

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Don't forget to fill out your ballot

The online candidate forum sponsored by the EO Media Group is over, and we are all pleased it proved to be a success.

A gathering of candidates during an election to answer questions and present their views is always good news and should help voters who are undecided to make an informed choice.

To make an informed choice, though, one must vote. Ballots are already out, and many voters will not choose to exercise their fundamental right to choose who they want to represent them.

There is no other more important element to democracy than the ability and the privilege to vote.

We harp on the importance of voting from time to time for a good reason — it is important.

Especially now as the entire nation staggers under the impact of the COVID-19 virus, our ability to exercise our right to vote is crucial.

The virus has changed our lives in fundamental ways and going forward our nation will be different until a vaccine can be discovered, and then administered on a widespread basis. Until then, we will be subjected to a new paradigm, but what will continue to remain is our basic building block of government — voting.

Voting — even vote by mail — can end up being a chore. The ballot can sit on the kitchen table or on the couch or chair for days, seemingly forgotten as we all try to find a way to respond and overcome the challenges presented by the COVID-19 virus. This election there is not a long list of candidates vying for positions, but there are some important races that voters should give more than a passing glance to.

First and foremost is the race for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District. As longtime lawmaker Greg Walden prepares to leave that position, a sizable group of people is trying to gain his congressional seat. The position is an important one. The winner will be the direct representative for the people who inhabit Eastern Oregon in Washington, D.C., and therefore should be someone who voters believe understands our unique values and culture well.

So, voters should not shrug off the primary election. A lot may not seem to be at stake but, especially regarding the 2nd Congressional District race, the importance of this election is huge for the future of not only Oregon but our little piece of it.

So, don't forget to vote. Exercise the right for which so many Americans have sacrificed their lives.

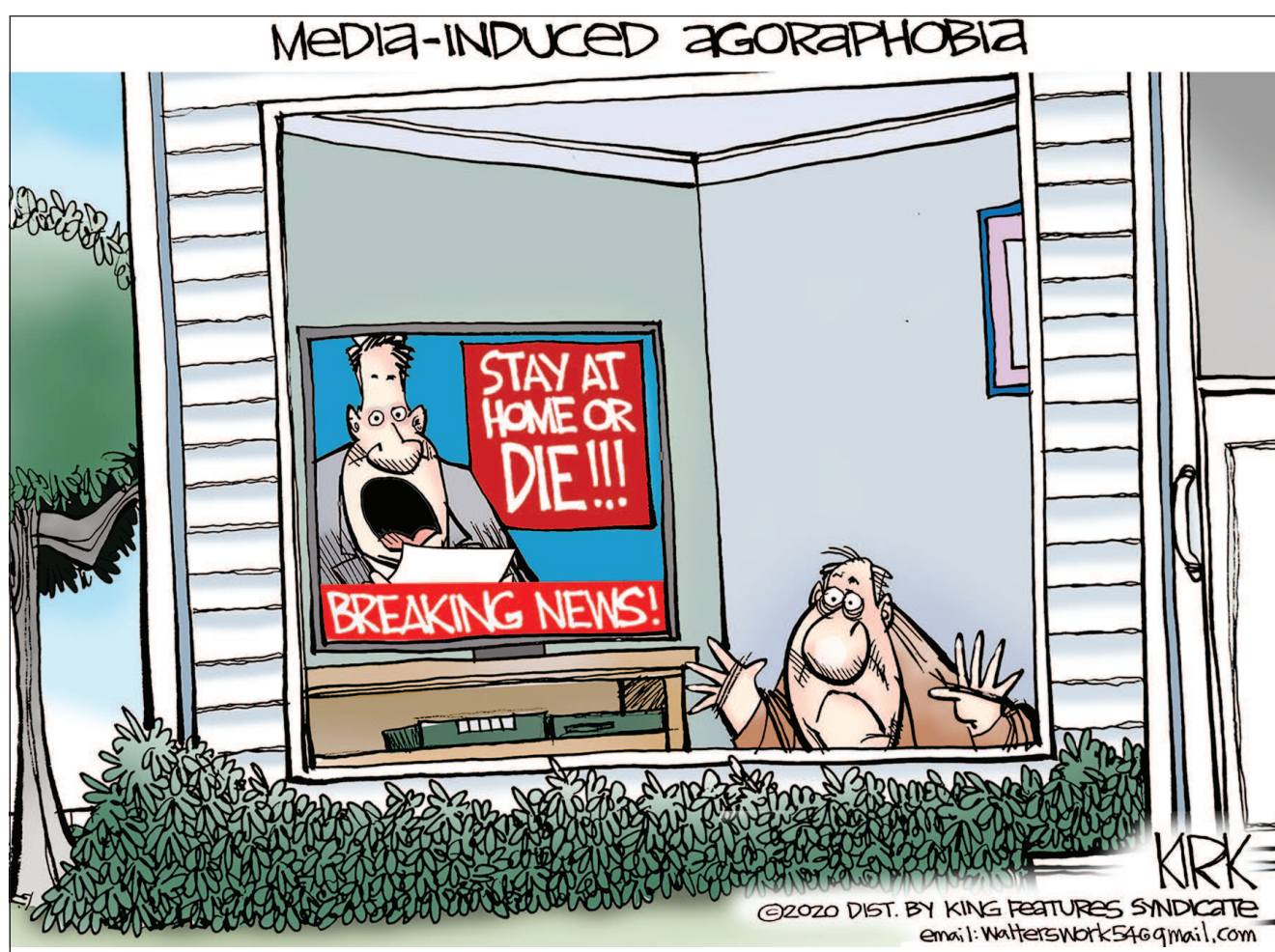
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Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- 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.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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Sex assault charges should be examined fairly — in all cases

**SAMANTHA HARRIS
JOE COHN**

“For a woman to come forward in the glaring lights of focus, nationally, you’ve got to start off with the presumption that at least the essence of what she’s talking about is real, whether or not she forgets facts, whether or not it’s been made worse or better over time.”

Former Vice President Joe Biden said this in 2018, speaking about the allegations made by Christine Blasey Ford against then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. This statement was consistent with Biden’s message over the years as the leading proponent of a system under which countless college students accused of sexual misconduct were suspended or expelled from school without so much as a hearing or the presumption of innocence.

On the campaign trail, Biden has promised to bring back that system if elected. For instance, he has pledged to restore the disastrous 2011 Title IX “Dear Colleague” letter, rescinded in 2017, that stripped accused students of critical due-process protections in campus sexual misconduct proceedings. Spurred on by the public advocacy of Biden and others, that letter kicked off an era of aggressive Title IX mis-enforcement that has developed a legacy of injustice through profoundly unfair disciplinary proceedings. Since 2011, more than 600 accused students have sued their universities alleging they were denied even the most basic due-process protections in those proceedings, and many courts have agreed with them.

Now that Biden himself has been accused of sexual assault by former staffer Tara Reade, he and his allies find themselves scrambling to distinguish this situation from those in which the principle of “believe all women” should apply. At the same time, some who normally call for due process and even-handedness in the face of sexual assault allegations are filling social media with the type of #IBelieve hashtags we would

normally expect from their opponents on the issue.

This is wrong, and we all know it. Were we or someone we loved to be accused of sexual misconduct, none of us would simply assume the accusation to be true based on the fact that it was made, or on the accuser’s identity. Even from a purely mercenary political view, the allegations against Biden, along with those lodged against President Donald Trump, former senator Al Franken and Justice Kavanaugh, underscore the necessity of evaluating complaints thoroughly and consistently.

There is no better time to set our collective partisanship aside and take this opportunity to reach a mutual understanding of the value of due process and the presumption of innocence.

This means reconsidering the institutionalization of the view that any accusation of sexual assault must automatically be believed. Both on campus and off, policies built upon that premise have unjustly upended lives and careers and made a mockery of due process. And while Biden, Trump and other powerful people accused of misconduct have many resources with which to defend themselves, the throngs of nameless college students who find themselves in similar situations often have only the hope of a fair hearing.

The Biden controversy takes place as the Department of Education nears finalizing long-awaited new regulations to ensure that allegations of sexual misconduct on campus are investigated thoroughly and adjudicated fairly, without sacrificing procedural safeguards. Unfortunately, Biden and many of

those rushing to his defense are among these measures’ strongest critics.

Some will likely use these allegations to pressure Biden into continuing to campaign against the new regulations, as a way of proving that he generally supports accusers, just not Reade. We hope instead that this incident will lead Biden and his supporters to reassess the impact of eliminating safeguards like the presumptions of innocence, the ability to review all of the evidence in an institution’s possession, the right to be represented by legal counsel, even the right to a hearing itself — all of which are routinely denied on our nation’s campuses.

Meanwhile, those who delight in watching Biden be hoisted by his own petard should instead demand the same type of evidence-based inquiry into Reade’s allegations that they would demand under other circumstances. Two wrongs don’t make a right.

Playing politics with due process devalues the individual lives and experiences of the accusers, whose complaints end up being evaluated based not on evidence, but on partisan utility. This, again, is wrong, and is a powerful reminder of how due process benefits the accuser as well as the accused. Fair procedures that don’t allow allegations to be swept under the rug, corners to be cut, or identity to determine outcome are what separate a witch hunt from a credible process likely to reach a just outcome.

Whether on or off-campus, honest investigations and due process should not be partisan issues. Our support for fair procedures should not depend on who is accused.

Samantha Harris is senior fellow and Joe Cohn is legislative and policy director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (thefire.org). They wrote this for InsideSources.com.

Your views

Trump’s behavior suggests something seriously wrong

President Trump’s behavior patterns and personality traits are on full display for all to see. They are available for everyone to assess, even though we don’t have degrees in psychology or psychiatry, as long as we are open-minded.

And our assessments should be telling us that something is seriously wrong with Donald J. Trump.

We may not be able to get inside his head to determine if he sadistically enjoys seeing 63,000 deaths (Cindy Birko’s op-ed of April 23: “Our president can’t be trusted”), but it’s unnecessary. His behavior already clearly intersects with the definition of a sociopath, combined with a severe learning disorder — a reading-comprehension deficit.

You can look up the profile of a

sociopath:

- Glibness and superficial charm.
- Manipulative and conning. They never recognize the rights of others and see their self-serving behaviors as permissible ...
- Grandiose sense of self ...
- Pathological lying ...
- Lack of remorse, shame, or guilt ...
- Shallow emotions ...
- Incapacity for love ...

This suggests that Trump does not necessarily gain pleasure from harming, humiliating, and degrading other people — but rather that he is totally insensitive to their pain, focusing only on himself and his self-betterment.

The “pathological lying” trait is seen in thousands of his public statements, his unreleased tax returns, and even his cheating at golf.

His history of brutally stifling his business creditors and suppliers aligns

with failing to “recognize the rights of others” and “self-serving behaviors,” as does his trillion-dollar tax cuts for himself and his fellow millionaires. Ditto his fatal month-and-a-half delay in publicly reacting to COVID-19 to calm the stock market and protect his re-election.

His learning disability shows up in his reported rejection of written information (like the President’s Daily Briefing) in favor of, say, TV reports (like Fox News). Another indication is his lack of vocal inflection as he reads from a document or a teleprompter. He does not understand what he reads.

I don’t see a remedy for this before the presidential election. I pray my fellow readers will consider his tragically failed leadership as they decide how to vote.

Marshall McComb
Baker City