

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Trump did the right thing

Editorial from the (Bend) Bulletin:

Tuesday, President Donald Trump granted full pardons to Dwight and Steven Hammond, the Harney County ranchers whose five-year prison sentences on arson charges led to the 2016 standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. It was a fitting end.

The Hammonds, father Dwight and son, Steven, have been cattle ranchers in Harney County since the mid-1960s, when they bought an existing ranch that included federal grazing leases from the Bureau of Land Management.

The relationship between the ranchers and the government deteriorated over the years, and by 2012 the two men had been convicted of arson on federal land. The federal judge hearing the case, Judge Michael Hogan, sentenced Dwight Hammond to three months in prison and Steven Hammond to a year and a day in prison.

During that sentencing, Hogan made it clear he did not believe the Hammonds and their crimes were those meant by Congress when it passed the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996, under which the pair had been charged.

That law required at least five-year sentences for the crimes. Hogan said that would “shock the conscience.” The federal government appealed the sentences and won. In 2015 federal Judge Ann Aiken resentenced the two men, this time to five years with credit for time served. They returned to prison in January 2016.

Hogan was right when he questioned whether Congress had the likes of the Hammonds in mind when the anti-terrorism act was passed.

The two men may have been more willing than they should have been to take on the BLM, but that doesn't make them terrorists. Nor does arson in the middle of the largely empty High Desert of Oregon make them terrorists. Criminals, perhaps, but surely not terrorists. Trump, at the urging of U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, recognized the difference and did the right thing by pardoning the two men.



Court needs a conservative woman

The Black Justice. The First Female. The Wise Latina. The Rumored Lesbian. The Catholic. The Other Catholic.

Liberals have had a tendency to label possible Supreme Court picks based upon their identities, not their brains.

Thurgood Marshall was the first African American on the bench, and it was understood that he'd have to be replaced with another Justice of Color. He was, but unfortunately, Clarence Thomas wasn't exactly what Marshall fans had hoped for.

Sandra Day O'Connor was the first woman on the court, but her conservative credentials annoyed the type of women who didn't think she was feminist enough. Ultimately, they warmed up to her when she protected abortion rights against attacks from her male colleagues.

Sonia Sotomayor made that famous statement about how a “wise Latina” might be able to bring something to deliberations that her Caucasian male brethren could not, riding the identity wave straight to the bench.

Elena Kagan was rumored to be gay in some sort of wishful thinking campaign from the LGBT community and as a subversive sort of criticism from homophobic opponents, but ultimately her sexual orientation became irrelevant.

I've often criticized using identity politics to make legal decisions, but now that President Trump has nominated Brett Kavanaugh to the bench, I've changed my tune. I'm not afraid to call myself out

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for hypocrisy and inconsistency.

I want a conservative woman on the Supreme Court.

After years of hearing minority groups demand representation and push the idea that they need to see their faces and voices reflected in our political institutions, and then watching those institutions yield to the idea that color, gender and sexual orientation actually matter, I realize that they might be right about one thing: Whining loudly enough gets results.

So if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Here is my whine, for the next time that Trump gets to appoint a justice (though it won't be to replace the Notorious RBG because she's attached to that seat with Gorilla Glue.)

The next person on that court should look like me, sound like me, think like me, act like me and do it fearlessly.

The president should've chosen a conservative woman.

I'm not talking about some safe Republican from the purplish suburbs who won't rock the boat and will hang with the feminists at lunchtime, eating granola and drinking oat milk lattes.

We need a real conservative woman, someone who believes that justices do not legislate from the bench and create rights based on her own desires, unteth-

ered to any constitutional basis.

Yes, I'm talking about abortion.

I want a conservative woman justice who won't adjudicate cases by consulting her reproductive organs for their opinions. She'll look at the law and try to determine if there is anything in the Constitution that justifies legalizing the termination of pregnancies. She won't listen to the ridiculous, overheated rhetoric about coat hangers.

I want a conservative woman justice who won't impose her conception of “privacy,” and “equal protection,” “religious freedom” and “speech” on the rest of us. She won't allow others to tell her that opposition to same-sex marriage is religious bigotry, if she believes that there is nothing in the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment that requires carving out a special privilege for Adam and Steve, while denying that same privilege to Bob, Carol, Ted and Alice.

I want a conservative woman justice who won't allow people to question her ability to be fair because she worships at a certain altar.

I want a conservative woman justice who will teach all of us that women think with their brains, and not their vaginas, and that they do not mistake loyalty to the sisterhood for loyalty to the law.

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Fear and loathing the pump: Self-service gas

When I tried to pump my own gas in California last year I shoved my debit card straight up the slot that dispenses receipts.

The card went in with a gratifying lack of friction.

I stood there for something like half a minute, no doubt with an expression of exquisitely placid stupidity on my face, waiting for the nozzle to leap out of its cradle and insert itself into the filler, or anyway for something to happen which denoted progress in a task that many thousands of 16-year-olds accomplish every day.

Perhaps I ought to have recognized my mistake right off.

But perhaps the cretins who designed the gas pump could have avoided making the receipt dispenser the exact width of a debit card.

I suppose it might have been an innocent oversight on their part — a potential customer error so improbable that even the federal government, which must have approved the design and which can get hysterical at the notion of somebody sleeping on a tagless mattress, decided it was so implausible as to be well nigh impossible.

But at the awful embarrassing instant when I realized my gaffe, I was convinced that I was the victim of a conspiracy — and possibly that I was the sole intended target.

I suspected the Illuminati was involved.

As my card disappeared into



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the black slit it struck me, in the depressing way that characterizes such screw ups, that there had been no telltale gentle tugging pressure, like a minnow nibbling at a hook, that indicates the machine inside has latched onto the card and will commence to pulling it the rest of the way in so that a clever identity thief can get his hands on it.

I had the brief hope that it was one of those mechanisms where you're supposed to jab the card in and then yank it out as quickly as possible, as though you were executing a daring fencing move or trying to stab an attacker. But I had thrust the card so far in that I could no longer wiggle it back out anyway.

In fact I could no longer even see its thin edge. As far as I could tell, the card might well have plummeted to the bottom of the pump housing, and possibly into the storage tank itself.

(I know as little about the plumbing schematics as I do about the electronics of these infernal devices.)

Defeated, I trudged over to the bunker-like structure where the station attendant sat, doing whatever it is that gas station workers do in states where customers

procure their own fuel.

He quickly quashed my forlorn hope that my gaffe was a frequent one, and that he had indeed been waiting to render aid as soon as he saw our Oregon license plate.

When I told him what happened I had to repeat myself twice. I don't believe he was confused about what I was saying so much as he was skeptical that I wasn't having one over on him.

His expression suggested that he was wondering not only how anybody could be so idiotic, but why that person would admit his ineptitude rather than simply phone the bank and order a new debit card.

The attendant wandered over to a shed and returned a minute later clutching a flat-bladed screwdriver and still looking vaguely amused.

He wedged the tip into the receipt slot and a few seconds later he turned and handed me the card. He looked sympathetic and frankly a bit curious, as though he wondered whether, after my adventures with the pump, I was actually going to try to operate an automobile.

I thanked him and gave the card to my wife, Lisa.

Once the attendant understood that I wouldn't be touching the gas pump itself — and thus a preemptive 9-1-1 call probably wasn't necessary — he returned to his bunker.

Lisa, who went to college in Idaho and so is not a complete neophyte with dispensing gas, deftly managed the fueling and the transac-

tion and we continued on our way.

You'll understand, then, why I reacted with a certain trepidation when Oregon lawmakers decided that the way California and 47 other states deal with the refueling of privately owned vehicles was perhaps not so asinine after all. (Needless to say I was not consulted.)

As my experience in California indicates, I have an innate (albeit a well-founded) fear of unfamiliar machinery. I distrust my ability to decipher instructions that include not only words, which I usually understand, but also diagrams, which almost always befuddle me as thoroughly as trigonometry did the one time I bothered to even open the textbook.

(I slammed the cover shut immediately, as though I had seen a snake, potentially one with venom that causes your limbs to fall off randomly, coiled on the table of contents page.)

I break out in a flop sweat whenever I go to the store and am confronted with a card machine I have never used, and there are several other customers behind me.

Gas pumps only accentuate my anxiety, since their very purpose, even when operated correctly, is to spew at a rapid rate an intensely inflammable liquid.

The first few times we took advantage of Oregon's more lenient fueling law I let Lisa handle the

task.

Although this probably implies, wrongly, that I had any choice in the matter. She was, after all, a witness to the California debit card debacle.

But there came a day not long ago when I needed gas and my only passenger was my son, Max, who's 7.

I briefly considered handing my debit card to him. I've watched Max assemble Lego kits in an hour — kits with instructions that to my eyes looked identical to that trig text — so I figured he could handle things. Also, most boys enjoy handling combustible materials of any sort.

But I mustered the courage — and clutched my card so hard my knuckles turned white — and managed to reach the blessed moment when the screen read “begin fueling.”

The actual gassing up is the least intimidating part of the job for me, mainly because the nozzle is designed to cut the flow if you do something stupid.

There is no such attempt to prevent mishaps with the card — to “idiotproof” it, to use the piquant, and appropriate, phrase.

Take a look at any gas pump island — the places are littered with crevices ready to accept a thin piece of plastic.

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