

Did Cliff Bentz fail Oregonians?

If you have been reading the paper, you know Rep. Cliff Bentz, the newly elected Republican representing Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, objected to the certification of electors from Pennsylvania.

Should Bentz have done that? The state's Democratic Party says he failed Oregonians. Did Bentz have a point? If he did, was it the right thing to bring it up?

Almost anything that happened in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday has been drowned out by the president of the United States inciting an attack by a mob on the legislative branch. Even before that, it was difficult to take any of the Republican challenges to the November election seriously. Most were not backed by the slimmest of facts. Courts rejected them. The challenges also threatened to disenfranchise millions of Americans, if not imperil the democracy.

Bentz was concerned about what happened with what's called Act 77 in Pennsylvania. It passed the Legislature there in 2019. Among other things, it established universal mail-in voting in the state. If Pennsylvanians wanted to vote with a mail-in ballot, they could. They didn't need an excuse. Other states have not been as swift as Oregon to allow that.

In September 2020, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court extended the deadline to accept absentee ballots in that state by three days after the Nov. 3 election to Nov. 6. The Pennsylvania secretary of state and others argued additional time was needed because of postal issues and backlogs related to COVID-19.

Bentz's complaint was Pennsylvania's secretary of state "and the state's Supreme Court did not adhere to the statutes set forth by the legislature when they extended deadlines for the return of absentee ballots. This action violated the principles of Article II of the (U.S.) Constitution because the state legislature had not previously delegated broader authority to the secretary (of state)."

Lawyers with the support of President Donald Trump's campaign effectively asked the U.S. Supreme Court to take up this particular Pennsylvania question twice. The court declined.

At least four conservative justices on the U.S. Supreme Court were, though, concerned about what the Pennsylvania Supreme Court did. "The provisions of the federal Constitution conferring on state legislatures, not state courts, the authority to make rules governing federal elections would be meaningless," Justice Samuel Alito wrote, "if a state court could override the rules adopted by the legislature simply by claiming that a state constitutional provision gave the courts the authority to make whatever rules it thought appropriate for the conduct of a fair election." Bentz made a similar argument.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who is also a conservative, did not side with those justices. He has made a different argument that state courts have the right to interpret the state's constitution and laws. Others on the Supreme Court have believed voting accommodations could be warranted during a pandemic. New Justice Amy Coney Barrett did not participate.

So Bentz did bring up an arguably unsettled constitutional question. But was it then correct for him to object to the election results for Pennsylvania?

The voters spoke. The election was not close. The U.S. Supreme Court also spoke. It did not reach a clear conclusion in agreement with Bentz. Bentz could have let it go. It's not as if the issue would be forgotten if he did not raise an objection on the House floor. He chose to stick to his convictions. Did he fail Oregonians?

Historical editorials: Don't condemn city

■ *Editor's note: The following editorials originally appeared in what was then called The Bend Bulletin on Dec. 22, 1905.*

Now comes Bull Creek flat with a sugar beet showing of unusual merit. Evidently the whole Deschutes country is naturally the best sugar beet country in the United States. Nature having done her part fully, what will man do to improve the sweet opportunity?

...

It is a mistake to suppose all the

people of Prineville are in sympathy with lawbreakers. Prineville does not differ greatly from any other American community. It has many excellent people — people of intelligence and character and fine sensibilities, who love justice and a square deal. That other elements frequently come into prominence is true of Prineville as it is of other towns. It is a mistake to condemn the town or the county because of occasional acts of disorder. Human society everywhere must struggle with such facts.

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



Here's how the riot at the Capitol unfolded

BY DAVID WEIGEL

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — On Wednesday morning, when I heard people chant "storm the Capitol," I didn't take it seriously.

It was 11:42 a.m., and I'd arrived on the East Lawn of the White House, where Vice President Mike Pence would enter, to check on the "Stop the Steal" protests. The crowd consisted of less than a thousand people, smaller than rallies I'd seen in the same place for opposing the Affordable Care Act, or blocking the Iran nuclear deal or, eventually, opposing the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

The president had begun his marathon speech outside the White House, and I was listening to a dozen people pray before an image of Jesus Christ when I heard a shout: "We love the Proud Boys!"

As I moved out of the way, a gang of Proud Boys, a male-chauvinist group with ties to white nationalism, marched past. "They can't stop us!" yelled the march leader, through a bullhorn. "I say we storm the Capitol!"

"Storm the Capitol!" someone else shouted, through another bullhorn. "Seventeen-seventy-six!" yelled someone else.

It took 90 more minutes for me to grasp the significance of that. A career covering politics, much of it spent on the conservative movement, had conditioned me to revolutionary rhetoric that nobody acts on. Yet here they were, acting out the plan they'd screamed into reality, walking right past me.

I usually avoid first-person writing. My initial plan for Wednesday was to talk to supporters of the president as the plan to throw out the results of the election foundered. But events have made that impossible. Although Joe

Biden was officially declared the president-elect early Thursday morning, that moment was delayed by an attempt to overthrow the government. I'm calling it that because it's what a critical mass of rioters believed they were doing.

It was clear, early yesterday morning, that the usual work of approaching political activists, asking for their names and writing up their opinions was not going to be easy. The first person I talked to, a man from Delaware holding the state flag, would only give his name as "Chris."

"What are you expecting to happen today?" I asked.

"To be honest, I'm just kind of holding my breath here, waiting for someone to make a (expletive) move," he said. "If they don't start (expletive) arresting people and hanging people real soon, they're going to be burning and hanging off these (expletive) trees out here."

I laughed awkwardly, and stopped at his next sentence: "We have the Constitution in this country. It defines the responsibilities and the limitations of the government." A few minutes later, I saw a reporter for the BBC being harassed by two activists, moving back with his camera as they moved toward him. When I walked over to help him, one of the activists began screaming for us both to leave.

"He has a right to be here, as do you," I said.

"No," she said. "You're communists. You're bought by China. Get out."

The whole day went like that, only worse. I never planned to enter the Capitol itself, due to restrictions on how many people could be inside at once. Instead, I watched thousands of people psych themselves up into crashing police barricades, cutting fences and eventually smashing windows to halt the

certification of the election.

For about an hour, I positioned myself on the West Lawn near a wall that activists were climbing over as they marched from the president's speech. One group of men shouted "build the gallows" as they looked for a path to the Capitol. A man egging on the wall-climbers shouted "military tribunals," trying to get a chant going, with a few people joining in. When there was a bang near the Capitol itself, there was a loud cheer: People assumed that the invasion was on.

The events of Jan. 6 will be with us for a long time, from the immediate political consequences to a criminal investigation that will make use of countless photos and videos, often taken by the people committing federal crimes. I don't know what effect it'll have on campaigns. But it felt like the end of something.

Everything I heard, from the threats to murder members of the government to the snarls meant to scare reporters away, was familiar from the rhetoric I'd seen online. I'd been conditioned to see it all as hyperbole, intentionally provocative trolling.

But when these rioters said "storm the Capitol," they meant that they would storm the Capitol. When they said "Hillary for prison," they meant that they wanted to jail the president's 2016 opponent. When they said "Biden's a pedophile," they meant that they thought the president-elect was either a member of an international ring of child rapists, or a freelancer with the same predilections. When they said "1776," they meant that the incoming government was illegitimate and tyrannical, and should be overthrown by force.

■ David Weigel is a national political correspondent covering Congress and grassroots political movements.

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

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How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

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P.O. Box 6020
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Why should Oregon work so hard for single-payer health care?

BY DR. SAMUEL METZ

The Bulletin's editorial, "Single-payer plan in the works for Oregon," identifies major challenges confronting the SB 770 Task Force. As a task force member, I can confirm that changing Oregon's health care industry is a heavy lift. Health care is the largest industry in Bend. It's the largest industry in the US. It's the largest industry in the world.

So in the face of this challenge, why is our task force investing so much effort to create a single-payer health care plan?

Because single payer provides better care to more people for less money.

Every single-payer plan in the U.S. and the world confirms this. Single payer examples like TriCare for the U.S. military, Medicare for seniors, the Oregon Health Plan for those unable to afford private insurance and the national plans of many European and

Pacific Rim countries achieve more with their health care dollars than our American multi-payer private plans.

Single payer is so effective that most large U.S. businesses offer private-single payer plans. We usually call them "self-funded plans," but they use key principles of single payer: Everyone participates in a single comprehensive plan with a single provider network. In Oregon, 60% of employer-sponsored health care plans reject private insurance policies in favor of single payer.

Oregonians are no stranger to single-payer health care. In Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, 80% of residents already receive health care through a private or public single-payer plan. This includes everyone who participates in Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Plan, and an employer single-payer plan.

Our SB 770 Task Force wants everyone in Oregon already enrolled

GUEST COLUMN



Metz

in these many single-payer plans to join one statewide plan, and then bring in everyone else. The economies of scale, especially the dramatic reduction of administrative costs to patients and providers, save enough money to expand care to everyone in Oregon for less money than we spend now.

But The Bulletin editorial identifies our challenges, which are significant. First, multiple federal laws (especially ERISA) prevent any state from marshaling all public and private health-care spending into a common fund. Remediating this requires Congress to pass a states' rights health care super-

waiver, much like HR 5010, the "State-Based Universal Health Care Act." (Four of Oregon's U.S. representatives co-sponsor this bill.)

Working around federal law without such enabling legislation will leave Oregon with multiple health care payers, sacrificing the efficiency of a single-payer system.

Second, the editorial asks "How would Oregon pay for it?" Oregonians already pay more than enough for universal health care. We don't get it because our multi-payer system is the most inefficient in the world. Single payer in Oregon requires less money, not more.

Third, the editorial implies that radical improvement requires radical change. This is correct. Our dysfunctional health care system is as efficient as it can be. Small tweaks will not bring big results. We need big change.

Lastly, the editorial asks a key ques-

tion: When many Oregonians have lost trust in all institutions, both private and government, how can we ask them to accept publicly-administered, tax-funded health care?

This question is absolutely critical to our task force. The answer lies with everyone in Oregon who wants sustainable, affordable, quality health care for themselves, their families, their employees and their community. I ask the editors of The Bulletin, the readers of The Bulletin and Oregonians everywhere to be advocates for single-payer health care: better care to more people for less money.

■ Dr. Samuel Metz lives in Portland and is a member of Oregon's SB 770 Task Force on Single Payer Health Care. He is vice president of Oregon Physicians for a National Health Program and a founding member of Mad As Hell Doctors. He was a member of Oregon's 2018 Universal Access to Health Care legislative work group and of the Oregon Medical Association's 2018 Universal Healthcare Task Force.