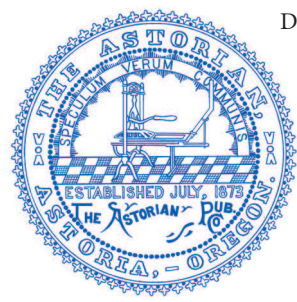


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



DAVID F. PERO, *Publisher & Editor*  
 LAURA SELLERS, *Managing Editor*  
 BETTY SMITH, *Advertising Manager*  
 CARL EARL, *Systems Manager*  
 JOHN D. BRUIJN, *Production Manager*  
 DEBRA BLOOM, *Business Manager*  
 HEATHER RAMSDELL, *Circulation Manager*

## OUR VIEW

# Bipartisan ideas to reform PERS

Sens. Johnson and Knopp attempt to overcome leadership inertia

Two state legislators have offered an impressive list of ideas for fixing Oregon's ailing retirement system for public employees. Their suggestions are fair, constitutional and would protect government services. Their effort, notably, is bipartisan.

With all that going for it, the ideas are unlikely to be embraced by Gov. Kate Brown or Democratic leaders in the Legislature. They are focused instead on spending potential revenue from Measure 97 and gaining super-majority status for their party.

The challenges of the Public Employees Retirement System are well documented. The program's unfunded liability exceeds \$21 billion and continues to grow. Costs to school districts and local governments are scheduled to jump \$885 million next year, forcing massive cuts in staffing, programs and services.

Our state's political leaders cobbled together a so-called "grand bargain" in 2013 to save PERS. Predictably, many of the changes were struck down by the Oregon Supreme Court because they reduced accrued benefits for current retirees. The planned "savings" legislators counted on instead increased unfunded liabilities.

Two respected state senators realize the severity of the challenge and are attempting to create momentum for bipartisan change. Democrat Betsy Johnson from Clatsop County and Republican Tim Knopp of Bend have created a work group to craft solutions that are legal, bipartisan, fair to retirees and protect essential government services. They have invited experts, government officials, retirees and representatives from business and labor to participate.

Already, several reforms have been reviewed by the Legislature's legal counsel and deemed likely to survive a constitutional challenge. Among them:

- A \$100,000 cap on the final average salary used to calculate retirement benefits. This would significantly reduce the payouts to football coaches, university presidents and other highly compensated public employees.
- Move all new public employees to a defined contribution plan, much like those in the private sector.
- Prevent unused vacation and sick time from inflating final average salaries to artificially increase retirement benefits.
- Use market rates to calculate annuities. Currently, the PERS board assumes a 7.5 percent rate of return — far above current market rates.

Sens. Johnson and Knopp should be lauded for their efforts to reform PERS. Perhaps they can initiate the political momentum to get past the inertia in the state capital.

# Brown bypassing coastal issues

It's not surprising that polls show Gov. Kate Brown has a substantial lead against Republican challenger Bud Pierce heading into November's general election.

The governor is a Democrat in a heavily Democratic state and she has been concentrating on garnering votes, banking campaign contributions and voicing support for the controversial Measure 97 corporate tax initiative along the Interstate 5 corridor where most of the state's population resides. Most career politicians would say that's a smart strategy, a sure way to win the race.

But what is surprising is that Brown is giving the appearance of marginalizing Clatsop County by ignoring coastal voters and their concerns on issues like gillnetting, emergency preparedness, pension reform and aging infrastructure.

Along those lines, it didn't help that perception earlier this week when Brown turned down an opportunity to debate Pierce here on the coast to address those issues in person. The Daily Astorian's parent company, EO Media Group, was among four sponsors of the debate proposal, and the sponsors would have foot the bill for the debate as a community service.

Pierce was eager to participate in a coastal debate. But the governor is already participating in five other debates with Pierce, four of which are on the I-5 corridor with the fifth in Bend, and according to her campaign staff, a sixth debate in Astoria — although desired — wasn't logistically possible.

That's too bad because Brown hasn't visited Clatsop County since June 2015 and it would have afforded her a leadership opportunity to be transparent and inclusive in front of voters who tend to cast ballots their own way and who potentially aren't sold on her political leanings or her leadership qualities.

If Brown wants to change those perceptions, she should start serving coastal constituents by addressing those issues instead of spending her time casting for valley votes and campaign contributions.

With the serious problems Oregon faces, the state needs inclusive leaders in all areas, not just career politicians out to win elections.



# Hillary's sick days

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Before we delve any further into the coughs heard round the world and the swoon that changed history, some perspective:

Running for president isn't hard. It's brutal. The oddity isn't that one of the candidates would succumb to illness and be forced off the trail for a few days. The oddity is that all of the candidates don't drop like flies.

What we ask of them is less preparation than mortification, physical as well as psychological. Between formal speeches and informal rallies and briefings and fundraisers and long flights and short bus rides and coffee-shop huddles and state-fairground scrums, they endure 20-hour days in which they cram in twice that many hours of work. They're miracles of perseverance, so much so that a certain 68-year-old Democratic nominee can get a pneumonia diagnosis and deliver a big (if cloddishly rendered) speech at a fundraiser that same night.

Their stamina isn't at issue, just their sanity.

We haven't learned anything new about Hillary Clinton's penchant for secrecy. We've had it confirmed — for the millionth time. Her self-protection is a perverse form of self-destruction. It's borderline pathological. But it's something that most voters accepted or rejected somewhere along the quarter-century timeline from Travelgate to her emails. A roadside crumpling and a round of antibiotics aren't going to change that.

Her lack of transparency might well be disqualifying if her opponent were the political equivalent of freshly Windexed glass. Her opponent is the political equivalent of a thickly armored car.

Donald Trump won't show us his taxes. He won't illuminate his philanthropic activity or the work-

ings of his charity, which, according to David Fahrenthold's terrific reporting in The Washington Post, operates in a bizarrely self-aggrandizing fashion.

He's promising more detailed health information and a sit-down with Dr. Oz, who is Trump with a stethoscope, approaching matters of great seriousness with great silliness. (Next up: Judge Judy hears the Trump University lawsuit.)

But what Trump presented previously — a few gushing sentences from a physician who later admitted to ginning them up on the fly — was a Valentine's Day card masquerading as medicine. I'm surprised there weren't hearts and Cupids in the margins.

**I can't see her coughing fits excusing his hissy fits, which are scarier and harder to cure.**

Apart from it, there's no evidence of Trump as Hercules. More like Nero, with a coterie of sycophants fanning him and peeling his grapes.

He's the master of phoning in to news shows rather than appearing on set, which would require more exertion. He has often done just one event a day, near an airport, so he can fly home in his plush private jet and sleep in his own comfy bed. He's the rare exception to the slog I described above. During the primaries, it was huge news when he finally overnights in a chain hotel in Iowa and, that same weekend, sat through all 60 minutes of a church service. Praise the Lord and pass the Gatorade.

Although his hair refuses to accept it, he's 70 years old, and if there's footage out there of him

doing the P90X workout, I missed it. I have seen him playing golf, which isn't much more aerobically demanding than backgammon.

All of this makes him a singularly ineffective critic of Clinton's health. And his surrogates and supporters are bungling the case by overstating it. To hear them talk, she's some sporadically animated cadaver, a mashup of "Weekend at Bernie's" and "The Candidate." They're going to look ridiculous when she stands sturdily on the debate stage for 90 minutes and speaks in sentences fuller, more coherent and more grammatical than his.

Of course events could unfold differently. She could have a debate so terrible that naysaying about her health is the least of her worries. She could continue to struggle with illness, compromising the intensity with which she stumps. She could shortchange us on the additional medical records that she has rightly pledged to share, yanking her campaign off message yet again. She could have a lurking malady — as could Trump.

But we don't have any more proof of her physical unfitness for the presidency than we did a week ago. There's no clear link between the blood clot of 2013 and Sunday's swoon.

What we have is a stress-aggravated instance of frailty from one of two senior citizens engaged in a marathon. Will it really eclipse the race's other dynamics?

In a recent Washington Post/ABC News poll, only 36 percent of respondents said that Trump was qualified to be president. I can't imagine any one of the other 64 percent reasoning: "He's ignorant, but so robustly ignorant. A liar, but such a strapping one. Forget those hateful tirades; look at those cholesterol levels."

I can't see her coughing fits excusing his hissy fits, which are scarier and harder to cure.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Process alone doesn't mean democracy has been served

One week ago, Gearhart's City Council passed an ordinance regulating less than 5 percent of Gearhart homeowners who rent their homes on a short-term basis. In getting the ordinance passed, the mayor and the city administrator applauded themselves in bull-dogging a process, and thereby claiming that democracy had been served.

The mayor even stated that passing the ordinance was "something we (the council) wanted to do" ("Gearhart gives new rental rules a go," *The Daily Astorian*, Sept. 8). Don't let that "we" slip by you. It has been the focus of the whole process the past several years. The "we" is not the citizens, but the mayor, other council members and the city administrator.

Following a process in and of itself does not satisfy the ends of democracy. If it did, there would be no reason for citizens to claim an abuse of process. The purpose of process is to consider facts and hear input from the public. Elected and appointed government officials are not expected to be experts on everything, and particularly volunteer, unpaid elected officials can hardly be expected to be experts on much at all, especially relating to governance. This is why citizen input and consideration of information and

facts from the public and experts is so critical to public discourse and excellent decision making.

#### Limitations on input

Gearhart's mayor and a handful of others in favor of the new zoning ordinance claim everyone had the opportunity to be heard. However, limitations were strictly placed on input — only five, and sometimes only three minutes, and only at public meetings or hearings. Additionally, the process set out by the law wasn't even properly followed. As one example, the ordinance as passed has provisions and language that was added after all public notice and hearings. The city pays its attorney to do a better job than that.

The 5 percent of Gearhart homeowners who rent their homes to vacationers (typically less than one-third of any year) were completely denied such a process. Many homeowners requested an audience with council members, either individually or in groups. We were refused. On repeated occasions we requested to help form a committee of Gearhart homeowners to study the issue. The council refused. We offered to form a group of homeowners who rent to vacationers to take into account other homeowners' concerns and impose self-regulation. The council

didn't consider it.

Experts on the issue of vacation rentals, including property managers, lawyers and political consultants were given five or three minutes, depending on the meeting, to speak at public meetings or hearings, and no more. Of course, written testimony was also submitted, but who knows what was received and read. City councilors have admitted to not looking at their government email accounts, and the city administrator has confirmed this. If there are emails which the city administrator decides need particular attention, he has admitted to sending them to the councilors' personal email addresses.

#### Process has been abused

Don't find comfort in the claim that democracy has been served by simply following a process. On the issue of regulating a small percentage of Gearhart homeowners who rent to vacationers, process has been abused in Gearhart by refusing, and not actually accepting and considering data, meaningful citizen input and expert information.

I am a friend of Gearhart who respects the rights of citizens both in court, and at the ballot box.

KATHY SCHROEDER  
 Portland/Gearhart