

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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The season of the fundraiser

Nonprofits enrich a broad spectrum of activities in our region

This is the season of the fundraiser. Last week was the Lady Liberty awards lunch, a benefit for the Liberty Theater.

Saturday is Clatsop Community College's annual dinner and auction. That will be followed by the soup bowls dinner, which is the special event of The Harbor, formerly known as the Women's Resource Center. Then there will be Hope House's dinner, and the mother of all local fund-raisers — the Columbia Memorial Hospital Foundation dinner and auction.

Nonprofit organizations play an outsized role in the life of the Columbia-Pacific region. This would be a much different place without them. They sustain a broad spectrum of activities that range from the artistic and cultural to youth athletics to human welfare, education and health care.

Next week, the board of Astoria High School Scholarships Inc., meets to interview students seeking financial aid for college. The principal of the scholarship fund is a phenomenal \$7 million. The group intends to build the corpus to \$10 million, which would allow it to give \$350,000-

\$400,000 a year in scholarships.

One of the less visible, but highly important local nonprofits is CASA, the Court Appointed Special Advocates. They are adults who advocate for children in court proceedings. CASA held its annual dinner and auction one month ago.

Pacific County, Wash., is similarly dependent on nonprofits. The Ocean Beach Education Foundation auction and banquet is one of the county's biggest philanthropic events. The accomplishment of the Friends of Chinook School is plainly visible as one drives through Chinook. The restored gymnasium and the schoolhouse with its new coat of paint are testimony to the power of historic preservation. The gym has become home to a variety of concerts, events and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's two annual visits.

These organizations accomplish things we cannot expect from the private sector or government. They — and their fundraising events — are essential fixtures in our lives.

Give rural people greater say in resource decisions

The expression "Everybody complains about it, but nobody does anything about it" usually refers to the weather, but can just as aptly refer to perennial griping from rural regions about the political/economic dominance of urban areas and the national government.

The difference is that regional divide can be at least partially redressed, if we choose.

Our sister publication, Salem-based *Capital Press*, specializes in covering West Coast agricultural people and issues. It would be fair to say that frustration is a long-term motif of its coverage of political decision making in Oregon, Washington and California as seen from the perspective of food producers. This is abundantly reflected in the *Capital Press* analysis, "One Washington, Two Sides," in today's *Daily Astorian*.

Much heartburn is generated by statewide decisions about wildlife and land-use controversies, with Eastside legislators generally finding themselves outflanked on topics such as wolf restoration. In common with several other issues and legislative themes, this fight over wolves is closely mirrored in Oregon.

It is, perhaps, possible from the perspective of living in a rural area on the far west side of the Cascades to objectively examine the fight about wolves and other issues. Living at the mouth of the Columbia River, we are familiar with the phenomenon of urban-oriented enthusiasts being avidly interested in protecting large carnivores — sea lions in our case — that a substantial proportion of local people find to be problematic. Eastside ranchers and their communities clearly fear ending up in a similar circumstance, with a growing population of lamb- and calf-chomping wolves protected by rigorous laws written by people who don't have to bear any of the consequences.

By the same token, however, Eastside ranchers and farmers would have a pale shadow of an agricultural industry without the federal dams and reclamation projects that all Americans pay for with taxes, and which Pacific

Northwest residents supplement via our electricity rates. Decisions to turn parts of arid eastern counties into major ag producers were made over sharp protests from lower Columbia River residents, who correctly foresaw the doom of salmon runs that underpinned our economy for generations.

While Clatsop County enjoys relatively close geographical and political proximity to the Portland/Salem dynamo, we nevertheless find ourselves somewhat victimized by decisions like the main stem gillnet ban and ex-Gov. Kitzhaber's refusal to fill our seat on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. Political "outsidership" is a far more vivid experience in Pacific County, which along with the rest of Southwest Washington beyond Vancouver, suffers endemic underemployment and other woes. Even so, as late state Sen. Sid Snyder of Long Beach often noted, Pacific and other rural Washington counties get far more back in the form of government services than they ever pay in taxes — thanks to the success of the Seattle metroplex.

The solution to disenfranchisement urged by Washington's Eastside lawmakers — creating a separate state — will go nowhere. Other answers are, however, conceivable. For example:

- Abandon statewide wildlife and natural resources commissions in favor of two or more regional commissions in each state with memberships that better reflect local knowledge and concerns.

- Directly elect natural resource commissioners rather than giving those appointments to governors, who in recent decades invariably hew to urban interests and sensibilities.

- Rather than embracing empty slogans like "One Washington" or "Toward One Oregon," embark on a substantive and inclusive process to devolve power from state capitals and agencies to counties and regional governments, with accompanying funding.

The West Coast states are large, diverse and quick-changing places. Our political systems must start evolving to reflect this reality.

A new phase in anti-Obama attacks

By The New York Times
 Editorial Board

It is a peculiar, but unmistakable, phenomenon: As Barack Obama's presidency heads into its twilight, the rage of the Republican establishment toward him is growing louder, angrier and more destructive.

Republican lawmakers in Washington and around the country have been focused on blocking Obama's agenda and denigrating him personally since the day he took office in 2009.

But even against that backdrop, and even by the dismal standards of political discourse today, the tone of the current attacks is disturbing. So is their evident intent — to undermine not just Obama's policies, but his very legitimacy as president.

It is a line of attack that echoes Republicans' earlier questioning of Obama's American citizenship. Those attacks were blatantly racist in their message — reminding people that Obama was black, suggesting he was African, and planting the equally false idea that he was secretly Muslim. The current offensive is slightly more subtle, but it is impossible to dismiss the notion that race plays a role in it.

Outrageous attack

Perhaps the most outrageous example of the attack on the president's legitimacy was a letter signed by 47 Republican senators to the leadership of Iran saying Obama had no authority to conclude negotiations over Iran's nuclear weapons program. Try to imagine the outrage from Republicans if a similar group of Democrats had written to the Kremlin in 1986 telling Mikhail Gorbachev that President Ronald Reagan did not have the authority to negotiate a nuclear arms deal at the Reykjavik summit meeting that winter.

There is no functional difference between that example and the Iran talks, except that the congressional Republican caucus does not like Obama and wants to deny him any policy victory.

On April 3, Colbert King, a *Washington Post* columnist summarized a series of actions by Republicans attacking the president's authority in areas that most Americans thought had been settled by the Civil War. Arizona legislators, for example, have been working on a bill that "prohibits this state or any of its political subdivisions from using any person-



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais
 U.S. President Barack Obama speaks during his news conference at the Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Panama, Saturday.



AP Photo/Molly Riley, File
 Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky. speaks to reporters on Capitol Hill in Washington March 17.

nel or financial resources to enforce, administer or cooperate with an executive order issued by the president of the United States that has not been affirmed by a vote of Congress and signed into law as prescribed by the United States Constitution."

The bill sounds an awful lot like John C. Calhoun's secessionist screed of 1828, the South Carolina Exposition and Protest. Laurie Roberts of *The Arizona Republic* wrote that it was just "one of a series of kooky measures aimed at declaring our independence from federal gun laws, from the Affordable Care Act, from the Environmental Protection Agency, from the Department of Justice, from Barack Obama."

Executive action

Republicans defend this sort of action by accusing Obama of acting like a king and citing executive actions he has taken — on immigration and pollution among other things. That's nonsense. The same

... even by the dismal standards of political discourse today, the tone of the current attacks is disturbing.

Republicans had no objection when President George W. Bush used his executive authority to authorize the torture of terrorism suspects and tap the phones of American citizens. It is not executive orders the Republicans object to; it is Obama's policies, and Mr. Obama.

The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, who declared war on the new president in 2009 as minority leader and used the filibuster to paralyze the Senate, essentially told foreign governments to ignore the carbon-emission goals Obama was trying to set by international agreement. Because climate-change deniers in Congress and in some states oppose the effort, setting those goals is pointless, McConnell pronounced last month.

If this insurrection is driven by something other than a blend of ideological extremism and personal animosity, it is not clear what that might be. But it is ugly, it deepens mistrust of government and it harms the office of the president, not just Obama.

GUEST COLUMN

Put the pride back in the Port

By DAVE DENSMORE
 For The Daily Astorian

Well, the cat is pretty much out of the bag as far as the boatyard is concerned.

We now find this Port of Astoria Commission has let a lease on property that was already in use.

No wonder the push was on to kill the boatyard. That decision to do so was apparently made behind closed doors in "executive session" and when exposed, excused as needing to generate more revenue from land that was tied up by a "failing" boatyard operation.

When it looked like that wasn't going to fly, suddenly "Oh my God, DEQ is going to drop the big one on us any day!" Well, you people checked it out, stood up and exposed the fallacy in that, also.

Now we have an advisory board (with port commissioners, and the yard manager who adamantly advocates moving the whole yard somewhere else) studying how to fix the yard.

How ridiculous is that? Yet one of the prime movers who was responsible for getting the Port a boatyard in the first place, was told he wasn't welcome.

There was a lot of effort not to

mention taxpayers' money spent on studying the feasibility of, and putting the boatyard in. That effort was begun in the late 1980s. Pier 3 was the most viable option with paved surfaces, drains and power already in place. Due diligence was exercised back then and all options were examined.

The Port did not, and in fact does not, own tongue Point, thus it was not, and is not, truly an option. I have copies of two different studies, which by the way were not supplied by the Port. There were public meetings, advisory boards and public comment solicited. A commercial designer was hired out of Portland and those presentations were all open to the public.

So ask of this Port commission what happened to the plan for a seafood support complex; ask what happened to the cold storage plant that tried to come in here; ask why Bornstein's has been kept from expanding (providing more jobs); ask why the repaired Pier 2 is just sitting, being "saved for heavy cargo" that may never come.

Ask why the East End Mooring Basin is in such disrepair when there are waiting lists of boats needing moorage. (It was falling apart long



Dave Densmore

before the sea lions overran it.)

What's being done to repair and reclaim our floats from the sea lions and restart the flow of much needed revenue from a viable, working boat harbor? Why is the Port of Astoria seen as being user unfriendly for everyone except heavy

shipping?

Why did a Port commissioner tell a boat owner the day after the boatyard advisory group met that the boatyard was still going away. Poke, prod, ask questions, it's far past time more than lip service was paid to transparency.

Even Englund Marine, which has grown from a single small store into a huge multistore complex, has done so due to proper business practices and an understanding that growth comes with one small sale at a time, not dreaming of pie in the sky huge scores or grants. As far as I'm concerned, the public trust has been repeatedly betrayed.

Sincere BS is still BS! Maybe it's time to vote "None of the Above" for the Port commissioners until we get people in there who can remember they are voted in by the people to serve all the people's interests.

It's your Port, we need people serving that care about the Port and not just catering to cronyism.

Put the pride back in Port Of Astoria. Clatsop County deserves a port to be proud of.

It's up to you. You all can do it!

Where to write

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