

# Oregon, Alabama and the pains of one-party rule

Oregonians would not usually look to Alabama for an example. But during his post-election press conference, Alabama's Senator-elect Doug Jones said something that applies to our state's condition.

Noting his historic win last week — becoming the first Democratic U.S. senator from Alabama in 25 years — Jones said that a state benefits when its two political parties are competitive. Conversely, Jones said, it is not healthy for a state to be dominated by one party.

That observation fits Oregon, because we have become a one-party state. Victor Atiyeh was Oregon's last Republican governor. He was one of Oregon's best governors of the postwar era, serving from 1979 to 1987.

More significantly, the state Legislature is dominated by the Democratic party. That has led to a very unhealthy outcome, with public employee unions carrying outsized and unchecked power in the capitol.

It is worth remembering that until 1954, Republicans were Oregon's progressive party, in the Theodore Roosevelt mode.

In the words of one historian, Oregon Democrats were "inarticulate" until the 1950s.

A state legislator from Portland named Richard Neuberger appeared and the Democrats gained a voice, who happened to be one of America's most prolific writers. Neuberger became Oregon's first Democratic U.S. senator in 40 years. Subsequent Democrats such as Vera Katz, John Kitzhaber and Barbara Roberts were Neuberger's beneficiaries.

More importantly, Gov. Tom McCall credited

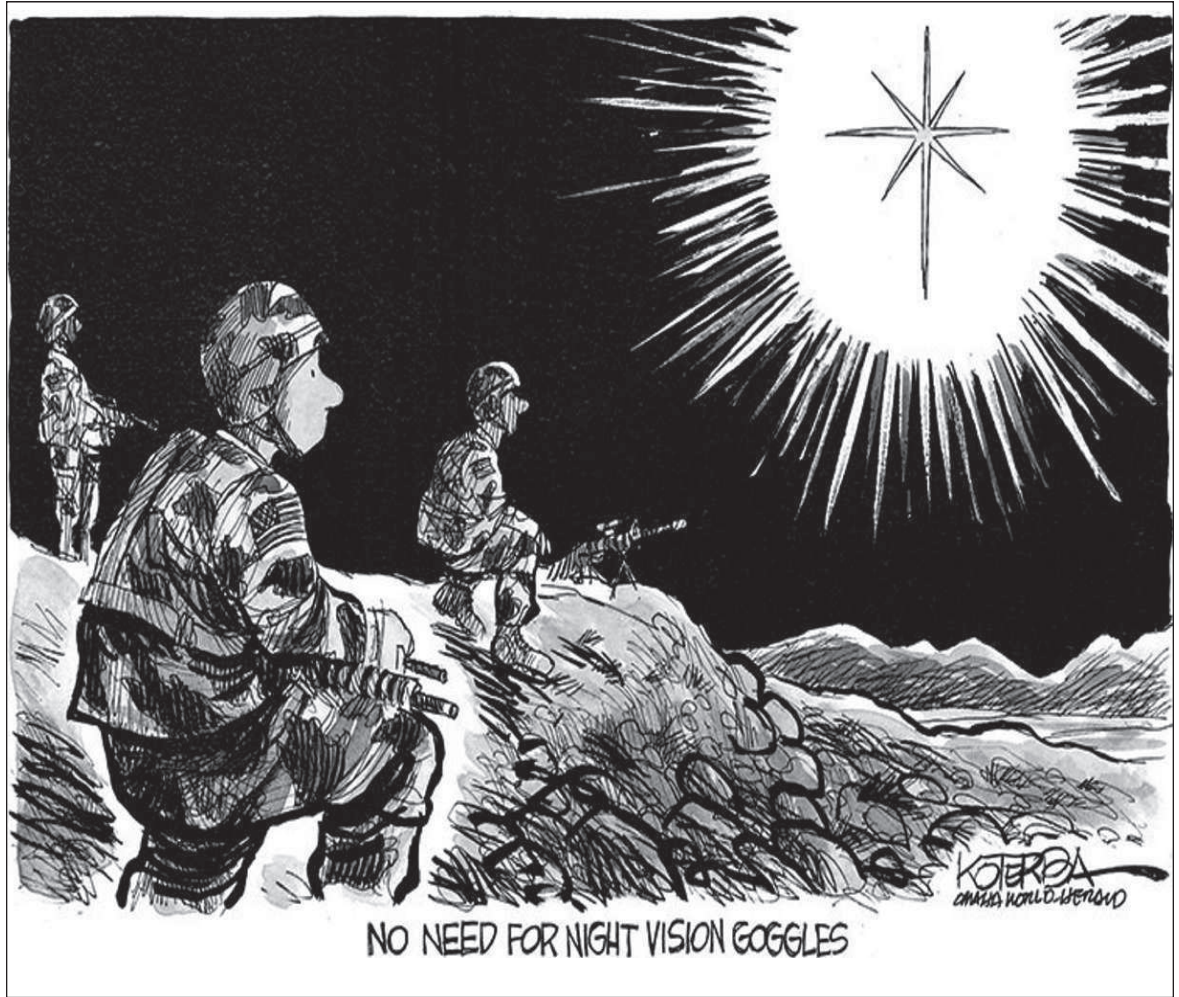
Neuberger with being his inspiration. Neuberger was an environmentalist before that word became part of the lexicon.

Republicans today who excoriate Oregon's statewide land use planning statute forget that it was Republicans — McCall, Hector MacPherson and Hermiston's own Stafford Hansell — who moved Senate Bill 100, Oregon's landmark legislation. In other words, it was a time when Oregon Republicans offered big ideas.

The Democrats who hold sway in Salem are also not so inspirational, but perhaps for a different reason. Gov. Kate Brown's tenure has been a disappointment mainly because she fails to lead on the matter that is killing local governments across Oregon — the growing financial obligation of the Public Employees Retirement System. The public employees unions would disown Brown if she went near a courageous PERS solution. It may be that Brown lacks imagination or it may be that she lacks the guts of a governor such as McCall or Atiyeh.

As much as Democrats like to preach the virtue of diversity, you seldom see that coming out of the statehouse on many urban-rural issues.

Alabama's new senator wants to reach across the aisle for bipartisan compromise. He might discover that too many Senate Republicans lack the imagination or guts to let that happen. In politics you never know where inspiration will come from. Doug Jones' improbable election may be one of those moments. Oregon is waiting for its improbable moment.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Media constantly on 'Trump attack'

**To the Editor:**  
I can't help but be amused by the obvious fact that the local Blue Mountain Eagle, a subsidiary of the very left-leaning Portland "news media," is so eager to add fuel to the "hate Trump" movement that it fails to read their own editorial bleatings. This week's lead editorial, "Trump's denigration of FBI is self-serving," states: "... It is a standard ploy to attack government during political campaigns, but quite another to sabotage it after being elected. Meanwhile, the rest of us need government to function. And we sure as hell need the FBI to continue doing its job well."

On the very same page, Brianna Walker's column, "Conned with the truth," states: "... One of my favorite acronyms for FEAR is 'False Evidence Appearing Real.' ... take a moment to see behind the 'facts.' Who's feeding the fear? What is their agenda?"

Do we need a well functioning FBI? Absolutely! Do we at present, or in recent history, have one? Well, maybe, maybe not. Also, maybe we should look at the "agenda" of media constantly on the "Trump attack," especially those emanating from places like Portland, home central of political far-left terrorism.

How many here in John Day and Grant County in general would really want the likes of the self-proclaimed "educated elite" much pictured across the nation as they hid behind masks and destroyed businesses, private property and bullied and injured any dissenters of their view on how this country should be run and as they violently insisted upon.

Watch out for people in masks, or operating out of left-leaning media strongholds. What is their agenda? Ski masks hiding political terrorists might not be all that different than media hiding political agendas behind ink and newsprint. If you like what you have seen politically demonstrated in places like Portland, you'll get your big chance for more "Hope and Change" in three more years from behind the masks we are now seeing so viciously and constantly appearing from the "educated elite."

God help us all!

**Gary Davidson**  
Canyon City

*Editor's note: The Blue Mountain Eagle, established through mergers of local Grant County newspapers in the late 1800s, became a subsidiary of EO Media Group in 1979. EO Media Group, founded in Pendleton, also owns the Capital Press as well as the Wallowa County Chieftain, East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald newspapers in Eastern Oregon. None of the company's subsidiaries are based in, or cover, the Portland area.*

### White has plan for Second District

**To the Editor:**  
Things need to change in the Second Congressional District. The district faces a myriad of complex issues, and it will take courage, imagination, skill, financial/economic expertise and integrity to come up with and execute action plans to address our needs.

I have found an individual, Tim White, who has not only the requisite has qualities, but also a solid plan to deal with our challenges.

We need more economic opportunity. Per capita income in the rural areas is lagging the national averages. White has talked about investment in solar and related technologies, apprenticeship training programs and upgrading our highway systems to encourage business to relocate here. Economic planning is crucial to bringing sustainable prosperity to the district by adapting to the forces of globalization and automation without damaging our precious environment.

Second, working families are struggling. White intends to defend and support middle class families by advocating for: a) a progressive tax system, b) measures to fund substance abuse addiction recovery care, c) enhancements to secondary education and d) expanding access to affordable higher education.

Third, quality and affordable healthcare is crucial for the well being of families. Not only does White believe this, but he also plans to work assiduously to lower costs, improve positive health outcomes, fight to protect or augment ACA and strengthen the social safety net by protecting Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, so seniors can live with dignity.

Fourth, the treatment of veterans is extremely deficient. Not only do we have wait times for treatment that are still unacceptable, the number of homeless vets is a moral disgrace. Volunteerism is wonderful, but it is the obligation of the government, which asked them to fight in the first place, to restore them to spiritual health. White won't stop fighting to properly fund the VA.

We need a fresh look at our issues. White has the wisdom, integrity, values, expertise, skill, knowledge, experience and courage to represent the interests of the people of the Second District. He has a plan grounded in the realities of today and focused on the needs of our fellow Second District citizens.

**Leo McGregor**  
Bend

### A widening opportunity gap requires action now

**To the Editor:**  
As 2017 draws to a close, we consider the challenges, hopes and opportunities for the year ahead, and we are confronted with the stark reality that Oregon can and must do better for children and families. It is humbling to know that more than 100,000 children in Oregon are living in households with \$800 a month or less in income. If nothing changes, these children — and many more in Oregon — are unlikely to escape poverty and its effects during their lifetime.

New research from The Oregon Community Foundation — Toward A Thriving Future: Closing the Opportunity Gap for Oregon's Kids — confirms that disparities in Oregon are growing along socioeconomic, racial and geographic lines. The circumstances of one's birth, where one is born, and longstanding patterns of discrimination determine the lifelong opportunities that are available to Oregon's children. Families face economic stagnation, children face barriers to quality education and neighborhoods are increasingly segregated and isolated. Left unaddressed, this gap in opportunity will cut to the very core of Oregon's future.

But we can change this trajectory and close the opportunity gap for many of Oregon's children by supporting economically and racially integrated affordable housing solutions, encouraging community engagement and promoting leadership development. Parenting education and expanded career and technical education opportunities are also part of the solution.

We need to invest in education, from quality and affordable childcare and preschool to out-of-school enrichment, mentoring, and access to higher education. These strategies will be most successful when they are led by community members who can best define community assets, problems and potential solutions. When seeking to improve outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color, members of those communities need to play a leadership role in designing feasible and sustainable solutions.

As we enter the new year, we challenge Oregon communities to focus on the children whose promise of the American dream is becoming an illusion. Timely solutions will come from committed Oregonians who are willing to organize, collaborate, advocate and invest in families and strategies that renew the promise of the American dream for every Oregon child.

**Tim Mabry**  
Hermiston



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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.
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