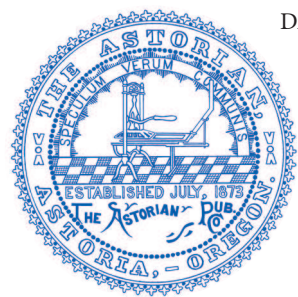


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# It is time to take another look at drug charges

It's a notable and important development that Oregon sheriffs and police chiefs are recommending simple drug-possession charges be treated as misdemeanors instead of felonies in certain circumstances. But as our local sheriff cautions, it's also crucial that such a step — if taken — doesn't lead to an anything-goes attitude to illicit drugs.

As denoted by our state's enthusiastic legalization of recreational marijuana, Oregon is inclined to be a leader when it comes to re-examining legal and social strategies for dealing with drugs. Along with Washington, Alaska and a growing rank of other states that have abandoned a losing struggle against a substance many regard as less harmful than alcohol, Oregon police now are ready scrap the century-old orthodoxy that punishment is the best way to discourage possession and use of other drugs.

The law enforcement groups note that felony convictions "include unintended and collateral consequences including barriers to housing and employment and a disparate impact on minority communities." In essence, conviction on a drug-possession charge can condemn a person to circumstances that make life permanently more difficult. This can have the contradictory result of paving the way for future drug use by hopeless and marginalized citizens.

Convicted users should instead be given individualized, mandated treatment. Such a consequence isn't a slap on the wrist, carrying with it the likelihood of financial cost, loss of personal time and the embarrassment that accompanies being required to get help. But the cost to offenders and to taxpayers would be far less than prosecuting a felony case, imprisonment and years of follow-up.

Local law enforcement is split on the issue, with most appearing to agree with the recommendation but urging that careful and conservative implementation would be key to success. Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin goes further, seeing a switch to misdemeanor treatment as a slippery slope and a hazardous social experiment.

Such concerns must be addressed to legislators' satisfaction before any change is made. It seems likely, however, in a time of severely strained law enforcement and criminal justice budgets that some degree of experimentation is both desirable and inevitable.

# Making Astoria more inviting, a parklet at a time

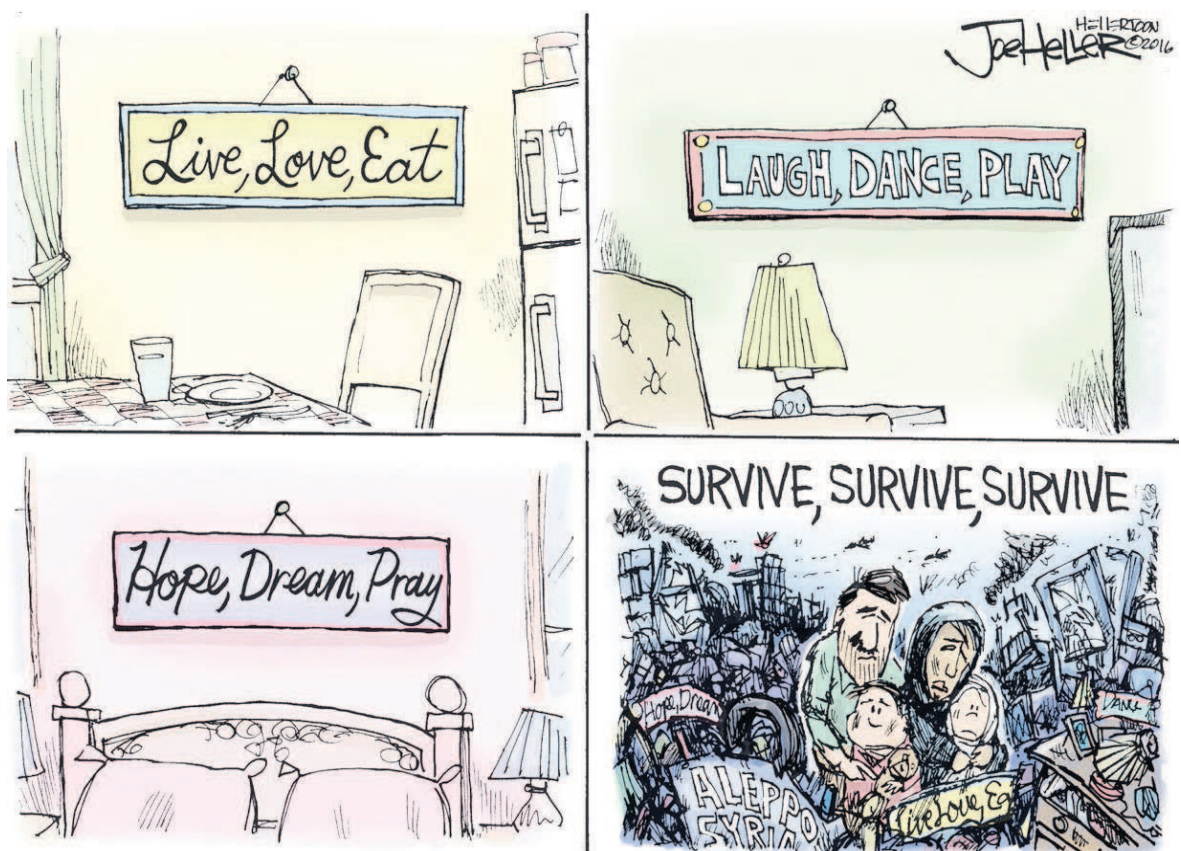
Blending mini-parks into an urban environment is one of the best enhancements a community can make to its livability and sense of place. Often, these "parklets" are the pet projects of business owners. Such will be the case with a parking space and a loading zone outside of Cargo on 11th Street.

The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association and Astoria City Council are facilitating the mini-parks, initially with this week's approval of a proposal by Jim Defeo, owner of Cargo, the Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro and Carruthers restaurant. Defeo plans benches using reclaimed wood and other recycled materials, and may add tables and other features.

Giving up even a single parking space can be controversial in a place like Astoria, which squeezes a lot into its small area of flat surface reclaimed from the Columbia River over the decades. It takes courage and foresight to look beyond short-term considerations and continue making downtown more walkable and vibrant, as urban strategist Michele Reeves urged in a 2012 study.

All this might be decidedly old news in Seattle and Portland, and even more familiar to the people of Paris and other European cities, which routinely make much richer use of their sidewalks, small plazas and other urban spaces. Nearby, thanks to Henry Harrison Tinker, a town founder with lots of good ideas, the downtown of Long Beach, Washington, is generously sprinkled with mini-parks that invite conversations, play and leisurely sitting in the sun and mist.

All involved in Astoria's effort to do more in this arena are to be commended. One parklet at a time, a city can dramatically enhance its sense of being people-friendly and inviting. This is a success that deserves to generate similar decisions by others. Each little park will be unique in its own way. This is a great part of the charm of dynamic public spaces in a creative little city like ours.



# Pence's ugly chore in the vice-presidential debate

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Back when Mike Pence hosted a talk radio show in the 1990s, he described himself as "Rush Limbaugh on deaf."

For much of Tuesday night, he was like Forrest Gump on chamomile, squarely and steadily plodding forward, seldom tugged from his talking points and never particularly rattled. His expression was a sort of upbeat blur. His voice was a lulling drone.

It wasn't exactly a vivid performance, but it was an eerily consistent one, and it answered the question of how a man who supposedly prides himself on his virtue defends a running mate who is often bereft of it. He sets his jaw. He slows his pulse. He practices a bemused chuckle, perfects deafness to anything he prefers not to hear and purges from his memory anything he doesn't want to own.

"Six times tonight, I have said to Gov. Pence: I can't imagine how you can defend your running mate's position on one issue after the next," Kaine said, his voice somewhat squeaky with frustration. "And in all six cases, he's refused to defend his running mate, and yet he is asking everybody to vote for somebody that he cannot defend."

## Fair summary

That's a fair enough summary of the vice-presidential debate, and it flagged what made the event so fascinating, which was Pence — specifically, the astonishing peace he has made with Trump and his whole-

hearted readiness to promote a man who should be so offensive to him.

In the face of Kaine's incessant grilling, Pence blithely denied that Trump had made statements that he inarguably had, changed the subject to Hillary Clinton's failings, mocked Kaine for being scripted and dismissed Kaine and Clinton as career politicians — ignoring the fact that he fits that description, too.

Substantively, it was galling. Strategically, it may well have worked. With his minimalist speaking style, Pence drew attention to Kaine's maximalist salvos. Pence's unflappability threw Kaine's irritation and interruptions into relief.

One of Pence's assignments was to counter Trump's childish excitability with adult calm, which he did almost flawlessly. Another of his assignments was to make Trump palatable to wavering Americans by communicating that Trump was positively yummy to him. He aced that, too, meaning that he's either a phenomenally talented actor or a master of self-deception.

## The devil in Pence

I wrongly expected that the debate would be a letdown, especially after last week's blistering matchup of Trump and Clinton. Following that faceoff with this one was like chasing a Quentin Tarantino movie with a rerun of "Touched by an Angel" — or so I assumed.

But I forgot the devil in Pence and what an engrossing, depressing character study the Indiana governor has turned out to be. It's hard to think of a vice-presidential candidate in modern history who has gone so far against his supposed nature and his proclaimed values in the service of his running mate.

He has always worn his religiousness conspicuously, introducing himself time and again as "a Christian, a conservative and a Republican, in that order."

In 1991, after losing a race for the U.S. Congress in which he harshly attacked his opponent, he published an essay, "Confessions of a Negative Campaigner," in which he invoked Jesus and mentioned sin as he swore off such future ugliness.

"Negative campaigning is wrong," he wrote, adding, "A campaign ought to demonstrate the basic human decency of the candidate."

The Trump campaign has demonstrated anything but, and yet Pence has repeatedly vouched for Trump, even as Trump savaged the Muslim parents of a soldier who died defending America, seemed to encourage Second Amendment enthusiasts to take aim at Clinton, pinned the birther conspiracy on her, and spent the days after his own debate — a disastrous one — lashing out at a former Miss Universe and tweeting about pornography.

Tuesday night Pence rewarded Trump's inane, insane antics with a debate performance that reflected fierce determination and the kind of thorough preparation that Trump had skipped. Pence didn't forget to bring up the Clinton Foundation. Or the "basket of deplorables," a knife he twisted dexterously.

Never has he taken Trump to task or taken a stand for "basic human decency." He seems to have reversed the order of those identity adjectives. "Republican" now comes first and "Christian" last.

Maybe he'll atone and make amends in another post-campaign "Confessions." God knows he has plenty of material.

# Trump, taxes and citizenship

By DAVID BROOKS  
*New York Times News Service*

You can be a taxpayer or you can be a citizen. If you're a taxpayer your role in the country is defined by your economic and legal status. Your primary identity is individual. You're perfectly within your rights to do everything you legally can to look after your self-interest.

Within this logic, it's perfectly fine for Donald Trump to have potentially paid no income taxes, even over a long period of time. As Trump and his allies have said, he would have broken no law. He would have taken advantage of the deductions just the way the rest of us take advantage of the mortgage deduction or any other; it's just that he had more deductions to draw upon.

As Trump and his advisers have argued, it is normal practice in our society to pay as little in taxes as possible. There are vast industries to help people do this. There is no wrong here.

The problem with the taxpayer mentality is that you end up serving your individual interest short term but soiling the nest you need to be happy in over the long term.

## Giving and getting

A healthy nation isn't just an atomized mass of individual economic and legal units. A nation is a

web of giving and getting. You give to your job, and your employer gives to you. You give to your neighborhood, and your neighborhood gives to you. You give to your government, and your government gives to you.

If you orient everything around individual self-interest, you end up ripping the web of giving and receiving. Neighbors can't trust neighbors. Individuals can't trust their institutions, and they certainly can't trust their government. Everything that is not explicitly prohibited is permissible. Everybody winds up suspicious and defensive and competitive. You wind up alone at 3 a.m. miserably tweeting out at your enemies.

The older citizenship mentality is a different mentality. It starts with the warm glow of love of country. It continues with a sense of sweet gratitude that the founders of the country, for all their flaws, were able to craft a structure of government that is suppler and more lasting than anything we seem to be able to craft today.

The citizen enjoys a sweet reverence for all the gifts that have been handed down over time, and a generous piety about country that is the opposite of arrogance.

Out of this sweet parait of emotions comes a sense of a common beauty that transcends individual beauty. There's a sense of how a lovely society is supposed to be. This means the economic desire to save money on taxes competes with a desire to be part of a lovely world.

In a lovely society we all pull our fair share. Some things the government does are uncontroversial

goods: protecting us from enemies, preserving the health and dignity of the old and infirm. These things have to be paid for, and in the societies we admire, everybody helps.

In a lovely society everybody practices a kind of social hygiene. There are some things that are legal but distasteful and corrupt. In a lovely society people shun these corrupt and corrupting things. The tax code is a breeding ground for corruption, so they don't take advantage. The lottery system immiserates the poor so they don't contribute to its acceptability by playing.

In a lovely society everyone feels privilege, but the rich feel a special privilege. They know they have been given more than they deserve, and that it is actually not going to hurt all that much to try to be worthy of what they've received.

Citizens aren't just sacrificing out of the nobility of their heart. They serve the common good for their own enrichment, too. If they practice politics they can learn prudence; if they serve in the military they can learn courage. Public citizenship is the path to personal growth.

You can say that a billionaire paying no taxes is fine and legal. But you have to adopt an overall mentality that shuts down a piece of your heart, and most of your moral sentiments.

That mentality is entirely divorced from the mentality of commonality and citizenship. That mentality has side effects. They may lead toward riches, but they lead away from happiness.