

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

We are failing our children

For anyone following the news of the school massacre in Uvalde, Texas, it should be clear that we are failing our children.

For anyone following the news of Oregon's state audit of the Oregon Department of Education titled "State Leaders and Policymakers Must Address Persistent System Risks to Improve K-12 Equity and Student Success," it should be clear that we are failing our children.

For anyone following the news about the nationwide shortage of child care and preschool, it should be clear that we are failing our children.

We are America. We are the most wealthy and powerful country in the world by some measures. Yet, by many other measures, we suck.

Here are a few from the Children's Defense Fund's 2021 report:

Child poverty: Nearly 1 in 6 children under age 6 live in households below the poverty line.

Child hunger: More than 1 in 7 children live in "food insecure" households.

Gun violence: Guns — not motor vehicle accidents — were the leading cause of death in 2018 in children ages 1-19. Nine children die of gun violence every day in this country.

Bullying: In 2019, 22% of students age 12-18 reported being bullied during the school year.

Education: In 2019, at least 67% of public school eighth-graders were not proficient in reading and math. And, only 85% of high school students graduate on time.

Early childhood care and education: Our lack of investment in child care and early education means that most families cannot afford (or even find) quality care and education for their infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

All this, despite plenty of research showing that for every \$1 invested in early childhood — birth through kindergarten — the lifelong return on investment is more than 13% a year.

We have neglected our youngest children and their parents for far too long.

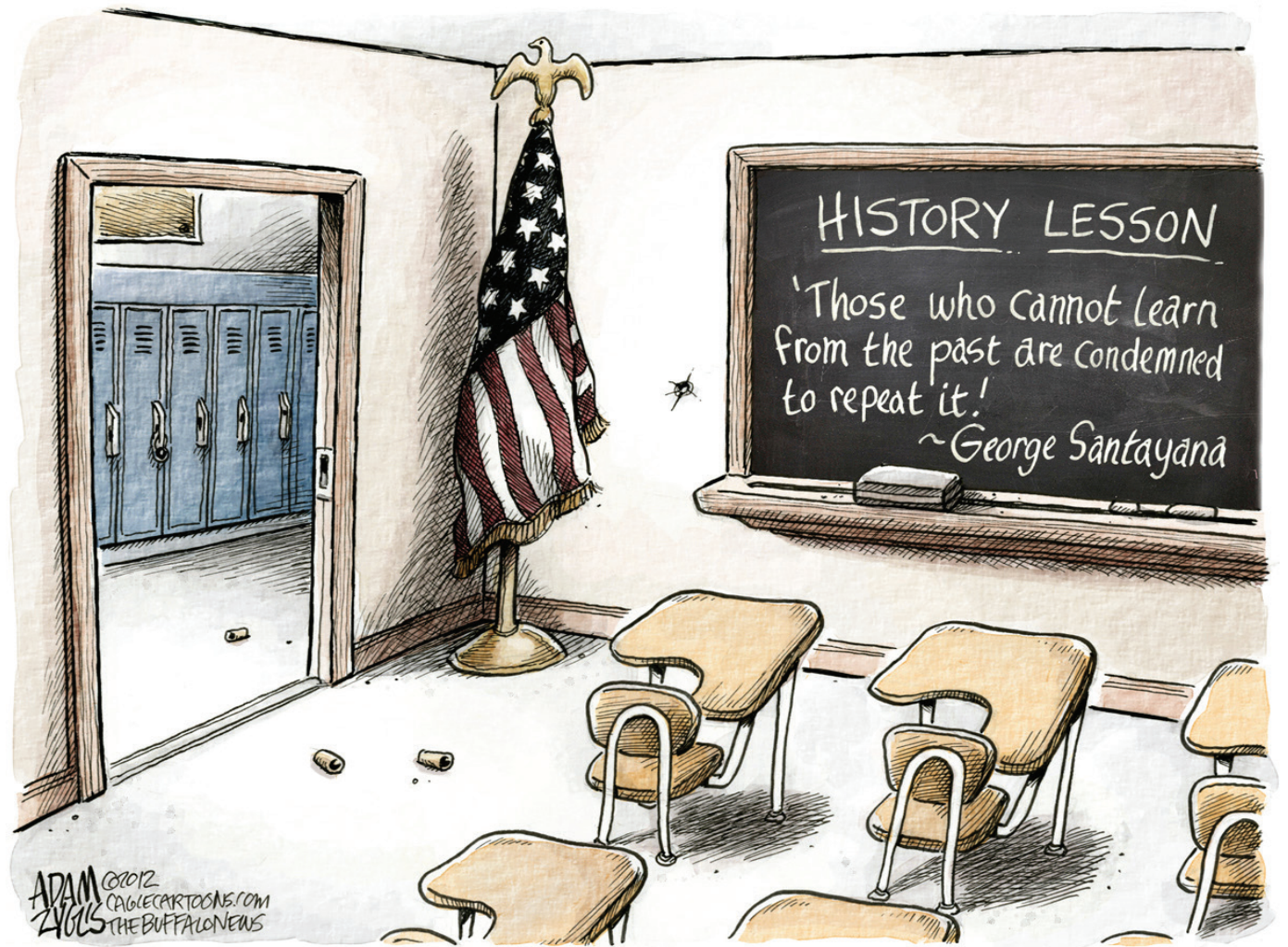
Lack of investment in quality early childhood programs has ripple effects. Children who have no exposure to high-quality preschool often struggle in kindergarten. Those children struggle to read by third grade, and struggle to graduate from high school.

Brain development begins at birth, and so much intellectual and socio-emotional development happens in the first five years. Yet we only begin public investment in our children when they turn 5 and enter the K-12 school system. Our tax dollars would go so much further if spent on younger children.

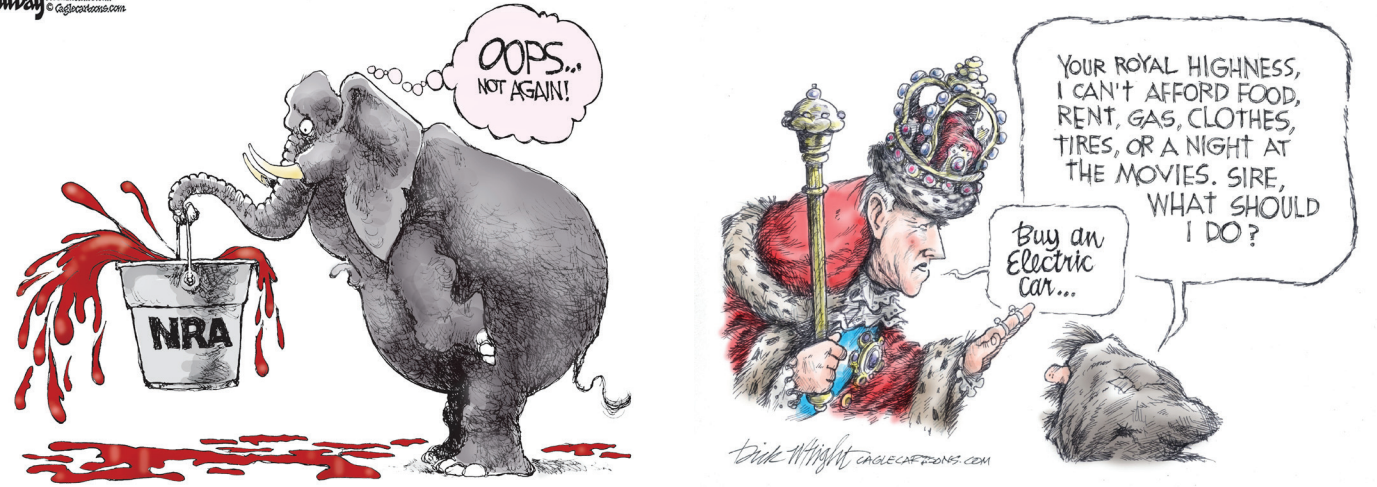
We all need to focus on investments in early child care and preschool.

Universal federally-funded preschool for 3- and 4-year olds would be a great place to start. This does not mean expanding the K-12 school system, although that may work in some areas. It means supporting high-quality, nonprofit child care centers and in-home child care as well.

Let's stop failing our children.



Bill Day



Republicans splintered vote for governor



OTHER VIEWS

Randy Stapilus

With 19 distinctive — not to say sometimes colorful — candidates for governor, Oregon Republicans should have told us something about themselves by their choices in the just-ended primary election.

They did: They are split. Many seem driven by abortion or other culture issues, some are powerfully drawn by regional preferences, but a plurality just want to win in November.

No single overriding motivation appeared to apply overwhelmingly to Oregon Republican voters.

Former legislator (and House Republican caucus chairwoman) Christine Drazan was the clear winner from early on, and she won a majority of Oregon's counties. She led (decisively) in the three Portland metro counties, and her four best counties (in order — Wallowa, Curry, Klamath and Benton) were widely scattered across the state. Her win cannot be called narrow.

What drew Republican voters to her?

Likely not the media endorsements (her website's endorsement page didn't even link to them). But she was endorsed by a slew of Republican elected officials and a number of GOP-leaning organizations. She had an extensive county organization, and it seems fair to say she was the closest thing to an (informal) candidate of the statewide Republican organization. That helps a lot. And she was articulate and likable.

Careful messaging

She did not emphasize hard-edged messages. Her website's tag lines called out "lower taxes, safer neighborhoods,

brighter future, better schools" — something Democrat Tina Kotek could use as easily (maybe with some tweaking of the first one). She did offer some specific policy proposals, but she was not among the candidates with quotable lines on abortion, stolen elections and similar subjects.

Was this the candidate considered by voters as best equipped to fare well in November? Probably that was part of it.

Remember though that she received just 22.7% of the Republican primary vote, a support level that looks better only in the context of her 19-person field. Her nearest competitor, former state Republican Chairman Bob Tiernan, was not terribly far behind with 17.8%. Seven candidates received more than 5% of the vote.

If there's another contender who might logically be called a Republican establishment candidate — because of service in elected office and as chair of the state party — that would be Tiernan, who won six counties — Clatsop, Coos, Columbia, Douglas, Lane and Tillamook. His second-place vote actually may owe to some of the same factors as Drazan's.

Candidates who lost past major races, like Bud Pierce and Bill Sizemore, underperformed.

So, there's a good chance electability was heavily on the minds of close to half of the Republican electorate, maybe reflecting both desire to win and a sense that 2022 might not be a good Democratic year.

But that still leaves a majority of the Republican primary voters apparently signaling other concerns.

What powered Sandy Mayor Stan Pulliam to a third-place showing with 10.4% of the vote? There are a few possibilities, but a good bet might be abortion, high profile during the voting period. Though not endorsed by Oregon Right to Life, Pulliam got attention for the edgiest abortion portion stance in the campaign, criticizing his competitors as being wimps on the subject and saying without qualification he would as governor sign any "pro-

life piece of legislation."

Votes for him may be a reasonable measure of the abortion-driven segment of the Republican vote.

Anti-masker fizzles

That seems a little bigger than the climate change and anti-masking approach of Marc Thielman, the former Alsea school superintendent who won a straw poll at the Dorchester event. He had backers statewide — he had more than a few signs in Eastern Oregon — but still managed just 7.8% of the vote.

If you're looking for a candidate testing the salience of rural and anti-metro appeal, look at Baker City Mayor Kerry McQuisten. She won seven counties, more than anyone but Drazen, carrying most of the land area of Eastern Oregon with Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Sherman, Union and Wheeler counties. No candidate got a higher percentage in any single county than McQuisten did in Grant (44.6%).

Of course, relatively few voters live in those counties, and McQuisten wound up just sixth in the results. But she left a stronger marker of the east-west and urban-rural gap in the state.

Some messages seemed not to catch on. Nick Hess, who pressed for a traditional conservative style (and was nearly alone in the field to do so), got only 1.1% of the vote.

And if there had been more "electable" candidates and fewer "message" candidates? This primary could easily have seen different results. The instability of the parties — Democrats too but especially the Republicans, even in a time of polarization — may be one of the primary lessons of this year's Oregon primary.

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