

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Benefits of police body cameras flow both ways

*Video can provide an undeniable record of police interactions with suspects*

Body cameras for law enforcement officers are clearly a mature technology with general acceptance in Clatsop County, as described in our story last Friday. The Astoria Police Department has bought more cameras and video software. Some officers have been using them for a decade, and vehicle-mounted cameras even longer.

It isn't difficult to find citizens who object to the cameras based on concerns video recordings contribute to modern society becoming a "surveillance state," in which official notice is taken of many transactions that used to be unobserved and transitory. It is possible to sympathize with the feeling that a degree of creepiness attaches to the possibility of being recorded by police.

On balance, however, considering the policies and precautions taken by Astoria Police and other agencies, these concerns are less valid than they might otherwise be. Steps like blurring faces and discarding videos without investigatory or judicial relevance allay most citizen worries.

The advantages of having recordings of police-citizen interactions are great. They flow both ways. While they can't be

relied on for every element of context and nuance, videos provide a nearly undeniable record of who said and did what during police actions. Not only are videos powerful evidence, but the cameras serve as an incentive for good behavior on the part of cops and those they contact. Using cameras is, especially, a no-brainer from the standpoint of managing insurance and legal liability for departments.

Body cameras are available to citizens, too, and these recordings are certain to become a bigger issue in terms of privacy. In tandem with the rapid expansion in drone aircraft ownerships, ubiquitous video cameras are a growing part of modern life.

Working out the legal obligations and simple good manners of this technology will require deliberate thought and discussion for years to come.

## CNN won't report the sage grouse deal

*Problems avoided are costs avoided*

Problems avoided are a lot like wars that don't happen. They don't get the attention of problems that explode in public places. When calamity — especially armed calamity — is avoided, we save money and lives.

During his Astoria town hall meeting last Saturday, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden mentioned successful negotiations over the greater sage grouse. The outcome was an agreement that the grouse would not be listed as endangered while affected states were charged with developing and carrying out plans to protect the species.

Unlike the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, the sage grouse deal will not get national coverage. CNN will not show up.

The sage grouse process transpired over some five years. It involved federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service as well as environmental groups and users such as ranchers.

"This produced a commendable plan to improve habitat on 60 million acres of public lands

in 11 western states," said Mark Salvo of Defenders of Wildlife. "Nobody would dispute that. This is a step forward, especially for the BLM, which had not managed lands well."

Evaluating the various states' strategies, Salvo said: "Oregon's is considered one of the better strategies for sage grouse. It is an all-lands approach. It includes state and private lands, steps no other state has taken."

The Oregon Natural Desert Association is especially focused on the outcome. Said Dan Morse, its conservation director, "From our perspective, both plans (federal and state) have many positive elements that if implemented will help us turn the corner."

During his Astoria appearance, Wyden compared the occupation in Harney County to confrontation over the potential endangered species listing of the greater sage grouse. It was an apt comparison and it makes a point that some presidential candidates fail to grasp. Our land use economics are complex. Progress on species preservation is possible. But to move forward sometimes demands years of work.

# The Obama boom

By PAUL KRUGMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

Do you remember the "Bush boom"? Probably not. Anyway, the administration of George W. Bush began its tenure with a recession, followed by an extended "jobless recovery." By the summer of 2003, however, the economy began adding jobs again. The pace of job creation wasn't anything special by historical standards, but conservatives insisted that the job gains after that trough represented a huge triumph, a vindication of the Bush tax cuts.

So what should we say about the Obama job record? Private-sector employment — the relevant number, as I'll explain in a minute — hit its low point in February 2010. Since then we've gained 14 million jobs, a figure that startled even me, roughly double the number of jobs added during the supposed Bush boom before it turned into the Great Recession. If that was a boom, this expansion, capped by last month's really good report, outbooms it by a wide margin.

Does President Barack Obama deserve credit for these gains? No. In general, presidents and their policies matter much less for the economy's performance than most people imagine. Times of crisis are an exception, and the Obama stimulus plan enacted in 2009 made a big positive difference. But that stimulus faded out fast after 2010, and has very little to do with the economy's current situation.

The point, however, is that politicians and pundits, especially on the right, constantly insist that presidential policies matter a lot.

## Focus on illegal guns

By CHARLES BLOW  
*New York Times News Service*

Late Thursday a madman approached a police cruiser in Philadelphia and fired at least 11 times at the officer in the vehicle, striking him three times in the left arm.

Even with those wounds, the officer was able to get out, chase the shooter and return fire, striking him in the buttocks.

The shooter would later tell the police, according to Capt. James Clark, commander of the Police Department's homicide division: "I follow Allah and I pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. That is the reason why I did what I did."

This is a disturbing reminder of the influence of the Islamic State on individuals disposed to acts of terror, and how hard it is to identify all of them before they commit a violent act.

But the episode also highlighted something else that does not get enough discussion: the use of stolen guns in crimes.

You see, the gun used in the Philadelphia attack had been stolen, from a police officer no less, in 2013.

Our current discussion about increasing gun regulations often centers on efforts that would mostly affect people who legally buy firearms. Many of them make sense, in theory, but the truth is that they would not be likely to have a huge impact on criminal gun violence, because many of those criminals obtain their weapons illegally.

So, when the gun lobby and gun owners make this case, we must admit that they have a point.

In 2013, Samuel Bieler of the Urban Institute wrote a fascinating article

about where criminals get their guns, and his findings were somewhat shocking.

Corrupt dealers supply some of the guns. According to Bieler:

"Some researchers have suggested that gun retailers divert a relatively low volume of weapons, while others have found them to be a major source."

Some come from gangs and family and friends. Specifically, "Research has put their role as a supply source at 30 to 40 percent of crime guns, but little is known about the composition of this nebulous 'friends and family' category."

And research by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives suggests that "just one percent of licensed firearms dealers sold more than half of the guns recovered in crimes, and that most gun dealers rarely have one of their guns show up in crime."

But what I found most shocking was the number of guns that are stolen each year: as many as half a million. Each year! And many of those stolen guns are used in other crimes.

In a 2003 book, "The Challenge of Crime," published by Harvard University Press, authors quoted researchers who found the following:

"They learned that 32 percent of the felons had acquired their most recent weapon through their own theft; an additional 14 percent knew that their friend, family, or street source had stolen the weapon before conveying it; and an additional 24 percent thought that the weapon probably had been stolen by his source. At least 46 percent, then, and possibly as many as 70 percent of felons' most recently owned firearms had been stolen either by the offender himself or by the source

**From a conservative point of view, Obama did everything wrong, afflicting the comfortable (slightly) and comforting the afflicted (a lot), and nothing bad happened. We can, it turns out, make our society better after all.**



Paul Krugman

And Obama, in particular, has been attacked at every stage of his presidency for policies that his critics allege are "job-killing" — the former House speaker, John Boehner, once used the phrase seven times in less than 14 minutes. So the fact that the Obama job record is as good as it is tells you something about the validity of those attacks.

What did Obama do that was supposed to kill jobs? Quite a lot, actually. He signed the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform, which critics claimed would crush employment by starving businesses of capital. He raised taxes on high incomes, especially at the very top, where average tax rates rose about 6.5 percentage points after 2012, a step that critics claimed would destroy incentives. And he enacted a health reform that went into full effect in 2014, amid claims that it would have catastrophic effects on employment.

Yet none of the dire predicted consequences of these policies have materialized. It's not just that overall job creation in the private sector — which was what Obama was supposedly killing — has been strong. More detailed examinations of labor markets also show no evidence of predicted ill effects. For example, there's no evidence that Obamacare led to a shift from full-time to part-time work, and no evidence that the expansion of Medicaid led to large reductions in labor supply.

So what do we learn from this impressive failure to fail? That the conservative economic orthodoxy dominating the Republican Party is very, very wrong.

In a way, that should have been obvious. For conservative orthodoxy has a curiously inconsistent view of the abilities and motivations of corporations and wealthy individuals — I mean, job creators.

On one side, this elite is presumed to be a bunch of economic superheroes, able to deliver universal prosperity by summoning the magic of the marketplace. On the other side, they're depicted as incredibly sensitive flowers who wilt in the face of adversity — raise their taxes a bit, subject them to a few regulations, or for that matter hurt their feelings in a speech or two, and they'll stop creating jobs and go sulk in their tents, or more likely their mansions.

It's a doctrine that doesn't make much sense, but it conveys a clear message that, whaddya know, turns out to be very convenient for the elite: namely, that injustice is a law of nature, that we'd better not do anything to make our society less unequal or protect ordinary families from financial risks. Because if we do, the usual suspects insist, we'll be severely punished by the invisible hand, which will collapse the economy.

Economists could and did argue that history proves this doctrine wrong. After all, America achieved rapid, indeed unprecedented, income growth in the 1950s and 1960s, despite top tax rates beyond the wildest dreams of modern progressives. For that matter, there are countries like Denmark that combine high taxes and generous social programs with very good employment performance.

But for those who don't know much about either history or the world outside America, the Obama economy offers a powerful lesson in the here and now. From a conservative point of view, Obama did everything wrong, afflicting the comfortable (slightly) and comforting the afflicted (a lot), and nothing bad happened. We can, it turns out, make our society better after all.



Charles Blow

from whom he acquired the weapon. In addition, 47 percent of the respondents quizzed as to whether they had ever stolen a firearm during a crime admitted to so doing and 86 percent of the felons who admitted prior stealing of firearms reported multiple thefts."

Rather than focusing on all guns, the vast, vast majority of which are owned by responsible people and are never used in the commission of a crime, we have to focus on keeping guns out of the hands of this relatively small number of criminals.

People, including the president in his speech and town hall meeting last week, like to compare increasing gun regulations to the way cars are regulated. But they didn't simply get safer due to regulations. They also got safer because the market desired more safety, as well as anti-theft features. Many of the innovations, carmakers came up with on their own. The gun market doesn't behave that way.

Furthermore, cars are required to be licensed, registered, insured and periodically inspected. Also, you can't hide a car the way you can hide a gun. Cars are operated on public roads.

If we want to truly put a dent in gun violence, we must take some incredibly unpopular steps in some pockets. Safety features — including smart guns that can only be fired by the owner — are going to have to be added to the market. That will be hard to sell because no one wants a gun to fail to because it lacks a charge or due to a technology glitch. One of benefits of traditional guns is that, technologically, they are simple and ancient. There are no batteries or chips.

We are also likely to have to register guns and require insurance. This would be almost impossible, given the gun lobby's and many gun owners' current stance and the paranoid fears of confiscation, a fear some liberals feed.

Making guns safer and keeping more of them out of the hands of criminals and in the hands of responsible owners can be done, but not as long as many responsible owners are also unreasonable ones.

*Editorials that appear on this page are written by Publisher Steve Forrester and Matt Winters, editor of the Chinook Observer and Coast River Business Journal, or staff members from the EO Media Group's sister newspapers.*