has betrayed his oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America. Bentz has demonstrated that he will not be an effective representative for the people of Oregon's 2nd Congressional District and must resign, effective immediately.

Mark Peterson
Pendleton

Republicans must take back their party

Trumpism has been thoroughly expressed as of Wednesday, Jan. 6, by the storming of the nation's capital. The decomposing soul of the Republican Party has been dramatically exposed.

But we, as a nation, need the Republican Party. We are essentially a two-party republic and we need two viable, vibrant, functional parties so that there are valid choices for the electorate to make.

Sadly, the current status of the Republican Party does not fit this definition. It is not viable, nor vibrant, nor functional, especially in that there are still leaders — senators and representatives — who cling to the misrepresentations and the tsunami of outright lies that have been promulgated by Trump and his troop of sycophants. How can they, who have sworn to uphold the Constitution, carry on with this rotting compost?

For example, how can Joni Ernst, clearly stated as a follower of QAnon, believe and support the insane conspiracy nonsense and be a U.S. senator at the same time? Senators are supposed to be wise leaders who advise on good and effective governmental policies and operations.

I am a Democrat. But in state elec-

tions I am a ticket splitter; for example, I have consistently voted for Bill Hansell — a Republican — because he is a native son of Eastern Oregon and does excellent work on behalf of us all. I do not despise the Republican Party — rather, I feel a great deal of sorrow for the good, true and honest Republicans who see their party in such utter and complete shambles.

I wholeheartedly hope that those people — the honest and true and good Republicans — can displace the dissolute leadership of our present times and rebuild their party so the we can again have choices of competent leadership on both sides of the aisle.

Also, I note with sadness and shame — anger, too — that our Eastern Oregon congressional representatives, Mr. Bentz and Ms. Levy, have shown their stripes as Trumpistas and signed on to the totally delirious nonsense movement to object to the Electoral College vote counting and attempt to overturn the presidential election.

Jan. 6 is a dark day for all of us in a multiplicity of ways.

Andrew Clark
Pendleton

Middle of the road is no place to be

One-time Texas railroad commissioner and longtime activist Jim Hightower had it right: There's nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and a dead armadillo. That's where our newly elected congressional representative, Cliff Bentz, thought he found himself when he arrived in Washington, D.C. Faced with his first test as a congressman, Bentz failed it miserably.

In trying to walk that line between accepting the results of the election and rubber-stamping the subversion our democracy, he thought he could have it both ways. So he voted "no" on destroying Arizona's electoral votes, but "yes" on burning Pennsylvania's. That's despite the fact that Congress has no business rejecting the ballots of millions of voters in a fair election because they include mail-in ballots.

That he was willing to do so after rioters had trashed the U.S. Capitol, smashing windows and looting offices, was a real eye-opener for me. Just that morning I'd called his office and made it clear that, as a Vietnam veteran, I didn't go to war for to have our elections attacked with lies and deceit. Oregonians have voted by mail for over 20 years. It's probably the most secure system in the country. It's elected Democrats and Republicans, and it elected Bentz.

He betrayed our state and the citizens who elected him. The middle of the road he thought he was traveling was on the edge of a precipice, with sedition lurking below. He better have his parachute ready: It's a long way down.

Norm Cimon
La Grande

EDITORIALS

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.

LETTERS

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