

OTHER VIEWS

Will Lathrop



Reining in law enforcement can have broad impact

Oregon has been in the national media a lot recently, for the wrong reasons. David Leonhardt from The New York Times recently chricled Portland's dysfunction: "Just 8% of residents think their city is on the right track... [Portland] has seen a rise in homelessness and violent crime."

When discussing the Willamette Valley's struggle with homelessness, Angela Hart from The Los Angeles Times writes, "[Homeless] encampments have emerged as a haven of heroin and fentanyl use."

One homeless man interviewed by Hart warned, "A lot of people out here are criminals... stolen cars get dropped on this road constantly. There have been dead bodies."

Jarring national reports consistently portray the Willamette Valley as a fly-trap for addiction and violent crime.

Surprisingly, in the sea of discussions surrounding Oregon's condition of despair, few seem to identify systemic dismantling of Oregon's justice institutions as the root cause. Global data indicates that criminal law enforcement is the chief factor in deterring various forms of violence against vulnerable groups.

For the past eight years, I have been working with foreign governments to combat gender-based violence and human trafficking in Africa. Before that, I served as a child abuse prosecutor in Oregon. My work has left me with a strong sense of the government's responsibility to protect citizens from violence and the fundamental role of law enforcement to that effect. When governments do not protect their citizens from violence and pilfering, every part of civil life decays — civil rights, schools, natural resources, the economy and public health. Protection from crime is not a politically partisan concept; it is a fundamental expectation of good governance.

Recently, Oregonians have been misled by anti-law enforcement groups, peddling dysfunctional policies, such as defunding police, decriminalizing anti-social behavior, limiting law enforcement official's ability to detect and intervene in criminal behavior, and undermining incarceration as a staple deterrent. From the beginning, the movement lacked supporting data, discarded victim's rights, and ignored practical reality. The lesson learned from this tragic social experiment is that the absence of law enforcement corrodes the foundation of governance, leading to violent chaos and economic ruin. Sadly, the people of Willamette Valley are saddled with the consequences.

The premise for torpedoing criminal justice institutions was, in large part, a reaction to police abuse of power (in Minnesota and across the country). However, a bad solution can be worse than none at all. When a teacher sexually assaults a student, should we defund schools? When a doctor commits malpractice, should we defund the hospital?

Efforts to paralyze law enforcement because of incidences of abuse of power are counterproductive and harmful to everyone — none more so than minorities or marginalized groups. The remedy for police abuse of power is criminal and civil accountability.

Working in East and West Africa, I have seen firsthand what an absence of well-funded, well-trained police and prosecutors looks like — the poor struggle to survive in the shadow of pervasive and relentless violence. We are blessed to live in Wallowa County for its beauty, but also because of the strong expectation of safety. There are lessons to be learned from the grave results of anti-law enforcement policies in the Willamette Valley.

We also shouldn't be surprised to find the proponents who started the mess in Portland fleeing East for their own safety. Oregonians ought to have high expectations of professionalism for law enforcement officials — they should be held accountable for corruption or abuse of power. But, we should also be glad to fund and support the overwhelming majority of people in these institutions who are fair and honest and have dedicated themselves to our safety and civility. Without enforcement, laws are just words on paper, gums with no teeth.

Will Lathrop is a Wallowa County native and lives with his family in Ghana in West Africa where he work with the Ghana government to fight human trafficking. His family owns a home in Enterprise, and returns every summer for a furlough from his job.

SCOTUS's decision by six Catholics breaches wall between church and state

OTHER VIEWS

Naseem Rakha



Shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to gut Roe, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt declared, "The womb is now... the safest place for a child to be."

My question is, where is the safest place for women and the babies they will now be forced to bear?

The court's decision to overturn Roe made it clear that the "wall of separation between church and state" that founding father Thomas Jefferson described as integral to the Constitution, has been breached.

The majority opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson* came from five men and one woman, all of them Catholic and all of them self-described conservatives. The author of the *Dobbs* opinion, 72-year-old Justice Samuel Alito, has spoken publicly about how "religious liberty" is threatened by court decisions such as *Roe* and those extending rights to LGBTQ and trans populations. Some of the six have even begun to talk about overruling *Griswold*, which gave couples the right to buy contraception. All six justices were strongly backed by anti-choice religious leaders who considered them as having the necessary chops to overturn *Roe*.

The 6-3 ruling was hailed by Christian organizations throughout the country. "People are dancing in the diocese," said Father Francis "Rocky" Hoffman, Founder and CEO of Relevant Radio, a 24/7 Catholic broadcast heard on close to 200 stations nationwide. "God's grace has pre-

vailed over Satan's culture of death. All our prayers, our fasting, our protests, and lawsuits, all our giving and voting have worked. We finally have a court that honors life."

The justices, of course, didn't include any mention of Satan or the grace of God in their opinions. Instead, they based their ruling on the "original intent" of the 225-year-old Constitution. Because the founding fathers were silent on the subject of abortion, they reasoned, the document can not be interpreted as giving safe harbor to the procedure. Never mind that the men who wrote the Constitution hadn't bothered to give women the right to vote, or that abortion was actually a fairly common practice before, during and after the 39 founders scratched their signatures on that piece of parchment.

Interestingly, that is not how the Kansas Supreme Court considered the issue. In 2019, the conservative state's highest court ruled that Article 1 of its Bill of Rights recognizing the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness "protects all Kansans' natural right of personal autonomy," which "includes the right to control one's own body, to assert bodily integrity, and to exercise self-determination," and allows each individual to make their own decision regarding "whether to continue a pregnancy." The Kansas court got it right in concluding that liberty equals the unqualified recognition that a person has bodily autonomy.

In my time as a reporter, I have interviewed many women impacted by the pre-*Roe* world. I think of women like Mary, who in 1970 traveled from her parent's farm to obtain a back alley abortion in New York City. She was dropped off in some seedy neighborhood, climbed a decrepit staircase, was led into a filthy room, had a sock stuffed in her mouth and some kinda device

"slammed up inside of me."

I think of Shelby, a 16-year-old who in 1972 was found dead after trying to self abort with a hanger, or 17-year-old Laura, herself a daughter of a teen mom. She, like her mom, had been raped. She, like her mom, had no legal way to get an abortion. She, like her mom, felt overwhelmed by motherhood. But unlike her mom, she ended up in prison for murder of her child.

And then there are the other children, those who in some states will be forced to carry a baby to term even if the father is their own father, or uncle or brother. And then there are the women who have no resources to care for another child, or the addicted women who will give birth to an addicted baby. I think of the over two million runaways in the U.S., and the close to half-million foster children, the kids born to parents that either could not or should not parent.

And then I think of the bishops and the deacons, and all other pro-birth advocates celebrating the abolition of *Roe*. All of them thrilled the court just saved millions of "unborn," while all the time doing little if anything to bolster the programs and revenue needed to ensure that each of those children, once born, have the resources and support they need to live healthy, vital lives.

With the overturning of *Roe* by our religious right court, the womb may be safer, but not the women nor the children they will be forced to bear.

Naseem Rakha is a former public radio reporter, news show host and commentator. She is an author of the novel "The Crying Tree," which was inspired by her time covering two executions in Oregon. Naseem spends her time hiking, climbing, rafting and photographing areas throughout the American West.

Compromise only goes so far before action needed



OTHER VIEWS

Rynda Clark & Mathieu Federspiel

Earlier this month, our organizations joined with our allies and went to court to restore protections for large trees in Eastern Oregon. The editors of this paper argued it represented failure on all sides. We agree. To a point.

Anytime we go to court, it is the result of failure. In this case, it was the Forest Service's failure to abide by the law. A fundamental concept of our democracy is that no one — not even the government — is above the law. Regardless of their means, citizens have a right to hold their government accountable.

Our primary concern is for the health of our forests and communities. We support some thinning near communities and appropriate restoration of forests that have been degraded by fire suppression, logging and overgrazing. None of those things require cutting our biggest and oldest trees or logging the backcountry.

When a political appointee signed a decision to undermine decades old protections for our forests, it capped off a politically driven process. It also cut sovereign tribes and the general public off from legally required opportunities to seek a better outcome.

Left with no choice but to allow the

illegally amended rule to stand or challenge it in court, we chose to fight for our forests and our rights. Had the substance of the decision been different, we'd fully expect the logging industry to do the same.

We understand there are other perspectives out there. While we find their rhetoric misleading, we acknowledge the logging industry has a right to free speech and to use their political clout to increase their profits.

The real failure is with the Forest Ser-

"THE REAL FAILURE IS WITH THE FOREST SERVICE WHICH FAILED TO HONOR COMMITMENTS MADE OVER TWO DECADES AGO."

vance which failed to honor commitments made over two decades ago.

Supporters of the new rules that allow logging the largest 3% of trees often tell the half-truth that they replaced protections that were meant to be temporary. They don't mention those protections were meant to be temporary until the agency crafted comprehensive rules that would take all interests into account — including those of us who advocate for clean water, wildlife habitat and healthy communities. That never happened.

The agency regularly made exceptions to the rules. Sometimes with our support.

When we learned the Trump administration was changing the rules, we were skeptical. Still, we participated in good faith. Just as the editors suggested, we sat down and offered compromises and proposals we thought could lead to a good outcome.

However, those olive branches were brushed aside. During a period of historic conflict and distraction, and under tremendous political pressure, the agency pushed toward a predetermined outcome.

That outcome was opposed by dozens of conservation, climate, Indigenous and public health groups, thousands of citizens, 115 independent scientists, and even former Forest Service leadership.

We played by the rules. The agency did not.

So, when a political appointee ended the process by signing a decision that violated numerous laws, we were left with little choice but to exercise our constitutional rights and stand up to our own government.

We join the editors in wanting to see compromise from all sides and a better path forward. We also agree that Sen. Wyden has a history of bringing folks together as he did with his East Side forest bill years ago.

For that to happen again, protections must be restored, with the goal of working toward a viable solution. We'll be waiting at the table.

Rynda Clark is on the leadership team of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness which has four active chapters in Oregon. Mathieu Federspiel is on the leadership team of the Juniper Group of the Oregon Sierra Club.

Improve your 401(k) performance with these tips

LAYIN' IT ON THE LINE

Steve Kerby



In addition to the below tips, make sure to fully understand asset allocation and the fees being charged. Many 401(k) plans have fees subtracted by the firm that invests and manages the account.

If a client is 59½ and still working at the same firm where the 401(k) is, the funds can be rolled to a self-directed IRA without any tax exposure. This allows the client to select an asset allocation that might be more timely, especially retirement age draws closer.

A 401(k) at a former employer can be rolled to a self-directed IRA at any time. This tax-free transfer allows many more options for investing.

- **Be Informed:** Be well-versed in all aspects of the current 401(k) plan. Employees can advocate for changes

they would like to see an employer adopt. If, for example, they would like to add an option of a mutual fund, a simple call to a mutual fund company for information on choices would help an employer find out everything they can about all possible options.

- **Be Involved:** If a company is considering 401(k) plan changes right now, is the time for employees to make their opinions known. The average company changes 401(k) plans more frequently than most employees realize, and those in charge are usually open to suggestions.

- **Be a Company Asset:** Befriending the Benefits Director may be the way to see changes implemented. They have greater decision-making clout and influence when it comes to the choice of company retirement plans. Providing information to the Benefits Director on how employees would like to see retirement options structured may help them craft a more responsive program.

- **Be Open to Help:** Some employers have other groups that might assist in influencing change, such as an employer-sponsored group, or a union — if

applicable. These groups have experience in helping employees advocate for change.

- **Be Willing to Try Grassroots Efforts:** Consider starting a grassroots movement to advocate for change. It may sound trivial, but a petition with signatures of those employees who share common opinions on changes in the company 401(k) plan might make an impression on the higher-ups. Negative feedback might be likely, but it might also be as likely to find more likeminded coworkers who are as ready for a change.
- **Be Patient:** Nothing happens in an instant-especially major change like the adoption of a new 401(k) plan. Keep persevering until changes are addressed. Remember: today's 401(k) plan will significantly impact the financial future of employees when it comes time to retire. 401(k) plans are designed for the benefit of employees, so make sure the plan delivers on its promise.

Steve Kerby is a member of Syndicated Columnists, a national organization committed to a fully transparent approach to money management.