

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Merkley needs to decide

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon's U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley is doing more than toying with the idea of running for president in 2020.

He's formed a bunch of political action committees, hired staff in New Hampshire and Iowa, and appeared on TV news shows ... all the stuff a would-be presidential candidate might be expected to do.

There's just one problem. Merkley must run for the Senate in 2020 if he hopes to serve another term there, and under Oregon law he cannot run for both offices at the same time.

Merkley, who served in the Oregon House from 1999 to 2008 and was speaker in his final term, hopes to change that. He's already said he's running for the Senate.

The Legislature may well go along with Merkley. It will be controlled by Democrats in 2019, and the House, in particular, might be willing to give a former speaker of the same party that sort of a boost. That doesn't make the change a good idea.

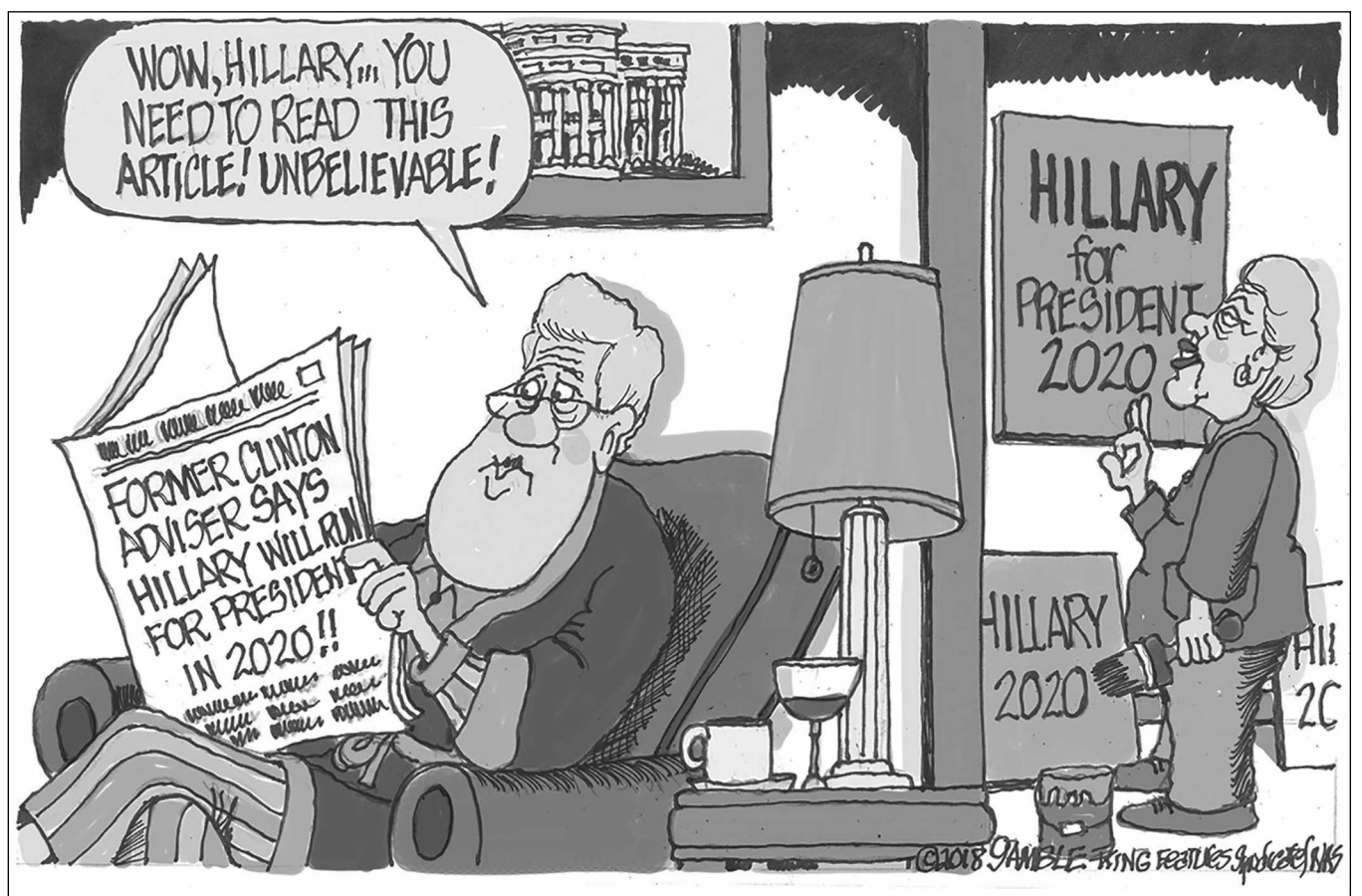
There are good reasons for denying Oregonians the right to be candidates "for more than one lucrative office to be filled at the same election," as the statute (ORS 249.013) puts it.

It's wrong because, were a person to be elected to both offices, that would leave a vacancy in one. In this case, the vacancy could be in the U.S. Senate, and while a new senator could be appointed, Oregonians deserve to vote on who will fill that office. A change in Oregon law would deny them that right.

Moreover, Oregonians deserve the right to vote for a candidate who really wants to be a U.S. senator, not for one who is on the ballot so he or she will have a job if that presidency thing doesn't work out. The Oregon Legislature has plenty to do in 2019 without passing a job security bill for Sen. Merkley.

Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Letters are limited to 350 words. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days. Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.



GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from McClatchy Newspapers (The Sacramento Bee, The Fresno Bee, The Modesto Bee, The Merced Sun-Star and The Tribune in San Luis Obispo):

The Camp Fire has claimed more than 60 victims, and rescue workers continue to search for hundreds who are still missing.

The Tubbs Fire, around Santa Rosa, killed 22 in 2017. Mudslides following the Thomas Fire in Southern California killed 20 people last year. Just months ago, seven people perished in the Carr Fire in Redding.

There are nearly 9,000 firefighters battling blazes this week in Malibu and Butte County.

Californians are anxious. And with our attention fixed on Paradise, we wonder: who will be next?

Scientists predict extreme fire danger across much of the West will become the new normal by the middle of the 21st century, per a recent report by the U.S. Forest Service. Jerry Brown, California's outgoing governor, says we're already living in the new abnormal.

Our hearts go out to those who have lost family, friends, pets and homes. One of the most-read stories on SacBee.com this week is about how to help, and there's no question your support is needed and appreciated.

But when it comes to tangible steps that will reduce tragedies, we face a long road.

State and federal agencies, environmentalists, businesses and homeowners must take seats at the same table.

We need a clear understanding of risks and tradeoffs and we need strategies to reduce the likelihood of another catastrophe.

There is room for optimism.

"Sometimes out of catastrophe comes greater unity," Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told The Bee's Dale Kasler last week in Butte County. Brown said last week that we should "learn how to do this together."

There are plenty of places to dig in:

- Are we doing enough to build fire resistance into our communities? Should building (or rebuilding) be allowed in fire-prone communities? Why spend millions on a mansion in the hills if we risk loss of life to defend it? Can homeowners or homeowners' associations accept responsibility for the risk that comes with a view of beautiful, old-growth trees out the kitchen window?

As homeowners, we must take personal responsibility for maintaining our land.

- For those who already live in high-risk areas, let's be proactive about cutting power lines that spark fires. What are the safest steps in areas where it's difficult, or even impossible, to bury lines? Are we prepared to live off generators during red-flag conditions?

- Evacuation routes are inadequate. What can we put in place as we move forward – sirens, improved reverse 911 calls or other solutions?

- We must improve forest management. We've been talking about this for decades. The biggest threat to our forests is not tree loss from harvest-

ing. It is catastrophic events such as wildfires. Forests will continue to burn and they will burn into our cities if we do not work together to reduce fuel. Sawmills can be retrofitted to accommodate smaller-diameter trees, those that are now serving as kindling for major fires. How can we responsibly remove those trees and cut down on chaparral and brush?

- We can also look at roadways, which are major flashpoints for human-caused fires. State lawmakers are working on a proposal to thin vegetation growing along forest roads, a logical solution to make fire-prone areas more defensible.

- One of Gavin Newsom's first priorities as governor must be to convene an inclusive and thoroughly serious summit on this issue. He must provide it with direction and deadlines.

- Breathing the smoke from these fires is dangerous. Period. The chemicals and particulates it contains worsen virtually every respiratory condition; often severely. Look out your window, and realize we all are in danger from these fires.

Private landowners, environmentalists, the federal government and our incoming governor and lawmakers all have a role. All of us have a responsibility to demand change and to acknowledge that it comes only if we work together.

If we do not, California will continue to burn. Our friends and family will continue to be at risk for homelessness and, as we have seen this week, far worse.

Elk hunt adds a chapter to a family's history

It was one of those father-son bonding moments, the likes of which don't happen often, and it was my rare privilege to be present.

The boy isn't my son, but that in no way diminished my gratitude at being able to watch the episode and to participate in a minor way.

As I watched my brother-in-law, Dave Britton, stand beside his 16-year-old son, Tyler, while Tyler shot his first elk, a fine big bull with seven points on one side of his rack and five on the other, my heart ached in that unique and pleasant way that it does when you're experiencing an event that lasts seconds but which will forever remain as part of a family's lore.

I had my binoculars to my eyes as Tyler fired the final shot. I saw the bull crumple and immediately go still.

Tyler and Dave, who were standing about 40 yards from me, slapped hands.

"Great shot," Dave and I said almost simultaneously as the tension of the previous minutes suddenly eased.

It was indeed fine marksmanship. Tyler, who had nothing on which to rest his barrel, had fired the last bullet from almost 400 yards, a considerable distance for a 7 mm-08 cartridge.

The moment was indelible, and the sight of Tyler and Dave standing



JAYSON JACOBY

together, both clad in camouflage and hunter orange vests and caps, the boy a few inches shorter than his dad, seemed to me a perfect tableau.

Even the binoculars felt right. Their knurled black plastic was worn smooth in places by the hands of my maternal grandfather, Edmund Klecker, whose initials are scratched onto the case and whose first name my wife and I bestowed on our son, Max, as his middle name.

My Grandpa Klecker, who died in 1980, was quite an outdoorsman himself. And although he preferred backpacking into and fishing the high lakes of the Central Cascades, I thought it not farfetched to imagine that the 7-power glasses might once have afforded him a similar view of a successful hunt.

As every hunter knows who has ever filled a tag, the exhilaration of that moment, in the silence after Tyler fired the last shot, was rapidly replaced by the drudgery, much of it rather messy, that involves turning a massive animal into edible meat.

A frosty twilight had fallen before

we lugged the first batch of bloody cloth bags to the nearest road, where Tyler's grandpa, Howard Britton, met us.

The chilly breeze felt fine on my cheeks, which were dappled with sweat as I trudged along with a hindquarter awkwardly draped over my shoulders.

(Awkward being the only way an elk hindquarter can be hauled. At least by me.)

I had pretty much decided to scrap my down jacket, which was liberally decorated with blood and has a bum zipper anyhow, but the hawthorn thicket I blundered through ensured the garment was doomed.

In the glare of my headlamp I noticed the jacket was disgorging feathers from one major gash and a few smaller ones, creating a brief but well-insulating blizzard.

(The fault lies with me, of course, since the hawthorns, like most foliage, aren't capable of ambushing a person. For a reason that escapes me now, I was in the lead of our little venison parade, and the route I chose could not be fairly described as direct. Unless by direct you mean directly into a thicket of thorny trees.)

We returned the next morning at dawn to bring out the rest of the meat. It was an altogether satisfying hunt — probably the most satisfying hunt I've ever been on, and I never

carried a rifle.

The episode was the epitome of the classic big game hunt, a mixture of depression and excitement and anticipation and exhaustion.

Fortunately I had packed many fun size Snickers bars. I would not have survived without them.

We had started walking along about daybreak from near the summit of the Snake River Road south of Richland. Tyler had received one of three permits to hunt on Idaho Power Company's 10,000-acre Daly Creek property west of Brownlee Reservoir, but we had to hike across a couple miles of BLM ground to get to where we'd seen elk the day before.

Mileage is the typical way to gauge hiking distance, of course, but the method has little relevance along the breaks of Hells Canyon.

The topography is so consistently jumbled, so unrelenting in its harshness, that a mile, which is a trifling distance on a well-graded trail, can require that you negotiate two or three draws, each involving a few hundred feet of elevation loss (and, of course, gain).

We had been walking for more than four hours, and had peered into several canyons without seeing anything but a handful of deer and several coveys of chukars, when Dave finally spotted the elk herd.

They were spread out at the head

of a draw that included a rarity in this arid land — a grove of Douglas-fir trees. A handful of elk were bedded down among the firs, and several dozen more were feeding on a grassy bench below. Dave, who has a range finder, pegged the distance at 900 yards.

We decided to circle around the basin, staying behind the rimrock to avoid alerting the elk.

This took more than an hour. As we rounded the ridgeline and approached the bench a snow squall wandered in from the Wallows and pelted our faces with snow driven by a brisk wind from the northeast.

We saw a couple of spikes, but Dave noticed a branch-antlered bull off by himself. I held back while Dave and Tyler crept toward the herd, reasoning that adding another pair of feet — and clumsy ones at that, which mine most assuredly are — could only reduce the chance that Tyler would get a shot.

A few minutes later, in the glow of the westerling sun on a properly nippy November day, I watched the pair celebrate a milestone that will be relived, and savored, for decades to come.

It is a fine thing to watch a chapter of a family's history — the very best sort of history — being written.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.