

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Don't limit search for Richardson successor

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Dennis Richardson, Oregon's secretary of state, died Tuesday night of brain cancer. Now it's up to Gov. Kate Brown to appoint his successor.

Richardson, a Republican and six-term member of the Oregon House, was the first member of his party to hold statewide office in more than a decade. He was elected secretary of state in November 2016.

Richardson was admirably suited to the job. He was a policy wonk and not afraid to immerse himself in the details.

Richardson's brief career as secretary of state was highlighted by a variety of audits of public agencies. His auditors pointed out serious problems with the Department of Human Service's foster care and other childhood welfare programs, they uncovered millions of dollars of Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid) overpayments, and, most recently, found lax state oversight of spending by the state's public school districts.

He also helped reinstate thousands of Oregonians to active voter rolls in early 2017. He did so by doubling, to 10 years, the time a voter could go without casting a ballot before being declared inactive. At the time, he noted it made little sense to automatically register new voters when they obtain driver licenses while at the same time denying Oregonians the right to vote for failing to do so for a relatively short period of time.

Now it's up to the governor to appoint a successor, who must also be a Republican, to Richardson. She has said she wants someone who will promise not to seek election to that office later.

That shouldn't be her standard. Rather, she should choose the best qualified person for Richardson's job, future plans notwithstanding. Her selection has big shoes to fill, and limiting her choice based on political plans can't guarantee she'll name the best person for the job.

Letters to the editor

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Cohen hearing was a farce

JAY AMBROSE

He was a star witness and then some, a former lawyer for Donald Trump who said he started the glory hound's presidential campaign and that, if this racist, con man and cheat should lose in 2020, he would never allow a peaceful transition. We're talking about congressional testimony from Michael Cohen, a convicted liar rattling off little that was new in a hearing that was a farce from the beginning.

The House Democrats in charge of the proceeding could have scheduled this nationally watched TV show at any old time, but chose Wednesday, the same day our president was negotiating overseas with North Korea on nuclear weaponry. A possible message to the Communist murderers was that our leader might be shred of power to do them harm and so why concede anything? For Trump himself, it could well have been an unneeded diversion while trying to save multi-millions from a world's worth of horror. Whatever, the talks collapsed.

Let's turn then to the Washington drama and how the well-spoken star of the show – he spent 10 years wading in scum to suit Trump's standards – had to compete with a long list of supporting actors in entertaining the masses. We're talking, to begin with, about Democratic representatives focused less on questions than speeches about how great they were, how unspeakably degenerate Trump and the Republicans were, and how only they would do what's right.

Instead of defending Trump, Republicans replied that Democrats and unjust players in the Justice Department were the threat, and, as to Trump's faults, they said Cohen was likely lying. But understand that he is facing several years in prison in part for lying to Congress in the past and would surely be caught if he tried it again on specific, testable issues. Several years could become much more, and he is not so dumb as to risk that.

In fact, Cohen insists he is now a good guy. He probably sees his role in history as helping to bring down Trump. His criticisms tended to confirm that Trump was someone who wouldn't have had a political chance if luck had not provided as scary an opponent as Hillary Clinton to make him president. Many of his core supporters still like him because he has embraced and delivered on worthy goals while too many of his opponents inspire disgust.

When he did get to talk, Cohen told us again how Trump paid a porn star to shut her mouth about a sex session. That's not illegal per se. He implied Trump was in cahoots with Wikileaks because he was informed of email releases damaging to Clinton. Even if true, that's hardly proof that he had a hand either in collecting or distributing them. Cohen said he saw Donald Trump Jr. whisper in his daddy's ear

once and heard him say the meeting was set. Legalese may consider that evidence of Russian collusion, but not common sense.

For all of that, there is a place where gotcha dragons lurk. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York is said to be investigating financial trickery by Trump. Such matters mentioned by Cohen could lead to impeachment efforts and eventual jail time even if special counsel Robert Mueller's report lets Trump off the hook on Russian collusion and obstruction of justice.

Whatever happens, we must not yawn about all the egregious excesses we have been facing, such as debasing the basic principle of attorney-client privilege to set this hearing up or an unjust Justice Department making governance harder than usual or the illiberal rise of socialism among some freedom-obstructing Democrats.

Impeachment, impeachment, impeachment will likely be the continued leftist cry and so it is that real duties will often be ignored for the sake of more disruption. If we do not vote wisely, we citizens ourselves could wake up someday and find ourselves impeached, which is to say, torn away from a constitutionally observant political system as well as from trust and our most precious rights and values.

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Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Trump wise to walk away rather than make a bad deal

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

The abrupt end to President Donald Trump's summit meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Un may strike some as a huge embarrassment for a president who portrays himself as the ultimate dealmaker. It wasn't. Instead, Trump deserves credit for leaving Vietnam when he concluded that Kim was insisting on unreasonable terms — the lifting of all U.S. economic sanctions if the North dismantled its nuclear complex in Yongbyon.

Before the summit, it was thought

North Korea might decommission that site in exchange for the U.S. agreeing to a formal statement ending the Korean War and perhaps relief from some sanctions. But Trump said Kim demanded much more: the lifting of sanctions "in their entirety." Added Trump, "We couldn't do that." (North Korean foreign minister Ri Yong Ho disputed Trump's account, saying that the North asked for the lifting of only those sanctions that "hamper the civilian economy and the livelihood of our people.")

Trump and his advisers had indicated they were willing to make

concessions and accept incremental steps from North Korea rather than immediate denuclearization. Reportedly the administration was even willing to defer its demand that the North provide an inventory of its nuclear stockpile and ballistic missiles. But in the end, Kim apparently wasn't content with such concessions.

The president's decision to leave without even a vague agreement is especially notable in light of his boasting about his personal relationship with Kim. (He had said, only half-jokingly, that "we fell

in love.")

But it was still the right decision, and it doesn't necessarily mean the engagement is over or that the U.S. and North Korea won't reach an agreement in the future.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan walked away from a summit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, after failing to reach a sweeping agreement on reducing nuclear arsenals. But the U.S. and the Soviets continued to communicate, and in 1987 Reagan and Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range

And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF) treaty, which grew out of discussions in Reykjavik. (Irony alert: The Trump administration has announced that the U.S. is withdrawing from that agreement.)

Trump has been widely criticized for being too eager to "make a deal" and overconfidence in his ability to bond with foreign leaders. His decision to reject an unacceptable offer from Kim may reflect the counsel of harder-headed advisers, but the final decision was his. He has acted against type, and his critics should thank him for that.