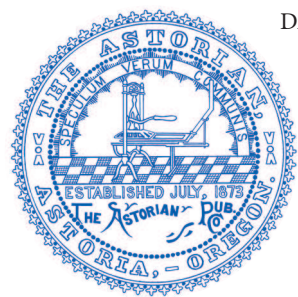


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OUR VIEW

As political season ramps up, so should questions

This weekend will mark another Labor Day holiday that not only celebrates the workforce but is also symbolic for the seasonal changes it's come to represent. The lazy days of summer are quickly turning into the bustling days of fall and folks are moving from backyard barbecues to the busy routines of back to school.

But this year especially, it also marks the true ramp up of election season. Look for more chutzpah-filled speeches, more candidate postcards and voter pamphlets in your mailbox, and lots of programming on your TV channels sponsored by sometimes dubious political advertising. Amid that noise, we all should be unabashed about posing the question of "what have you done for me lately" to those politicians who are now asking for our votes.

While the slates of candidates for the national and statewide ballot have long been in place, the filing deadline for city races here in Clatsop County occurred earlier this week and there are a number of important contested races that need close inspection.

One issue that needs to be addressed and is central at all three election levels — federal, state and local — is the economy with its continuing but doggedly slow recovery from the Great Recession and the disruptive changes it brought across the country and here at home.

Nationally, as we head into Labor Day, the good news is a number of economic indicators are trending upward while unemployment is trending downward. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported the jobless rate was down to 4.9 percent in July, a far cry from the 10-plus percents of the recession. Despite these positive trends, many simply say it just doesn't seem to feel as good as the politicians and bureaucrats say it is.

Why?

Across the country and here at home, many workers were negatively affected by the recession and are now unhappily underemployed. Others are struggling in jobs with wages far less than they made previously. Still others caught in the recession's wrath were forced from full time to part-time work. Some stopped looking for work altogether, which lowers the unemployment rate statistically but does nothing to help from a human standpoint. Nationally, reports show, the wage gap is continuing to widen.

Additionally, health care and retirement benefits that once came with many middle class jobs are no longer a guarantee, and in many cases the benefits are now far less than they once were. That puts even more pressure on families and retirees trying to make ends meet. For those who can't afford health insurance, the Affordable Care Act that was designed to provide that care isn't meeting expectations and faces future challenges as insurers cut back on coverage options and raise rates.

And while the housing sector is recovering from the dark days of the crisis that led to the recession, affordability is now much more of an issue.

Statewide, indicators show the economy is also back on the upswing, but additional economic development, public employee pension funding, transportation improvements, health care, and educational funding are constant issues amid the background of a limited tax base. Oregon faces a looming \$1.4 billion deficit and a vociferous controversy covers proposed statewide funding solutions like a heavy fog that shrouds the coast.

Here in Clatsop County the issues are far more localized, but also economic related. Housing availability and affordability, aging infrastructure, improvements for public facilities and more funding for schools all need to be addressed.

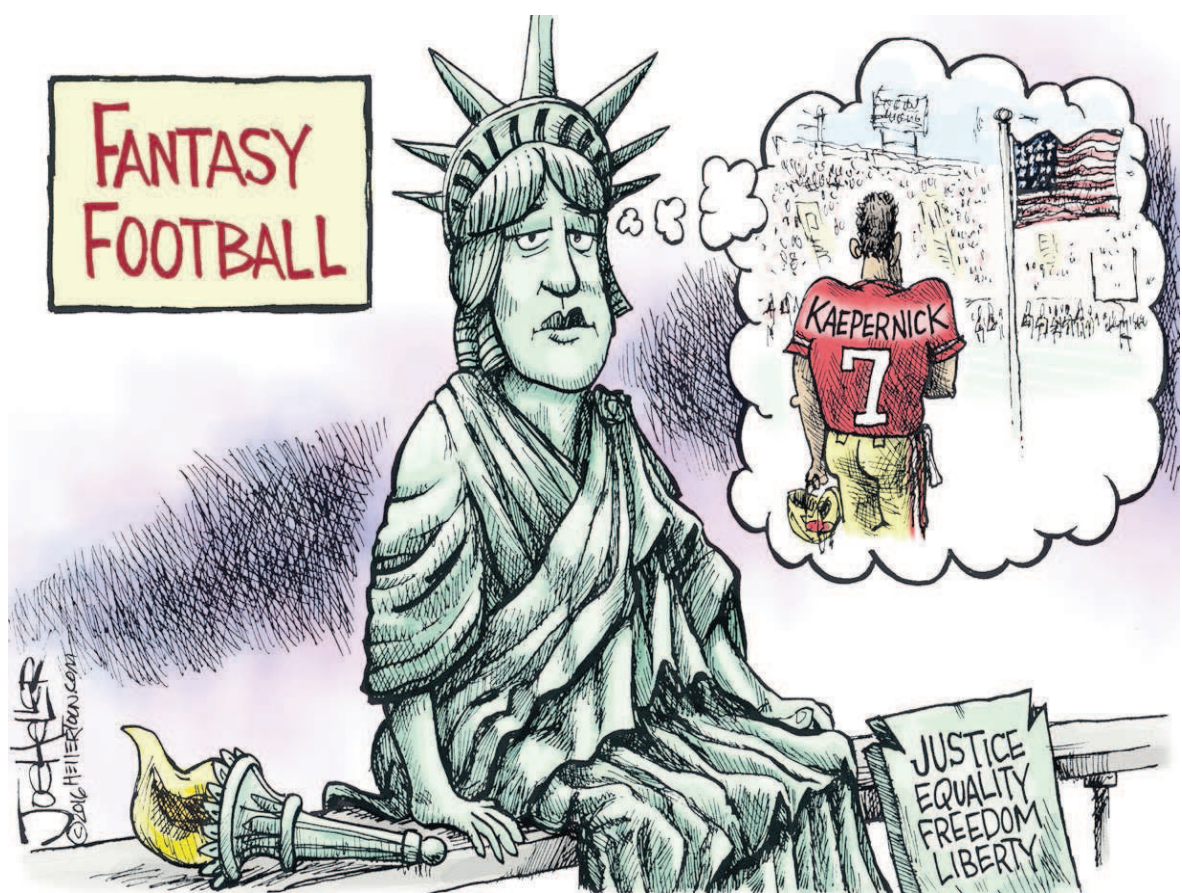
Responsibilities

So whose job is it to address the issues? It's ultimately all of ours.

The politicians who present proposals, solutions and seek to enact policies depend on our votes to put them in office. It's their responsibility to be transparent, to tout their stances on the issues, to tell us all how and where they will find creative and fair solutions, and explain how they will use scarce tax dollars in the best and most efficient ways.

It's our job collectively to register to vote, to analyze the candidates, to ask demanding questions that keep the hopefuls on the issues, and to thoroughly investigate their claims before we fill out our ballots.

Now that the season is changing and the politicians want to harvest our votes, it's up to us all to separate the wheat from the chaff.



Donald Trump's tumescent twin

By FRANK BRUNI
New York Times News Service

It's rich, as the English would say, that Donald Trump is trying to profit from Anthony Weiner's latest mortification, because Trump is to his persevering supporters what Weiner was to his long-suffering wife: a scoundrel undeserving of so many second chances; a head case incapable of the redemption that's supposedly just a few extra measures of discipline away; someone



selling himself as a servant of the public although he's really a slave to his own raging ego and unquenchable needs.

When Trump looks in the mirror, there's a whole lot of Weiner staring back at him.

The details are tawdrier in Weiner's case, and the stakes far smaller. But both men are creatures of potent want and pure compulsion who lucked into forgiving audiences. Weiner's finally stopped forgiving: Huma Abedin announced that she was formally separating from him after six years of marriage.

Trump still has legions by his side. But for how long?

On the home page of The Times' website on Monday, coincident with the news story about Weiner's latest sexting and Abedin's break with him, was a chart documenting when and why 110 GOP leaders gave up on Trump.

The left side of the chart presented a timeline of his apostasies and indecencies, and it alone was transfixing: a reminder that any other candidate at any other time would have been undone by just one or two of these outrages; an illustration of the way they keep coming, no matter how ardently his inner circle pleads with him for calm, no matter how furiously the outside world reacts. He can't help himself.

The right side of the chart presented another timeline, this one

showing the points at which each of the 110 Republicans bolted. The surprise was how delayed their departures were. Hope is a stubborn thing.

And at some point, it's too rosy a word for what's really going on, which is denial, delusion.

There's also brutal calculation: Does Trump's function as a barrier against a Democratic president — against Hillary Clinton, in particular — outweigh his cruelty, his incivility, his bigotry, his utter fraudulence? Too many Republicans have convinced themselves of that, in part by minimizing those vices, seeing them as ephemeral, or simply averting their gazes.

Some of these Republicans are

When Trump looks in the mirror, there's a whole lot of Weiner staring back at him.

living in the same fairy tale that some spouses are. They're telling themselves the same lie: that fidelity matters more than dignity and common sense. But if a crucial part of wisdom is knowing when to invest, an equally crucial part is knowing when to let go.

The Weiner-Abedin marriage had apparently devolved, even before the latest revelation of fresh sexting, into a blunt parenting arrangement, with Weiner's care of their 4-year-old son making her heavy travel schedule with Clinton possible.

That's an implication from recent comments that she made to Vogue magazine. It's the clear take-away from a Monday-night story in The New York Post, which quotes him telling his sexting partner that he doubted he'd be relocating with his wife to Washington from New York if Clinton were

elected president and Abedin made the move.

And it undercuts Trump's complaint that national security might have been endangered by the "close proximity to highly classified information" that a "very sick guy" like Weiner had through conversations with Abedin. There probably wasn't much pillow talk there.

If Trump wants to make Abedin an issue, he's on fairer, sturdier ground with the extra pay from outside sources that Clinton arranged for her when they worked together at the State Department.

He's on dangerous turf when he goes after Weiner as a "sicko" and a "pervert." He's no paragon of rectitude, no pillar of restraint.

This is someone who once joked to Howard Stern — on the air — that his own Vietnam was the danger he courted as a libidinous man in an era of sexually transmitted diseases. This is someone who publicly drooled over his daughter Ivanka, saying that he might date her if he hadn't sired her.

Weiner sent strangers pictures of his bulge. Trump assured the viewers of a nationally televised debate that he was amply endowed.

These impulses — these boasts — aren't unrelated.

A scene in the documentary "Weiner," about his ill-fated run for New York City mayor, depicts him at a computer, raptly watching and reliving one of his appearances on MSNBC. Trump is famous for marinating in all of the television time devoted to him. He tallies it. He crows about it. He's Weiner with extra traction, Weiner with added guilt.

It forces an important question: Have we constructed a politics with such bright, invasive lights that those who find it more attractive than repulsive include an unhealthy number of insecure exhibitionists out for affirmation above all else?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Racial facts

A recent article about diversity in the Lower Columbia region ("White out: Talking about race is a challenge," *The Daily Astorian*, Aug. 22) included a gem by Astoria City Councilor Drew Herzig, who recently prepared a brochure on what to do when stopped by police: "There's no avoiding it — If you're a person of color and you get pulled over, you could die."

While at first the comment seems to exhibit concern for the welfare of young, black men, even a casual study unleashes the pungent aroma of political race-baiting and shameless pandering.

Some excellent research has begun to accumulate on police use of force. If Herzig would take a momentary pause in the breathless hyperbole, he might be interested to look at the number of unarmed black citizens killed during interactions with police, while not involved in criminal activity at the time of encounter.

When you sort by unarmed suspects and race, and read the circumstances of each encounter, you'll find it is a very, very, very small number indeed (<http://bit.ly/1SQhWZa>)

The indisputable evidence, regardless of race, is that the conduct of suspects when stopped by police is the nearly singular determinant of the end of the encounter. In fact, according to FBI crime data, the chance of a black male in the U.S. being killed by police during a use of force is roughly 0.00078 percent of one percent. About 1/20 the chance of being hit by lightning.

Will Councilor Herzig be printing a brochure to address the "Systemic Lighting Strike Problems" in our area? Or will he just be satisfied in sully the name of the many good officers and departments that serve our North Coast communities?

Herzig should apologize, or resign.

D. MILLER
 Manzanita, Washington

Herzig one of the best

Astoria City Councilor Drew Herzig is leaving us. He and his life partner, Charlie Schweigert, will be missed. As a councilman, Drew has been one of the best. At council meetings, he actually listened and considered what speakers had to say. He absolutely was not a member of the "old boys" school of thinking."

Drew is the only council member I know, past or present, to have monthly public meetings, where he kept us abreast of city plans and welcomed our opinions. It is interesting to note that about half of those in attendance were from other wards. Their council people apparently don't need input from the public.

Drew and Charlie are moving to Massachusetts to begin a new chapter in their lives. My best wishes go with them.

MARGE PECK
 Astoria