

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Driver card: Good idea, badly done

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

The 2019 Oregon Legislature knows best. It knows rent control is the right thing to do and that news outlets should pay less for public records than everyone else. Each one of those bills ends with an emergency clause to prevent opponents from gathering signatures to have it challenged before it goes into effect.

So, too, does House Bill 2015, a measure that would allow the state Department of Transportation to issue driver's licenses to people even if they cannot prove they're living legally in the United States.

We supported similar legislation when it was approved by lawmakers and signed by then-Gov. John Kitzhaber in 2013. At the time we believed the measure could improve highway safety, because anyone getting either a full license or what were then called driver cards had to pass a written exam to do so. That hasn't changed.

What has changed is this: In 2014, voters rejected the driver card measure by a nearly 2 to 1 margin in a vote on Measure 88.

But Oregon lawmakers may suspect that without the emergency clause, the driver's license bill and others they introduce would, indeed, be challenged. They know, too, that some actually would be overturned, and clearly, they're not willing to take that chance.

Emergency clauses on measures that do not address real emergencies do Oregon no good. Rather, they build public distrust of the Legislature. It's a practice that should have been ended years ago.

Letters to the editor

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- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

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NeverTrump movement slows

DAVID AZERRAD

With the over-hyped but underwhelming conclusion of the Mueller investigation, whatever dreams NeverTrumpers within the GOP had of removing the president from office have vanished. Their last flicker of hope lies in mounting a Republican primary challenge in 2020 — a strategy doomed to fail.

NeverTrumpism is not dead, but it is on life support with no possibility of returning to the vitality it displayed in 2016. Were it not for the news media's eagerness to amplify the voices of those who hate the president, the movement would have long since been relegated to the more obscure corners of the internet.

NeverTrumpism still exists only because the Left finds it useful to add a sprinkling of "conservative" anti-Trump vitriol to its progressive anti-Trump vitriol. At this point, it is becoming difficult to distinguish the NeverTrumpers who claim to be on the Right from the anti-Trumpers on the Left.

Among conservatives, NeverTrumpism is already a fringe and irrelevant movement, its ranks having been decimated by countless defections. Most onetime NeverTrump commentators — like Ben Shapiro, Rich Lowry and Erick Erickson — have long since rejoined the ranks of fair-minded conservatives who simply judge Trump the way they would any other Republican president, praising him when warranted, criticizing him when necessary. A handful, led by Max Boot, have abandoned conservatism altogether. They are not missed.

The leading NeverTrumpers in Congress have either retired (Sens.

Jeff Flake and Bob Corker), become irrelevant (Sen. Ben Sasse) or died (Sen. John McCain). The flagship publication of their movement, the Weekly Standard, folded at the end of last year. Its online reincarnation, the Bulwark, has none of its clout or reach.

The Right has tuned out the few lingerers. The president's approval rating with Republican voters now stands at 89 percent. By comparison, Obama's was at 80 percent with Democratic voters at the same time in his presidency.

The conservative case against Trump was strongest during the 2016 Republican primary, when there were many qualified candidates to choose from. Once Trump became the Republican nominee, however, the reasonable conservative case against Trump became the indefensible NeverTrump case for Hillary Clinton.

Our presidential elections are, for better or for worse, binary propositions. The known unknowns of a Trump presidency should have been preferable for conservatives to the known knowns of a Clinton presidency. Still, there was no way to fully refute the apocalyptic predictions NeverTrumpers made during the 2016 race, however implausible or silly they were.

Now, 2½ years into the Trump presidency, the case for NeverTrumpism has completely collapsed. Not one of the overblown doomsday scenarios that President Trump was supposed to unleash on humanity has panned out.

The economy hasn't collapsed. Fascism hasn't come to America. And we aren't at war with the world.

The president, in fact, has an impressive record of conservative accomplishments. Admittedly, it is easy to lose sight of them amid the flurry of tweets, the high turnover rate in the administration and the daily skirmishes with journalists. But Trump has cut taxes, pursued an aggressive deregulatory agenda, boosted the defense budget and appointed two fine justices to the Supreme Court as well as a record number of appellate judges to the federal bench.

The economy is growing, unemployment is falling and wages are rising. We have pulled out of the Paris accord, withdrawn from the Iran nuclear deal, and destroyed Islamic State. Trump has arguably done more to advance the conservative agenda than any other of the 16 Republican candidates he ran against would have.

If anything, it is Trump's original die-hard supporters who have the most reason to be disappointed with him. His rhetoric notwithstanding, Trump has proven to be more of a conventional Republican than an "America first" nationalist. The great irony, which is entirely lost on the NeverTrumpers, is that in terms of policy, Trump has turned out to be the kind of president they always said they wanted but predicted he could never be.

David Azerrad is director of the B. Kenneth Simon Center for Principles and Politics and the AWC Family Foundation Fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from Bloomberg News:

If there's one thing the huge (and growing) field of Democratic presidential aspirants largely agrees on, it's that the U.S. ought to reenter the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. This week, Pete Buttigieg and Beto O'Rourke became the latest to join the chorus. Unfortunately, going down this path would be a big mistake — and a missed opportunity.

Known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear deal was negotiated by President Barack Obama's administration and agreed to by Iran and six world powers in 2015. In essence, it sought to impose a 25-year quarantine on the Islamic Republic's ability to develop nuclear weapons. Last year, President Donald Trump unilaterally terminated the agreement.

Although Trump's decision was rash, it wasn't wrong. The deal was fatally flawed.

Even as it was being negotiated, critics in the Middle East and beyond complained that the Obama administration was ignoring Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. They feared the regime would use the political cover provided by the JCPOA to step up its threatening behavior.

They were right. Since the deal, Iran has only grown more belligerent. In Syria, it has helped President Bashar al-Assad slaughter his own citizens. In Lebanon and Palestine, Iraq and Yemen, it has continued to arm brutal proxy fighters. It has only intensified its pursuit of ballistic-missile technology and its cyberattacks against the U.S. If an agreement limited to nuclear weapons was too narrow in 2015, Iran's actions since have made such a deal entirely insufficient.

With Trump's policies doing little to curtail this behavior, Democratic candidates should

seize the opportunity to push for a new deal. Rather than merely bringing the U.S. back into the JCPOA, they should insist on a broader, genuinely comprehensive bargain that fixes the defects in the original and takes into account Iran's recent aggression.

A new deal should require Iran to forswear not only nuclear weapons, but also missiles capable of carrying them. It should demand that the regime cease its other threatening activities in the region and allow for more intrusive and aggressive monitoring than that stipulated in the original agreement. It should also spell out tough sanctions that Iran would incur if it strays from the terms.

Iran's incentives to reopen talks, meanwhile, would be the same as those that informed its decision to come to the table in 2015: to end decades of near-isolation, escape the shackles of economic sanctions, and

finally build a nation that can live up to the potential of its people.

The regime might reasonably argue that Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA makes such agreements moot. That objection can best be overcome by fixing another of the old deal's weaknesses: It was an executive agreement, rather than a formal treaty. The presidential candidates should commit to submitting any new bargain to Congress for ratification, thereby forestalling Iran's skepticism about its durability.

Since Trump's policies have shown no signs of working, it surely makes sense for presidential candidates to signal a renewed openness to talks with Iran. But they should also recognize that the Islamic Republic's actions have changed the facts on the ground, making a simple return to the terms of 2015 impossible.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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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.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.