

OUR VIEW

Kotek needs to be governor for all of Oregon

The end of an election delivers great opportunity, and we hope newly elected governor Tina Kotek will be able to exploit the future prospects her selection by voters provides.

Kotek didn't exactly reach office on a mandate. Her victory over opponent Christian Drazan was close — closer than usual in an Oregon governor's race — and she can point to four or five counties whose voters helped her reach the state's highest elected office.

A fairly large swath of the state didn't vote for her, including Eastern Oregon.

The results of the election once again solidified the by now familiar scenario where voters in a few key counties chose our governor.

The hope, of course, is that fact — a state deeply divided among political lines — can be a starting point for Kotek, a place to move away from on a journey to deliver unity, purpose and leadership for all.

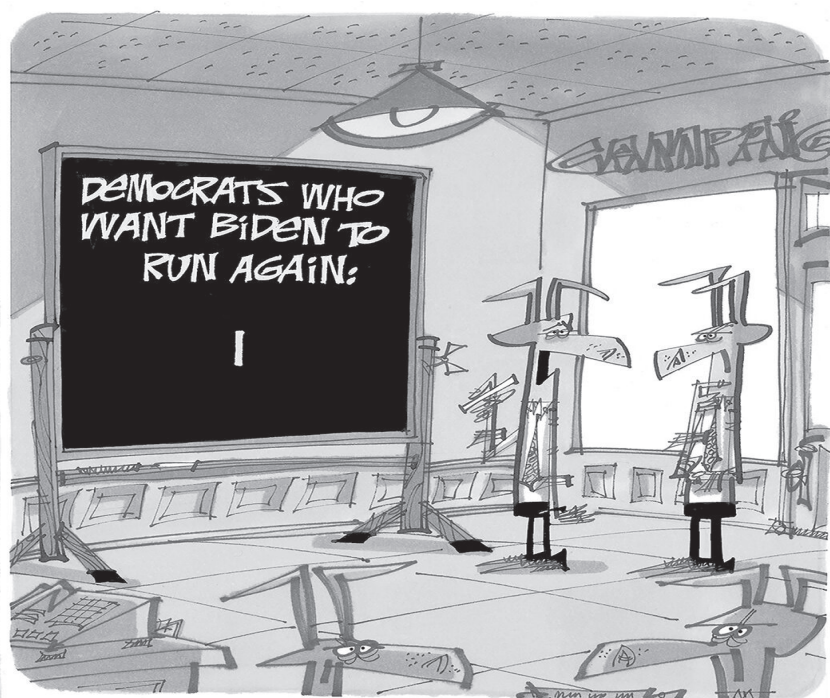
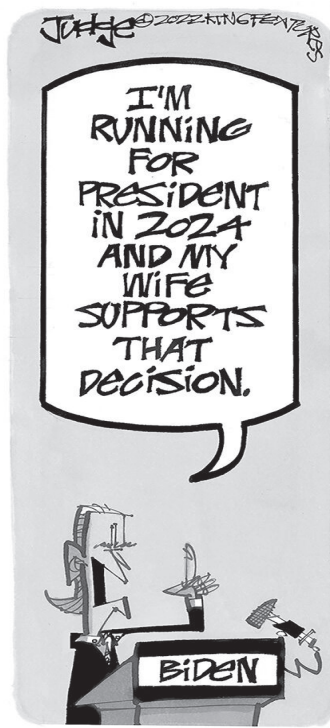
Kotek's political views stand in stark contrast to much of the state and Eastern Oregon. That's a divide that must be bridged for the state to move ahead.

For Oregon isn't just Washington, Lane or Multnomah counties. An individual's geographic location and political viewpoints shouldn't be an automatic disqualification from relevance.

The election is over, and Tina Kotek is our governor, and we hope she is able to look at the entire state, see that its political diversity can be a strength and begin to fill in the deep chasm between rural and urban, Republican and Democratic, in Oregon.

She doesn't necessarily have to do so. She will be a Democratic governor in a state with a Democratic majority in the Senate and the House. Bottom line is if Kotek doesn't want to do much for anyone but her Democratic cronies, she doesn't have to. That's where, though, we hope Kotek will illustrate she isn't just another politician but has the makings of a statesman. A person who can look at the broader picture and see clearly what needs to be done whether it is a Democratic or a Republican idea.

The end of an election is a time of hope. While hope is not a method, we do wish that our new governor discards partisan politics and governs for all, not just one party.



COMMENTARY

Remembering Korean War on Veterans Day

We are proud to note that even in the wake of devastating and destabilizing world events like the COVID-19 pandemic, celebrations that honor our nation's veterans were among the first to return to full strength. The value that we as Oregonians and Americans place on honoring and showing gratitude toward those who have served and sacrificed to protect our freedoms and way of life is immense.

This year, while the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs continues to honor all veterans, we are paying tribute to one particular era of our veteran community: Oregon's Korean War veterans. Though this war is referred to as the "Forgotten War," we in Oregon have never forgotten — and will never forget — the extraordinary and heroic veterans who fought for freedom in the Korean War.

This theme has a personal significance for me. My father fought as a Marine during the Korean War, where he earned the Purple Heart. After I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army and asked for my first tour of duty to be in South Korea, my father shared the only thing he ever said to me about his combat experiences there. He half-joked that if I ever traveled near the DMZ, I would surely see his fingerprints where he desperately attempted to dig a deeper foxhole as enemy artillery rained down on his unit.

Of course, my own experience of being stationed in the Republic of Korea was vastly different, thanks to those courageous men and women who fought during the Korean War. In fact, I enjoyed my first tour in Daegu so much that several years later, I served a two-year tour in Korea. The Korean people are wonderfully gracious and kind. Whenever I was in uniform outside the military base, older Koreans who remembered the war would sometimes approach me and thank me as a representative of the American military.

In 1950, our nation was weary of war after years of global conflict. Yet 1.5 million Americans — including 60,000 Oregonians — left their family and friends and their homes to help defend our nation's friends and allies halfway around the world, in a place they had never been and on behalf of a people they had never met.

Together with men and women



Kelly Fitzpatrick

from 20 other nations, they joined shoulder to shoulder with the brave people of South Korea to defend their independence, to safeguard other Asian nations, and to protect the freedom that remains our greatest gift. All those who fought in the Korean War endured terrible hardships — deadly cold, unbearable conditions, an enemy of overwhelming numbers, and the threat of brutal imprisonment and torture.

But their courage never wavered — not when they were defending the perimeter at Busan, braving the tides at Inchon, confronting the world's fastest fighter jets in MiG Alley, enduring hand-to-hand combat on Heartbreak Ridge and Pork Chop Hill, or even fighting their way back from the infamous Chosin Reservoir. In September of this year, I had the privilege of speaking at an Honor Flight of Portland send-off event for 24 honored veterans — 19 of whom served in the Korean War. It was an honor to meet them, shake their hands, hear some of their stories, and wish them well as they prepared to fly across the country to visit the fabulous memorials built in our nation's capital to honor and remember their service and sacrifice. They set a standard of valor and perseverance that may be equaled, but will never be surpassed in the annals of American history.

The men and women who served in the Korean War set themselves apart not only by their courage and sacrifice, but by their unity and dedication to one another. It was just before the Korean War, in 1948, that President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 — abolishing discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in the United States armed forces.

When war broke out in 1950, our country — for the first time in its history — entered the fray with a fully integrated and desegregated military. These proud service members of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds joined the people of 20 other nations and South Korea to fight this war.

Earlier this year, we also observed the 73rd anniversary of the establish-

ment of the Korean Augmentees to the US Army (KATUSA) program. It was started as a spoken agreement between President Seungman Lee and U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur. At that time, the U.S. Army needed a military force that had a proper knowledge of the geography of Korea, the ability to distinguish South Korean allied troops from North Korean enemy troops and communicate better between U.S. soldiers and Korean soldiers. Therefore, some men were drafted as KATUSAs, and others voluntarily applied. After training, they were assigned to U.S. military units. During the Korean War, nearly 44,000 KATUSA soldiers fought for South Korea with U.S. forces. They, too, are heroes, and we honor them today.

This program continued after the Korean War, and KATUSA soldiers would spend 18 months with the U.S. Army learning an occupation and would then return to the ROK Army to train others. The program remains active today and is a symbol of the ongoing friendship and mutual commitment between the Republic of Korea and the U.S.

I was fortunate to have KATUSA soldiers in my organization during both of my tours in Korea. They were among the most dedicated soldiers I have had the honor of serving with.

Finally, on this day, we remember and give thanks for the 40,000 Americans who paid the ultimate price in the fight for freedom and independence during the Korean War. Among their number were nearly 300 Oregonians whose names are inscribed on the Oregon Korean War Memorial in Wilsonville. Similarly, we give thanks for the more than 11,000 KATUSAs who went missing or were killed in action.

The world is a better place because of these men and women. Our duty as a nation and people is to remember and honor them, and to always strive to live up to the ideals for which they served and sacrificed.

Kelly Fitzpatrick is the director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and Governor Kate Brown's policy advisor on veterans' issues. She is a retired Army officer. Her military awards and decorations include multiple awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal and the Army Parachutist Badge.

COMMENTARY

Shortage of sports officials critical

By Randy Fulton

"Games canceled — no officials."

This headline is becoming increasingly frequent. High school and middle school athletes, coaches, administrators, kids, parents and fans are all paying the price.

Why is it so hard to get new sports officials? As a retired basketball and baseball official and current commissioner of a basketball officials' association, I can give you my opinion(s). Officiating any sport requires desire, dedication, training, time, money and tolerance. An official of any sport must enjoy the sport, enjoy the kids and want to be the best official possible. He or she must be able to sacrifice some free time and be a little tolerant of exuberant fans.

I began officiating basketball and baseball in 1976 and our local officials' association had over 30 members ranging in age from 19 to 68. Of course, those were the "boom" years in Harney and Grant County. Today I have just eight basketball officials to cover six high schools and three middle schools. Yes, COVID had a significant role in the loss of officials, but most of the officials we lost were close to retiring anyway. We cannot seem to get any of the younger

generation interested in becoming an official. The No. 1 reason I get is "With my job, I just don't have time" or "I don't think I could deal with the abuse from the fans."

Jobs are a legitimate excuse, and I cannot blame a young person for that, but the fan abuse is being addressed at the local and state levels, and from everything I can see at various sporting events, fans are helping with the problem by policing themselves. Coaches are now conducting themselves more professionally in their interaction with officials.

If we are unable to reverse the current downward trend in our number of officials, it will not be long before there are no officials for middle school contests, frosh/soph/junior varsity and eventually varsity contests. We are already at the point in basketball that after receiving the schedule from six schools, I must ask athletic directors to try and change Friday and Saturday games to a Monday or Wednesday. These types of changes have a trickle-down effect and cause problems with the visiting teams, busing, practice schedules, parents and fans.

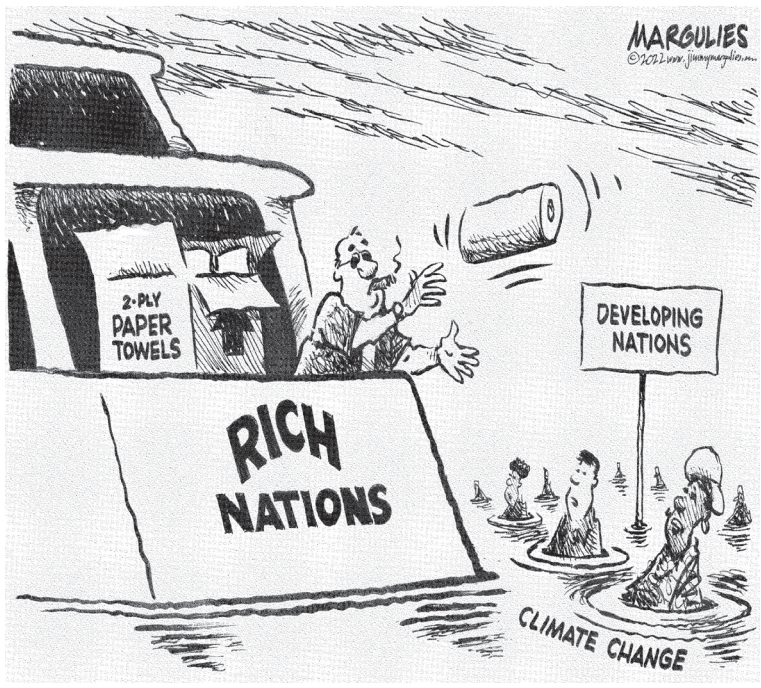
We need new people to get involved! The costs associated with becoming a certified sports official are minimal, about \$80 for the registration fee with the OSAA, and

in basketball the uniform, including shoes, will be around \$150. To hopefully attract interest, the schools in our region, in cooperation with the Strawberry Basketball Officials Association, have pledged funds to help offset the cost of getting started. If you have any interest in "giving back" and helping to ensure our athletes continue to have competitive sports, please contact me at 541-589-2593 or randful71@yahoo.com. If you are interested in officiating baseball, softball, football, volleyball, basketball or wrestling, I will put you in touch with the right person to get you started.

I can assure you that the commissioner for any of the sports will make every effort to ensure that your regular job is affected as little as possible. The compensation for all sports officials has increased in the past few years, and if your schedule permits you can have as many or few games per week as want.

Let us put an end to cancellations and postponements due to no officials! Call or email me today. I will provide you with any information you need to help make your decision to become a certified sports official.

Randy Fulton is the publisher of the Burns Times Herald newspaper and president of the Strawberry Basketball Officials Association, serving Harney and Grant counties.



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