

OUR VIEW

Mob violence has no place in American democracy

Some called it an historic moment, but the expulsion of Rep. Mike Nearman from the Oregon House of Representatives really was more about making a clear statement regarding unbecoming conduct by a lawmakers and its consequences.

GOP lawmakers united with majority Democrats in the House and voted to expel Nearman on a 59-1 vote. The only vote against the lawmakers was his own. The expulsion is the first in the 160-year history of the House.

Readers probably remember the latest undisciplined political brush-up that occurred last December, when Nearman let a group of protesters into the Capitol building as legislators convened an emergency session to decide on a path forward through the economic hit from the coronavirus pandemic.

Protestors barged into the building — closed because of COVID-19 restrictions — tangled with police and sprayed them with bear spray.

Nearman maintained he only let the protestors in because he believed the Oregon Capitol should be open to voters. Nearman would be correct if the individuals seeking to enter were not carrying guns, brandishing bear spray and generally acting like a mob. A group of voters who seek to peacefully commune with elected leaders is not a mob.

Nearman's actions point to a far larger problem that manifested itself in a more serious manner in January when another mob stormed the nation's capital and threatened lawmakers.

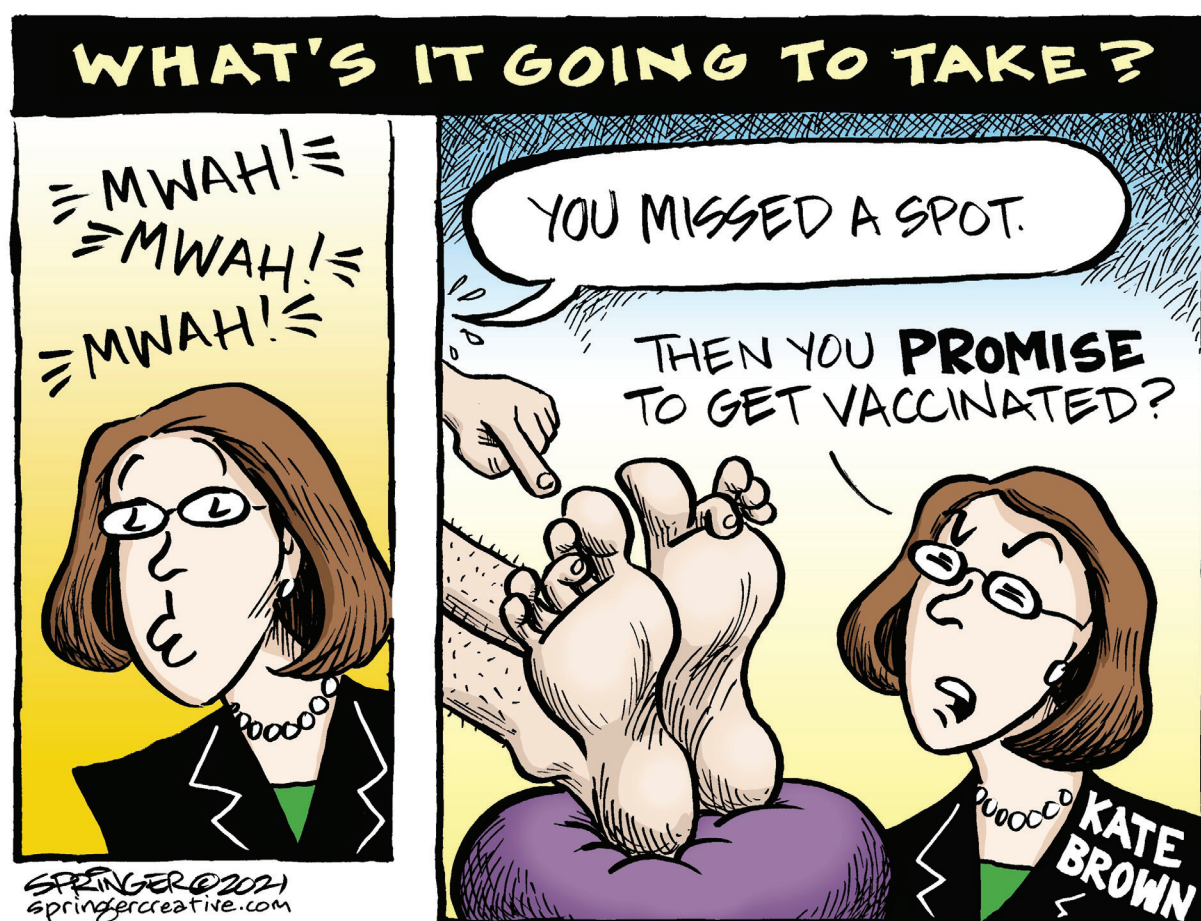
The larger problem is a sudden loss of common sense and discipline among those of us who should know better. Actions, such as the Nearman's stunt in Salem and the attack on the nation's capital in January, are not part of democracy. The two incidents are prime examples of mobs running amok.

No doubt there are those who believe the actions by protestors in both Salem and Washington, D.C., were justified. They are opinions that should be heard. That is what democracy in America is all about. Disagreeing over a political issue is part of our American DNA. We should never be afraid to debate.

Toting guns and screaming rhetoric and then running wild through the hall of Congress, though, is not productive. Already there are extremely stringent security measures in place at the U.S. Capitol. Those security measures mean access to the government is restricted — not because of a foreign security threat, but because of an American mob.

Oregon lawmakers made the right call with Nearman, but in the end they did not have much choice.

Mob violence has no place in American democracy.



Oregon should have independent voice in D.C.



KEVIN FRAZIER

OTHER VIEWS

In the 2019 legislative year, there were 236 Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives, four of whom were from Oregon. Out of those 236, though, the Oregonians were nearly indistinguishable from the rest of the Democratic block.

Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, Earl Blumenauer, and Peter DeFazio all recorded nearly perfect party-line records; CQ Press reported their party unity scores as 99 out of 100; Rep. Kurt Schrader came in at 93. Comparatively, on the other side of the aisle, then-Rep. Greg Walden had a far lower party unity score of just 81.

On the whole, these scores go to show that Oregonians have lacked an independent voice in D.C. Sure, Oregon's Democratic representatives have spoken out against their party from time to time and, though less frequently, even voted against their ideological colleagues; but, from a voting record perspective, there's nothing distinctive about the state's congressional delegates — especially on the Democratic side.

In defense of Oregon's Democratic delegates, they're just following a much larger trend. The average party unity score in 2019 for House Democrats was

97.6 — up from 75.8 in 1983.

Oregonians have a chance to elect a voice, rather than an echo, in their sixth congressional district. Now more than ever, independent voices in the House have a chance to sway the conversation by virtue of the fact neither party has a controlling presence in the chamber. Right now, there are 219 Democrats, 212 Republicans and four vacancies.

Electing independent representatives in a handful of districts would upend politics as usual by forcing both parties to cater to this party-free caucus.

Of course, the odds of state legislators drawing an independent district are low. It's in the interest of both parties to draw "safe" seats. These are seats with such skewed party registration differentials that it's a Sisyphean act for someone from the other side to run a credible campaign.

These sorts of seats save both parties money because the general elections are so uncompetitive. They also reinforce the faulty idea that we're stuck with two options when it comes to our elected officials and, therefore, entrench the dominance of the two parties.

So as legislators start to redistrict, Democrats will push for a map that has five safe, blue seats and that offers the Republicans one safe, red seat; Republicans will push for a four-two map. Neither will advocate for a purple district. That's why the rest of us, the voters of Oregon, must do so.

A competitive district in Oregon will

give at least some Oregonians a meaningful choice every election cycle. The two parties will have to put forth their best candidates, and third party or nonaffiliated candidates may even have a chance at running competitive races. This district can become an example of the sort of democratic competition that voters have long been denied due to closed primaries, gerrymandered districts and undue influence afforded to ideologically exclusive parties.

If just a few other states take this brave approach of thwarting party efforts to draw safe seats, then we could see the emergence of U.S. representatives capable of offering their voice and not merely an echo of the party line.

Our democracy is not broken; it's fixed. The rules, the game board and the players are tilted to two sides. Let's create space for an independent voice in Oregon again; someone who can truthfully share these same lines from Sen. Wayne Morse: "I will exercise an independence of judgment based on the evidence of each issue. I will weigh the views of my constituents and party, but cast my vote free of political pressure and unmoved by threats of loss of political support."

Kevin Frazier operates No One Left Offline, which has distributed nearly 100 Wi-Fi hot spots throughout Oregon. Kevin will graduate from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law in May of 2022.

YOUR VIEWS

Wind power benefits environment, local economy

At EDP Renewables North America, we celebrate Oregon's progress in becoming a leading state for renewable energy. To reach our environmental and economic goals, we must build a sustainable economy for our state, which is precisely why Global Wind Day is important to our future, and why the Rattlesnake Road and Wheat Field Wind Farms are living examples of this celebration.

Thanks to a dedicated effort alongside local communities, landowners and business leaders, EDPR NA's Rattlesnake Road and Wheat Field Wind Farms have successfully provided clean energy for over a decade. Since the turbines were commissioned in 2008, more than \$23.3 million has been spent within 50 miles of the wind farms and put back into the local economy. The projects created more than 100 jobs during construction and 26 full-time positions to support the operations and maintenance of the wind farms.

Along with saving critical resources, these two projects have brought over \$20 million in local spending to the area and over \$23 million in payments to local governments, supporting roads, schools, and public safety. Our projects are flourishing thanks to communities around us, and we value their support over the past decade.

While we have seen progress with our projects, building a sustainable future has become more urgent with each passing year. Through the clean power the Rattlesnake Road and Wheat Field Wind Farms

produce, we can continue to create an economy that protects our planet while generating new jobs and opportunities for all Oregonians.

Jarod Wizner
Arlington

Bentz's reasoning seems wrong

Cliff Bentz, in his recent newsletter, wrote that he voted against House Bill 1333, because it "weakens our national security by preventing the president from suspending immigration from unstable regions of the world."

I wonder what bill Bentz read because 1333 states the president may temporarily restrict the entry of any alien if the State Department makes a determination the restriction would address specific and credible facts that may threaten our security or public safety. Obviously, the bill does not prevent the president from suspending immigration.

The bill also states any restriction must address a compelling government interest; it must use the least restrictive means to achieve that interest; and it prohibits religious discrimination unless there is a statutory basis for such discrimination.

Since there is nothing in the bill that would weaken the president's ability to suspend immigration, then why did Cliff Bentz write what he did? Either Bentz did not read the bill or he is intentionally misleading his constituents, and if he is misleading his constituents then one must ask, why is he doing so?

In his newsletter, Bentz also provided reasons for not voting for other bills, such as allowing the marijuana industry to use the banking system, but given his stated reasons for not voting for 1333 and what that bill actually states, one must now question the truthfulness of our congressman, and that is not something we should need to do.

Steve Wallaert
Bend

Flying saucers the only reason for UAS secrecy

I see in the June 1 East Oregonian that the city of Pendleton, with the help of our local elected state House and Senate members, have struck another blow against the right of people to know what there government is doing.

We can no longer ask any questions about the unmanned aerial vehicle project at the airport. A part of our expensive water and sewer bills goes to pay for extending utilities to pay for money borrowed for this project.

I know that some secrets are needed for national defense, but I don't see any CIA presence in town so I don't think this project qualifies.

I think there is only one reason: There are flying saucers landing at night and the aliens will be staying at the new hotel at the airport that is being built for them. So if you see strange beings walking around during Round-Up, thank the city of Pendleton.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

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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