

No dignity

Suicide is not death with dignity. Abortion is not reproductive health. Both are legal and paid for by the citizens of the state of Oregon.

The Nov. 17 front page article laments that although assisted suicide is on the rise in Oregon, only the urban elites are opting in (“Death with dignity,” *The Daily Astorian*). One might say opting out. It appears that the poor, the minorities and the rural folks are not so eager to kill themselves when life gets difficult.

A sobering fact: Holland was the first to legalize assisted suicide. Holland killed 650 babies and 42 mentally ill patients in 2013 (“Doctors Euthanize 650 Babies Under Assisted Suicide Law in the Netherlands,” Jan. 2, *LifeNews.com*).

One in 28 Dutch deaths in 2013 involved assisted suicide (“Dying Dutch: Euthanasia Spreads Across Europe,” Feb. 12, *Newsweek*).

Is this the direction we want our doctors and hospitals to go with grandma and grandpa? And what about the many baby boomers who have no grandchildren — or children?

Who are we now, as a society, in America?

JEAN M. HERMAN
Astoria

Bad-Mouthed

In the Nov. 19, 2015 *Coast Weekend*, the Mouth of the Columbia reviewed the United Way fundraiser, Iron Chef Goes Coastal, and titled it “Iron Mouth.” The Mouth correctly noted the substantial funds this year’s event raised to benefit our local coast communities.

The Mouth also correctly noted the People’s Choice competition participants help make this fundraising event possible by feeding the attendees, and then recognized the significant expense and

effort they donate to this cause. What followed was something that may shake, or even break, the future of this event.

The Mouth began his/her assault on People’s Choice participants by proffering that while their donations may have been significant, they were more than compensated by the “intense advertising value” the event offered them. This might have been somewhat true, if the Mouth had not stepped in with his/her journalistic insight.

In the review the Mouth trashed the donated culinary offerings of almost half of the competitors. Bridgewater Bistro, Fulios, and Maggie’s all got stabbed in the back (Maggie’s got a extra twist of the knife). Drina Daisy, the People’s Choice winner, got another dish of the now famous poison. This time spiced with some new cultural ignorance and incorrect assumptions, as the Mouth implied the people’s ignorance in their choice.

The dynamics of the Iron Chef Goes Coastal People’s Choice competition are chal-

lenging, and a bit atypical from the normal commercial or catering venues. What each restaurant presents at this event cannot possibly represent their best, just their best for the situation. To consider their gifts to this charity event as an opportunity for any critical review is egregious.

Future Iron Chef events may now have a potential recruiting problem. Restaurants now need to weigh a significant investment in a good thing for the community against the definite chance of a bad thing for themselves, being publicly ripped.

Next year, the event may crater as many restaurants may seek to avoid the potential risk. If it does, the responsibility should fall squarely on the shoulders of *The Daily Astorian’s* editors, who permitted this.

I am not talking censorship. I am talking respect and decency. If their journalists do not have it, their editors should guide them, and this did not happen. Since this was their choice, *The Daily Astorian* should “put their

money where their Mouth is” and offer United Way to make up any revenue losses in their event next year.

KEN BENDICKSON
Astoria

Call now!

Ever wonder if there is a productive way to pass time while you are waiting in line at a store, or the Department of Motor Vehicles, or while holding on the phone for the “next available representative”? You know, something that would not only pass time, but give you that warm and fuzzy “I did something good” feeling. Multi-tasking to the ultimate.

Let me suggest you call the governor (503-378-4582) about Oregon LNG’s proposed gas terminal on the Skipanon Peninsula. Don’t be bashful. The government used your taxes to pay for a phone line and a staff person to listen to you, so take advantage of it. Shucks, you could probably do it while raking leaves. It is fall, and we live in the cell phone age.

Disclaimer: Do not call

while driving or operating dangerous machinery.

By now, some key words and phrases should go off in your mind, without even distracting you from what you are waiting for. Examples are “earthquake/tsunami zone,” “68 percent no vote,” “Army Corps of Engineers easement,” “Coastal Zone Management Act” and “insurance rates up — property values down.” Oh, don’t forget “blast zone.” They spew forth like paparazzi flashbulbs.

Go out on the Skipanon Peninsula on a nice day. We will get at least one more this year, guaranteed. Now look around while breathing in the clean, unpolluted fresh air. Then ask yourself, “Is this really where a giant atmosphere-polluting (2.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide, plus methane gas, annually) terminal belongs?”

Think about the 1.1 million cubic yards of fish habitat that will be dredged out of the path the salmon have instinctively followed for thousands of years. Finally, check out the dangerous (earthquake/tsunami) location the terminal

is proposed to be built on. You know, the wetlands the Army Corps of Engineers has an easement on.

Then go home and call the governor. Oh heck, call from the Skipanon — that’s what cell phones are for.

In a democracy, everyone is supposed to have their say. This is the only democracy we have, so it is up to us to make it work.

Be ready when you call, but wouldn’t it be great if you hear, “due to the high volume of calls we are experiencing, your wait time is ...” — I’ll wait for that any time.

What’s that number again? It’s 503-378-4582.

CARL DOMINEY
Astoria

Do something

Regarding the recent San Bernardino, California, shootings: What is it going to take? Register fire arms and background checks.

Stand up to the National Rifle Association and others. I will. Will this stop the terror? Of course not, but it is a good start.

This is terrible. Let’s all be responsible.

RALPH E. H.
NORGAARD
Astoria

Add signage!

I attended the Seaside Downtown Parade of Lights recently. It was very well done, and there were quite a few entries. However, many of the floats and entries had no signage to tell people who they were, or what organization they were representing. After doing all the work to decorate the float, and then not be able to have recognition, is sad. I do hope this is something to keep in mind for the next parade.

This was also a problem at the Fourth of July parade.

LIN ANDERSON
Seaside

On gun control, we’re not even trying to fix it

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF
New York Times News Service

Another day, another ghastly shooting in America.

So far this year, the United States has averaged more than one mass shooting a day, according to the ShootingTracker website, counting cases of four or more people shot.

And now we have the attack Wednesday in San Bernardino, California, that killed at least 14 people

It’s too soon to know exactly what happened in San Bernardino, but just in the last four years, more people have died in the United States from guns (including suicides and accidents) than Americans have died in the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq combined. When one person dies in America every 16 minutes from a gun, we urgently need to talk about remedies.

Democrats, including President Barack Obama, emphasize the need to address America’s problems with guns. Republicans talk about the need to address mental health. Both are right.

First, guns, the central issue: We need a new public health approach based not on eliminating guns (that simply won’t happen in a land awash with 300 million guns) but on reducing the carnage they cause.

We routinely construct policies that reduce the toll of deadly products around us. That’s what we do with cars (driver’s licenses, seat belts, guardrails). It’s what we do with swimming pools (fences, child-proof gates, pool covers). It’s what we do with toy guns (orange tips).

It’s what we should do with real guns.

We can improve public safety without eliminating guns. Switzerland has guns everywhere because nearly all men spend many years as part-time members of the armed forces (it’s said that Switzerland doesn’t have an army; it is an army). Yet while military weapons are ubiquitous, crime is low.

What we should focus on is curbing access to guns among peo-



Jae C. Hong/AP Photo

Jesus Gonzales, center left, who has been separated with his wife since Wednesday’s shooting, is comforted by local church members including Jose Gomez, center right, Thursday in San Bernardino, Calif. Gonzales has been unable to get to his home due to a police shootout with suspects which took place in his neighborhood.

The NRA used to be a reasonable organization.

ple who present the greatest risk. An imperative first step is universal background checks to acquire a gun. New Harvard research suggests that about 40 percent of guns in America are acquired without a background check — which is just unconscionable.

Astonishingly, it’s perfectly legal even for people on the terrorism watch list to buy guns in the United States. More than 2,000 terrorism suspects did indeed purchase guns in the United States between 2004 and 2014, according to the Government Accountability Office and *The Washington Post’s* Wonkblog. Democrats have repeatedly proposed closing that loophole, but the National Rifle Association and its Republican allies have blocked those efforts, so it’s still legal.

While Republicans in Congress resist the most basic steps to curb

gun access by violent offenders, the public is much more reasonable. Even among gun owners, 85 percent approve of universal background checks, according to a poll this year.

Likewise, an overwhelming share of gun owners support cracking down on firearms dealers who are careless or lose track of guns. Majorities of gun owners also favor banning people under 21 from having a handgun and requiring that guns be locked up at home.

These are reasonable steps that are, tragically, blocked by the NRA and its allies. The NRA used to be a reasonable organization. It supported the first major federal gun law in 1934 and ultimately backed the 1968 Gun Control Act. As a farm kid growing up in rural Oregon, I received a .22 rifle for my 12th birthday and took an NRA safety course that, as

I recall, came with a one-year membership. But the NRA has turned into an extremist lobby that vehemently opposes even steps overwhelmingly backed by gun owners.

As for mental health, Republicans are right that it is sometimes related to gun violence. But it’s also true that in some cases their budget cuts have reduced mental health services. To his credit, Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Pa., has introduced a bill that would improve our disastrous mental health system, perhaps reducing the number of people who snap and turn to violence. Yet some Democrats are wary of the bill because Republicans like it. That’s absurd: We need better mental health services just as we need universal background checks.

It’s not clear what policy, if any, could have prevented the killings in San Bernardino. Not every shooting

is preventable. But we’re not even trying.

When we tackled drunken driving, we took steps like raising the drinking age to 21 and cracking down on offenders. That didn’t eliminate drunken driving, but it saved thousands of lives.

For similar reasons, Ronald Reagan, hailed by Republicans in every other context, favored gun regulations, including mandatory waiting periods for purchases.

“Every year, an average of 9,200 Americans are murdered by handguns,” Reagan wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed in 1991 backing gun restrictions. “This level of violence must be stopped.”

He added that if tighter gun regulations “were to result in a reduction of only 10 or 15 percent of those numbers (and it could be a good deal greater), it would be well worth making it the law of the land.”

Republicans, listen to your sainted leader.