

## Thanks, but no

Dear Bernie,  
Thanks, but no thanks for your offer of \$15 per hour. That is small potatoes compared to your salary, and even smaller potatoes compared to Congress' ability to vote for its own pay raises, which you did in 2009. Furthermore, your total emolument is extracted by law from your employer, the tax-paying public, whether or not that public thinks you have earned it.

I will not be satisfied with anything less than the equal authority to vote, along with my fellow employees, to legally require our employer to raise our wages, and to have it extracted from him by law, with or without his approval, and regardless of his appraisal of our value.

Yours sincerely,

LOUIS SARGENT  
Gearhart

## New year, new you

The four Rs for new life in the new year are Reach, Risk, Rescue and Receive.

Every new year, I try to write something to inspire myself and hopefully others.

So here's what popped into my aging head.

First, Reach: Reach out and learn something new. I don't care how old we are. Learn something new. Do something new.

A famous quote says, "We don't grow old, we get old by not growing."

The Bible offers us this sage advice, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Every time we learn something new, we become something new.

Second, Risk: Risk looking foolish. Risk sticking your neck out. Risk standing up for what you believe in.

Shakespeare said, "Our doubts are traitors and cause us to lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt."

Risk and receive the good we oft might win!

Third, Rescue: When we Reach and when we Risk, we Rescue the yet unrealized potential within us.

Henry David Thoreau said, "Most lead lives of quiet desperation."

But not so, for if we Reach, Risk and Rescue, we will Receive a new lease on life for the new year.

JIM BERNARD  
Warrenton

## 2016 resolution

If you haven't made your New Year's resolution yet, allow me to suggest one for your consideration.

I believe politicians always like to hear from the public (official name, constituents), especially at election time. Let me think — are there any elections coming up in 2016? Hmmmm.

Anyway, back to the resolution. I propose that we all (one by one) resolve to call Gov. Kate Brown at 503-378-4582 and ask her to use her authority, the clean air and water acts and the Coastal Zone Management Act to stop the proposed liquefied natural gas terminal on Warrenton's Skipanon Peninsula.

The way I see it, if I don't do something, I won't have any complaint coming when I'm breathing polluted air (carbon dioxide and methane gas — cough, cough). Nor would I be able to complain when house insurance rates go up and property values go down or when I can't go out fishing because of the security zones around the LNG tankers. Oh well, even though I love locally caught grilled salmon, I didn't want to go out fishing, because somehow the fish don't seem to taste as good when they have been swimming around in chemically polluted water.

I also promise not to complain about the hundreds and hundreds of trucks rumbling through downtown Astoria, for four years, hauling construction materials from Tongue Point to the Skipanon.

No sir! I won't. I'll just bite my tongue while remembering the increased traffic congestion last summer. If you are like me, or not, I'm guessing that you didn't like that frustrating inability to find a parking place and congestion any more than I did, huh?

So, if you are looking for something to do, now is the time. Please consider attending an anti-LNG meeting (6:30 p.m. every third Thursday at 3 Cups



Coffee House, under the bridge) and/or write a letter to the editor and please call Gov. Brown.

As for me, I'm calling because:

- 1) In our democracy, I can, and I still believe in it;
- 2) Clatsop County matters;
- 3) I consider it a civic duty, and after reading Laudato Si (the second encyclical of Pope Francis), I believe it's even more than just civic;
- 4) This beautiful and relatively unpolluted Lower Columbia area is my home!

By the time you read this, I will have thought of another reason.

So, let's attack this. Call the governor at 503-378-4582 with the same determination that we voted 68 percent "no" on the LNG pipeline in Clatsop County.

CARL DOMINEY  
Astoria

## Freemasons

They walk among us.

When I was a child I asked my dad about a building in town with a Square & Compasses emblem on it. I was told that it was where the Freemasons meet, and that they are a secret organization, and one needs to be a blood relative to become a member.

My dad was totally misinformed.

The Freemasons are not a secret organization, they wear the Square & Compasses emblem on jewelry, clothing, proudly put it on their automobiles, and of course it identifies the buildings where they meet. Usually the names and phone numbers of the Lodge officers are posted in the window of the lodge.

Obviously, it's not a very secret organization.

Membership is not restricted to relationship with existing members. The only requirements to become a member are: Be an 18-year-old man, (it is a fraternity, women may join the Eastern Star, a concordant organization); He must ask of his own freewill; He must hold a true belief in deity/God and not currently be a felon on probation.

Freemasons support many philanthropies, and believe that education is key to the future for all of us.

In our area, some of the lodges provide the Child Identity Program (ChIP), where we use a computer to take a child's photo and thumbprints. Then a paper is printed with the information and given to the parents, so that they may have information available for authorities should the child ever go missing.

Another program is called Bikes For Books, to encourage elementary school students to read. They read grade-level books, and submit their names for a drawing. At the end of the year, a drawing is held and the Masons provide a free bicycle to one girl and one boy in each of the participating schools.

The lodges encourage scholastic excellence by recognizing students who achieve 3.5 GPA or better. We also award several scholarships, some to graduating seniors, some to continuing education students and some to students in nursing programs. Freemasons support a local Boy Scout troop, the food banks, and women's shelters.

Freemasons are quietly working in our community, supporting education and helping the needy.

Yes, they walk among us. To be one, ask one.

CLEVE ROLFE  
Seaside

## Startling starlings

As one of the residents of the Columbia House and one who blows the whistle, I feel I must respond to Mr. Haist's letter (Stop the whistle, Jan. 1, The Daily Astorian) regarding the "whistle" (the whistle is actually a small air horn) we blow

to control the starlings trying to roost beneath our home.

We do feel his pain as we live above the horn and are without the advantage of being a few blocks away from the noise.

I'm reasonably certain he has gone to City Hall and found we have a permit for this action, obtained after explaining the need for such action.

I take exception to being called "rude and thoughtless" when I, and certain of my neighbors, have had his interests in mind, as well as ours. Mr. Haist's concerns have been part of all our actions relating to the noise. We have reduced the soundings to less than 12 seconds with a break of more than 3 minutes for about an hour, the time between the first starling sighting and the last in the late afternoon. That's a total of less than 4 minutes of noise. On top of that we have relocated the horn placement to minimize the sound reaching beyond our home. The noon event Mr. Haist referred to was the testing of equipment and was of even shorter duration.

These actions are the best advice we could find. They are found at "G9447 Controlling Nuisance Blackbirds in Roosts" University of Missouri Extension." After reading that study you will find our method quieter and less brisant.

The goal is to avoid the horrible diseases that go with accumulations of bird droppings and allow inspection of the structure unimpeded with an encrustation of feces. The Columbia House has spent thousands of dollars previously for cleanup of these feces.

I'm fairly certain Mr. Haist wouldn't wish the plight associated with these droppings on us residents. And, if the starlings were roosting in his neighborhood by the thousands, as they try to do here, I would fully recommend this horn system for him, as well. After all, he is my neighbor and we are a community that usually stands together quite well.

CHARLES STUART  
Astoria

## Whistleblower

I totally agree with Paul Haist (Stop the whistle, Jan. 1, The Daily Astorian) regarding the whistle at the Columbia House condos. I live five blocks from there and it is truly annoying.

Some blasts are short but many last longer than 20 seconds and repeat every 5 to 10 seconds.

I also wonder about the effect on other wildlife in the area, and I am surprised that the city allows this noise pollution.

CAROL THOMAS  
Astoria

## Paying it forward

A bountiful end to the year!

I dared to go grocery shopping at Fred Meyers mid-afternoon on New Year's Eve. It was a madhouse with long lines.

As the checker was ringing up my purchases, I realized I had left my wallet at home. How embarrassing. The checker kept my groceries at the end of the check stand while I scurried home.

Upon returning the clerk informed me that the woman in line behind me had paid for my groceries, a total of a \$53.92.

Wow! What could I do? I paid \$53 for the very appreciative two gentlemen in line behind me, telling them we both had a big thank you for the woman that paid for my groceries.

Being on the receiving end of "paying it forward" is heart-warming and brought me close to tears.

Thank you, very kind woman who was in line behind me. I hope we meet again.

You are an angel with a very special message for all to enjoy.  
JEANINE WITTCKE  
Warrenton

# Guns, tears and Republicans

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF  
New York Times News Service

President Barack Obama shed tears Tuesday as he called for new gun safety measures, and some critics perceived weakness or wimpishness. Really?

On the contrary, we should all be in tears that 225,000 Americans have already died of gun violence in his seven years in office.

The shame is not a president weeping a bit, but that he has not been able to prevent roughly as many people dying from guns in America on his watch as have been killed in the Syrian civil war (where estimates range from fewer than 200,000 to more than 300,000). Yes, the U.S. gun toll includes suicides and, yes, Syria is a smaller country, but it's worth a cry that a "peaceful" America during Obama's tenure has lost roughly as many lives to gunfire as Syria has in civil war.

Ted Cruz responded to the president's executive actions with a Web page showing a scowling Obama in a helmet, looking like a jackbooted thug staging a home invasion, with the warning, "Obama wants your guns." Chris Christie protested that Obama was behaving like a "petulant child." Jeb Bush decried Obama's "gun-grabbing agenda." Donald Trump warned that Obama was moving toward banning guns. The upshot of all this scaremongering will be more Americans rushing out to buy firearms.

Look, let's acknowledge that liberals have not handled gun issues well over the years. Liberals often antagonize gun owners by coming across as patronizing or insulting — as well as spectacularly unknowledgeable about the guns they seek to regulate.

But on the basic question of whether more guns create more safety or more risk, the evidence seems clear: Most gun owners use firearms re-

sponsibly, but with more guns there are more tragedies.

Exclude guns and the U.S. has a rate for many violent crimes similar to that of other rich countries. But because we have 300 million guns sloshing around, some in the hands of high-risk individuals, we have a gun homicide rate that is about 20 times that of Australia (which cracked down on guns after a mass shooting there).

Gun advocates say criminals will always have guns, so regulations make no difference. But increasingly we have evidence that this is wrong.

The states with the most restrictive gun laws have the lowest gun death rates (including suicides). Take Massachusetts and New York, which have some of the tightest gun restrictions in America; they have 3 or 4 gun deaths per 100,000 inhabitants per year. At the other extreme, two of the states with the most permissive gun regulations are Alaska and Louisiana, and both have gun death rates about five times as high: more than 19 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Republican presidential candidates should look at the natural experiment that occurred when Missouri eased restrictions on buying handguns. The result was a 25 percent rise in the firearm homicide rate, according to a study in the Journal of Urban Health.

In contrast, Connecticut tightened regulations on buying handguns, and gun homicides there fell by 40 percent, according to the American Journal of Public Health.

This is not to say that regulations always work, or that fixing the problem is simple. Daniel W. Webster of Johns Hopkins University cites research that keeping guns from people with past convictions for domestic violence doesn't make much of a difference.



Nicholas Kristof

But blocking access to guns by people subject to current domestic violence restraining orders does reduce killings of intimate partners.

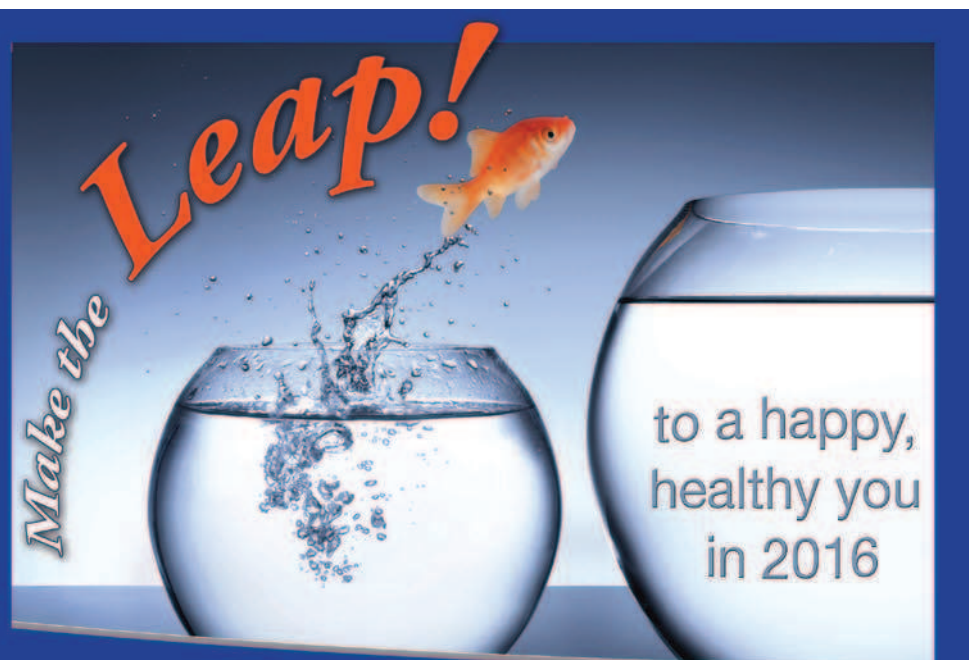
We need an evidence-driven public health approach, modeled on our highly successful regulation of cars to reduce auto deaths. That's the approach the Obama executive actions pursue. Republicans have said for years that we should focus on enforcing existing laws. That's what Obama is doing.

Likewise, Obama is pushing to investigate the feasibility of smart guns that operate with a fingerprint or a PIN.

This may or may not work, but it's worth a try in a nation where perhaps 300,000 guns are stolen annually. A toddler in America shoots someone on average once a week because guns are so easy to pick up and fire. If our cell-phones can be made to work only with a PIN, it's crazy that anyone can use a stolen assault rifle.

There's no magic wand to solve gun violence in America, but neither is it immutable fate that 32,000 Americans die from firearms each year. We know from the experience of states like Connecticut and Missouri that sensible regulations save lives. And why wouldn't we want to keep guns from men subject to domestic violence restraining orders if the result is fewer women murdered by jilted boyfriends?

The Republican presidential candidates are on the wrong side of history here. While even Republican voters overwhelmingly say in polls that they favor sensible steps like universal background checks, the Republican candidates are politicizing what should be a public health issue, and they are scaring Americans into buying more guns, which magnifies the problem and causes more carnage.



COLUMBIA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
Your partner in Health & Wellness

## What are your goals this year?

### Get Fit

- Cardiac/Pulmonary Rehab **503-338-4053**
- A Matter of Balance class **503-338-7564**
- Strong Women, Strong Bones class **503-338-7564**
- Tai Chi **503-338-7564**

### Manage Pain

- Physical Therapy Services **503-338-7555**
- Chronic Pain Management class **503-338-7564**

### Eat Healthier

- Diabetes Education **503-338-4012**
- Living Well with Diabetes class **503-338-7564**
- Healthy Eating for Successful Living class **503-338-7564**

### Quit Tobacco

- Tobacco Cessation **503-338-7564**

### Help Others

- Volunteer **503-325-4321**
- Donate **503-325-3208**

Tai Chi  
is back!