

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, Editor & Publisher

LAURA SELLERS, Managing Editor

BETTY SMITH, Advertising Manager

CARL EARL, Systems Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN, Production Manager

DEBRA BLOOM, Business Manager

SAMANTHA MCLAREN, Circulation Manager

It's not a piece of cake

Mayor Dianne Widdop was tough in the face of recall

Recalls have been frequent in Clatsop County over the past 20 years. District Attorney Julie Leonhardt was recalled from office in January 1994. Leonhardt was subsequently indicted and convicted, and she was disbarred. In 2008 County Commission Chairman Richard Lee was recalled from office and in 2009 another commissioner was recalled. In 2008, two members of the Jewell School Board were recalled from office. At the same time, in 2004, an attempt to recall four members of the Astoria School Board failed.

Now we have the resounding defeat of a recall brought against Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop. The recall campaign brought by Dr. Harold Gable and others was rebuffed by a landslide — 63-36 percent.

The ostensible cause of the recall was Widdop's conversation with a shop owner regarding her display of an election sign for a city council candidate. There was nothing illegal about Widdop's comment. Impolitic perhaps. In other American political cultures, the mayor's comment would have been part of the game. Oregon's recall statute is much looser than Washington's, for instance, where a criminal conviction is the trigger for a recall.

There were other, implicit

reasons for the attempt to remove Widdop. Among them was the contentious barn that is used as an events center. Katherine Lacaze reported last Wednesday that the state Land Use Board of Appeals is likely to rule on that matter in April.

The voters were not moved by Mr. Gable's argument. But his comments to Lacaze in our Friday edition indicate he will continue a war against City Hall by other means.

A New Yorker, Diane Widdop's persona stands out in plain vanilla Oregon. Her spirit is commendable. Being mayor of a small coastal town is not a piece of cake. Gearhart is fortunate to have a mayor who makes herself accessible to the community.

Oregon can lead the way on animal-neglect cases

There are people in other parts of the U.S. and probably even some in Western Oregon who scoff at the idea that individual animals deserve to be treated as separate victims in cases of mass abuse. However, the tide of social justice is clearly on the side of making humans more accountable for wanton cruelty and neglect of creatures under our care.

Earlier this month, the Oregon Supreme Court determined that it made a technical legal mistake when it and the Oregon Court of Appeals both accepted a state prosecutor's appeal of a sentence in a misdemeanor animal-neglect case. To save money, when it comes to appeals by prosecutors, laws generally give the trial judge final say on matters where relatively small fines and less than a year of jail time are involved.

Both levels of Oregon appellate courts earlier ruled that unfortunate animals who are starved, neglected or tortured together can be treated as individual victims for charging and sentencing purposes. Despite the Supreme Court walking back its decision because of the misdemeanor-appeals rule, Oregon lawyers who practice in this field believe justices will stand by their underlying belief that groups of animals aren't just anonymously lumped-together pieces of property when it comes to legal protections.

Animal advocates are on the

lookout for an appropriate case to help the court solidify its case law on the subject. According to Oregon Public Broadcasting, "two pending cases in the Court of Appeals — one involving neglected pit bulls in Beaverton and another involving cat hoarding in Gresham — could give the high courts another chance to say animals are victims in the same way as people."

Today's fractured political system may not permit the Oregon Legislature to codify a statute that makes this same point. But it should. Though agricultural interests might worry about such protections being taken to extreme lengths and applied to ordinary farming practices, the fact is that the vast majority of farmers and ranchers are compassionate animal lovers who lament cruelty and neglect. Frequently, it is hobbyists and mentally unbalanced "animal collectors" who are responsible for the most horrendous instances of prosecutable crimes, not ag professionals.

Whether we're talking about domestic cats, nuisance sea lions, backyard horses or feedlot cattle, there is an increasing consensus that fundamental morality demands we act in ways that minimize suffering and fear. People who transgress these norms deserve vigorous prosecution and the impacted animals deserve to be regarded as individual living beings.

The competition is flat

By DAVID BROOKS
New York Times News Service

Like a lot of people who pay attention to such things, I had assumed that Democrats had a huge advantage going into next year's presidential race.

Democrats do really well among the growing demographic groups, like Hispanics, single people and the young.

Republicans, meanwhile, are doing sensationally well with just about every shrinking group. If 67-year-old rural white men were the future of the electorate, the GOP would be rolling.

But there's a growing body of evidence to suggest that, in fact, Democrats do not enter this election with an advantage. There are a series of trends that may cancel out the Democratic gains with immigrants, singles and the like.

We first began to notice these counterforces in the high-immigrant red states that were supposed to start turning purple by now — places like Texas, Arizona and Georgia. New types of voters have, indeed, flooded into these places, but as Ronald Brownstein points out in *The National Journal*, since 1992, Democratic presidential nominees have averaged only 44.5 percent of the vote in Georgia, 43.7 percent of the vote in Arizona and a pathetic 40.4 percent of the vote in Texas.

Instead of turning pink or purple, these states have become more thoroughly Republican — from school board elections on up. Nationally, three big things are happening to at least temporarily hold off the Democratic realignment. First, the aging of the electorate is partially canceling out the diversifying of the electorate. People tend to get more Republican as

they get older, and they vote at higher rates. And older people are moving to crucial states. In Arizona, Barack Obama won 63 percent of the young adults, but only 29 percent of the oldsters.

This aging effect could have a big impact in the swing states of the Midwest, like Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan and Pennsylvania. These states have generally gone Democratic in presidential years, but it's hard to miss the growing Republican strength at every other level. As Brownstein notes, Republicans have a 42-to-18 advantage in U.S. House seats in these states. They control the governorships in all but Pennsylvania. They control both statehouses in all these states save the Iowa Senate.

Second, Democrats continue to lose support among the white working class. In 2008, Obama carried 40 percent of white voters with a

Democrats are now doing worse among college-educated voters.

high school degree. By 2012, that was down to 36 percent. As John B. Judis points out in a National Journal piece called "The Emerging Republican Advantage," the tilt of the white working class to the GOP

has been even more pronounced in other races. In 2006, Democrats got 44 percent of the white-working-class vote in U.S. House races. By 2014, they got only 34 percent. In 2009, Republicans had a 20-seat advantage in House districts that were majority white working class. Today, they have a 125-seat advantage.

Most surprising, Democrats are now doing worse among college-educated voters. Obama won white college graduates in 2008, but he lost them to Mitt Romney in 2012. In Colorado, for example, Obama lost 8 points in his support



David Brooks

from college-educated voters from 2008 to 2012.

White college grads are drifting away from Democrats down-ballot, too. And, most significant, there are signs that Hispanic voters, at least in Sun Belt states, are getting more Republican as they move up the educational ladder.

Surveys and interviews give us some sense

of what's going on. Voters have a lot of economic anxieties. But they also have a template in their heads for what economic dynamism looks like.

That template does not include a big role for government. Polls show that faith in government is near all-time lows. In a Gallup survey, voters listed dysfunctional government as the nation's No. 1 problem. In fact, American voters' traditional distrust has morphed and hardened. They used to think it was bloated and ineffective. Now they think it is bloated and ineffective and rigged to help those who need it least.

When many of these voters think of economic dynamism, they think of places like Texas, the top job producer in the nation over the past decade, and, especially, places like Houston, a low-regulation, low-cost-of-living place. In places like Wisconsin, voters in the middle-class private sector support candidates who cut state pensions and pass right-to-work laws, so that economic governance can be more Texas-style.

In short, economic philosophy is mitigating the effect of demographic change, at least for a little while longer. Political guru Charlie Cook asks: Will this be a "Time for a Change" election or will this be a "Changing American Demographics" election? I suspect it will be a "Time for a Change" election. The crucial swing voters will be white and Hispanic college graduates in suburban office parks. They are not into redistribution or that Sen. Ted Cruz opened his campaign at Liberty University.

IN GRATITUDE

Thanks, Refuge volunteers

The Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex thanks its many volunteers for their service in 2014. Willapa, Julia Butler Hansen and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuges are part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a nationwide network of lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, specifically for wildlife.

In 2014, volunteers dedicated 5,400 hours of time to the Refuges. The complex thanks each of our volunteers for their service and honors the following people who contributed more than 250 hours, including: Ron Craig, Kathy Freitas, Russ Lewis, Clayton Nichols, Floyd Sinclair, Janet Sinclair and Suzy Whittey. Those who give 250 hours or more of service to federal agencies qualify for an America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass, allowing them free access to federal fee sites for one year.

Craig was also recognized as Refuge Volunteer of the Year for donating over 800 hours of his time, energy and talents to the Refuge in 2014.

Area groups and service organizations play a role in conservation, too. Special thanks to the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and Shoalwater Birders for all their efforts.

There are many avenues for volunteering at the Complex, and all volunteers have offered their talents and time for a valuable contribution to wildlife conservation. Some get their hands dirty while surveying, data collecting and performing trail maintenance.

Others use their creative outlets such as photography and videography to contribute to the refug-

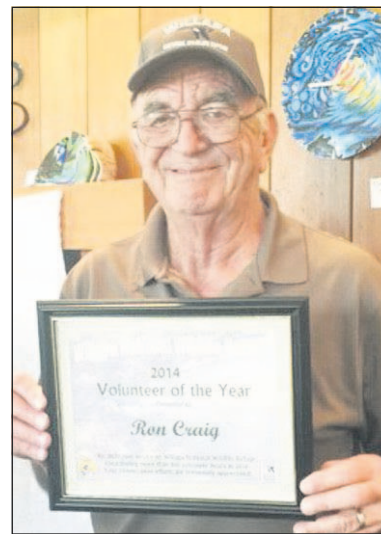


Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ron Craig, Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Volunteer of the Year for 2014.

es' websites and other forms of media. Many volunteer their time with local students for the Environmental Education program. The assistance of volunteers, no matter how big or small, continues to be a vital contribution to the mission of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

You can be part of Team Willapa, too. Contact the refuge at willapa@fws.gov or 360-484-3482 for more information on how you can help wildlife.

For additional information about Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex, go to www.fws.gov/refuge/willapa

JACKIE FERRIER
Project leader, Willapa NWR Complex
Ilwaco, Wash.

Bring on the machines

On Feb. 21, a special bus left from Third Street and Alder

Avenue in Warrenton. At \$5 each, 52 people, accompanied by New Northwest Broadcaster's Dave Martin, made a trip to Lincoln City to the Chinook Winds Casino. The trip, organized by Tim Murphy of NNB, was to raise money for the local chapter of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA).

In total, Murphy and Martin raised \$546.50 on this trip, which included an onboard raffle for various prizes. DBSA of North Oregon and South Washington Coast conducts monthly meetings at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria on the first Monday of each month, staffs and runs the non-profit PennyWise Thrift Store in Warrenton, and runs Heaven Sent Boarding House, a transitional housing alternative in Warrenton.

Murphy was the driving force behind the organization of this outing, and has indicated that he will be organizing more such trips in the future, possibly filling two buses, as word of the success of the first trip and the need for continued funding for mental health awareness within our own county spreads through the community.

DBSA of North Oregon and South Washington Coast wants to extend our thanks to Murphy and all those others at NNB who worked to make this fundraiser happen and succeed. It is the continuing support of each individual within the county that is making our efforts here a success, and we look forward to continuing to serve our community in the future.

PETER AND PATRICIA FESSLER
Facilitators, DBSA of North Oregon and South Washington Coast
Warrenton

Where to write

• **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D):** 2338 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C., 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. Fax: 202-225-9497. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005. Phone: 503-326-2901. Fax: 503-326-5066. Web: bonamici.house.gov/

• **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D):** 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Web: www.merkley.senate.gov

• **State Rep. Brad Witt (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court Street N.E., H-373, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/witt/ Email: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

• **State Rep. Deborah Boone (D):** 900 Court St. N.E., H-375, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.deborah.boone@state.or.us District office: P.O. Box 637, Cannon Beach, OR 97110. Phone: 503-986-1432. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/boone/

• **State Sen. Betsy Johnson (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., S-314, Salem, OR 97301. Telephone: 503-986-1716. Email: sen.betsy.johnson@state.or.us Web: www.betsyjohnson.com District Office: P.O. Box R, Scappoose, OR 97056. Phone: 503-543-4046. Fax: 503-543-5296. Astoria office phone: 503-338-1280.

• **Port of Astoria:** Executive Director, 10 Pier 1 Suite 308, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-741-3300. Email: admin@portofastoria.com

• **Clatsop County Board of Commissioners:** c/o County Manager, 800 Exchange St., Suite 410, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-325-1000.