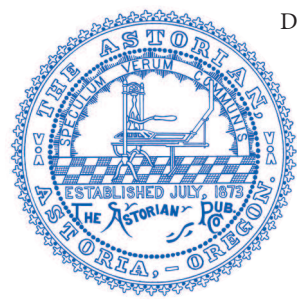


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Liberty's new leader has noble course ahead

Like all community projects and institutions, the Liberty Theater must constantly reappraise how it can best serve the public and evolve to suit changing needs. As a performing art space in an increasingly interesting and diverse place, the Liberty is in the enviable but perilous situation of needing to recreate itself in ways that are exciting and relevant to new generations.

For those who have lived in and near Astoria long enough, there continues to be an almost palpable feeling of relief that the Liberty was saved from the architectural scrapheap. It doesn't take much looking around the nation to find many examples of classic theaters that have been carved up into second-hand malls or worse. In a city with less-dedicated, generous and hardworking citizens, the Liberty's site might now be a parking lot. Such a loss would have had incalculable impacts on the future well-being of Astoria's historic downtown.

A series of volunteer board members and longtime Executive Director Rosemary Baker-Monaghan successfully steered the Liberty during the early years of its second lease on life. Now, the board has named Jennifer Crockett, a 39-year-old professional musician, to be the venue's new director.

"Music needs champions both on the stage and behind it, and the Liberty is the perfect place to make a measurable difference," Crockett said.

It is, of course, too soon to begin assessing how well the new director will succeed. But the basic theory underlying her hire is valid. The Liberty needs solid managerial and financial management, coupled with an energetic vision of what the theater's next chapters should be. With so much talent in our immediate region and remarkable creative assets nearby in the Pacific Northwest, it's possible to conceive the Liberty serving as an incubator and focal point for many forms of performing arts.

It's good to think of the possibilities, and gratifying to be moving toward them after this interim period of uncertainty.

Astoria council should have filled Ward 2 vacancy

We aren't sure we understand the lack of urgency the Astoria City Council displayed this past week when it chose not to fill an empty seat at its table.

When City Councilor Cindy Price proposed appointing Tom Brownson to fill the Ward 2 vacancy created when Councilor Drew Herzig stepped down to move to Massachusetts, her motion died for lack of a second. Later, councilors voted 3-1 to fill the void after the election, with Price saying "no." The decision means the council won't be at full strength until at least January.

Brownson is running unopposed for Herzig's empty seat and will be sworn into office in January after the general election next month. He has been a fixture at council meetings, already preparing to fill the position. He will be joined as a new member on the council in January by either Bruce Jones, a former U.S. Coast Guard commander, or Cory Pederson, a conductor and music teacher, who are vying to replace Councilor Russ Warr, who is not seeking re-election.

While seniority plays a role in Congress, it certainly doesn't on city and county councils and commissions, and there is a reason why most city charters call for an odd number of members, so that tie votes can be avoided. There was no real downside in putting Brownson in the position ahead of time.

But by not appointing Brownson, the council decided to leave a section of the city unrepresented and chose to do business as it always has rather than sending a signal of a new day dawning.

It was a missed opportunity.

'Music needs champions both on the stage and behind it, and the Liberty is the perfect place to make a measurable difference.'

Jennifer Crockett
 Liberty Theater's new director

COMING FRIDAY ★ THE DAILY ASTORIAN ENDORSEMENTS IN LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

It's time to become a Reefer Republic

By **TIMOTHY EGAN**
New York Times News Service

PORTLAND — The budtenders of the Rose City are relentlessly helpful with tips pairing a marijuana strain that is "equal parts fruity and musky" with a stimulating Sichuan dish. As Oregon, the place where empires once clashed over the global trade of beaver furs, glides into a second year of legalized recreational pot, the state is determined to show the world that a certain kind of drug prohibition belongs in history's dumpster.

Soon, with the likely passage of legal pot in California next month, all of the West Coast — from the tundra of Alaska to the sun-washed suburbs of San Diego — will be a confederacy of state-regulated marijuana use.

Across the Pacific, a completely different view of drug use is playing out in the horror of the Philippines. That country is ruled by Rodrigo Duterte, a crude and brutal strongman known as the Donald Trump of the Philippines. Under his watch, more than 3,500 suspected drug users and dealers have been killed. Many of those murders are "extrajudicial," as the State Department calls them.

Comparing his vigilante campaign to Hitler's Holocaust, the Philippine president recently said "I'd be happy to slaughter" 3 million drug users. By killing that many of his own people, Duterte said he would "finish the problem of my country and save the next generation from perdition." This is a Category 5 human rights disaster in the making, and should be universally condemned.

Bipolar reactions

The world has always been

bipolar when it comes to our fellow humans prone to addiction and chemical diversion. One impulse is hysterical — the sweeping, lock-'em-up tragedy of the United States after the crack epidemic, the numerous executions in places like Iran and the Philippines. The other is historical, at least by modern standards: the attempt by states in the American West (and a ballot measure in Maine this year) to call out the drug war for the farce that it is.

Throughout these swings, little has changed among a vulnerable cohort of humanity. And until a way is found to permanently balance dopamine levels, we will always have small but significant portion of the population prone to addiction. Benjamin Franklin abused laudanum, an opium and alcohol mixture, for his bodily pains. And Sigmund Freud was more than a casual user of cocaine.

The current opioid epidemic in places not usually associated with drug dens and dirty needles shows that addiction is not confined to ZIP codes of economic despair. On Staten Island, home to many a New York cop, there have been 71 deaths attributed to heroin overdose this year.

Heroin is the drug of choice in small towns in New England and wide-open rural areas across the country. Blacks and Latinos use and sell drugs at roughly the same rate as whites, but 57 percent of the people locked up for a drug offense in 2014 were nonwhite.

Perhaps because so many addicts are white and suburban, or white and rural, there is now a rare bipartisan consensus emerging for wholesale reform of the drug laws.

Nationwide

We can start, nationwide, with marijuana. Though legalization is not without its problems — a spike

in emergency room visits attributed to edible pot, persistent black market dealers — it's mostly been no big deal. Across the legalized West, consumers frequent their corner pot shop to talk varieties and buzz strength. Homegrown gardeners pass on suggestions to avoid bud rot as harvest nears. Tax revenue from sales — though not a panacea — flows to schools and roads and treatment programs.

It all works, for the most part. And when California, now the world's sixth largest economy, passes its legal pot measure in November as expected, it will truly be game over for this absurd form of prohibition.

So why are nearly 600,000 people arrested in the United States for simple possession of marijuana every year? And why is pot still illegal on the federal level? People in the loop of this policing circle know it is an absurd and Sisyphean use of law enforcement.

The opioid crisis is a tougher problem. Some years ago, at the height of the crack scare, I was given an assignment to go to the worst drug dens in urban America. I ran into my share of scary and sketchy dudes, yes. But where I expected to see "super-predators" and lifetime addled "crack babies," I instead found a fascinating variety of people struggling with an ancient affliction. Many of them could not get into treatment.

A clear majority of Americans now favor pot legalization. The problem is the federal government, which still classifies marijuana as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD. If pot was legalized nationwide, with a tax on every sale designated for treatment, it would free up the police to get at serious crimes, while ensuring that no addict would be denied treatment for lack of funds. As with most social reforms, it only seems impossible until it's obvious.

Predators in arms in the GOP

By **PAUL KRUGMAN**
New York Times News Service

As many people are pointing out, Republicans now trying to distance themselves from Donald Trump need to explain why The Tape was a breaking point, when so many previous incidents weren't.

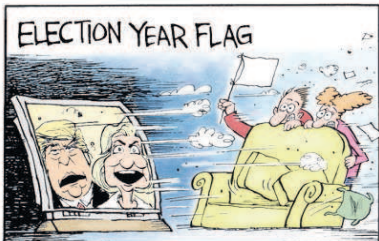
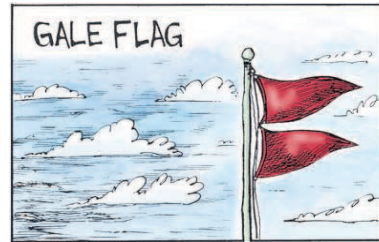
On Saturday, explaining why he was withdrawing his endorsement, Sen. John McCain of Arizona cited "comments on prisoners of war, the Khan Gold Star family, Judge Curiel and earlier inappropriate comments about women" — and that leaves out Mexicans as rapists, calls for a Muslim ban, and much more. So, McCain, what took you so long?

One excuse we're now hearing is that the new revelations are qualitatively different — that disrespect for women is one thing, but boasting about sexual assault brings it to another level. It's a weak defense, since Trump has in effect been promising violence against minorities all along. His insistence last week that the Central Park Five, who were exonerated by DNA evidence, were guilty and should have been executed was even worse than The Tape, but drew hardly any denunciations from his party.

And even if you consider sexual predation somehow uniquely unacceptable, you have to ask where all these pearl-clutching Republicans were back in August, when Roger Ailes — freshly fired from Fox News over horrifying evidence that he used his position to force women into sexual relationships — joined the Trump campaign as a senior adviser. Were there any protests at all from senior GOP figures?

GOP upset

Of course, we know the answer: The latest scandal upset Republicans, when previous scandals didn't, because the candidate's campaign was already in free fall. You can even see it in the numbers: The probability of a House Republican jumping off the Trump train is strongly related to the Obama share of a district's vote in 2012. That is, Republicans in competitive districts are outraged



by Trump's behavior; those in safe seats seem oddly indifferent.

Meanwhile, the Trump-Ailes axis of abuse raises another question: Is sexual predation by senior political figures — which Ailes certainly was, even if he pretended to be in the journalism business — a partisan phenomenon?

Just to be clear, I'm not talking about bad behavior in general, which occurs among politicians (and people) of all political leanings. Yes, Bill Clinton had affairs; but there's a world of difference between consensual sex, however inappropriate, and abuse of power to force those less powerful to accept your urges. That's infinitely worse — and it happens more than we'd like to think.

Take, for example, what we now know about what was happening politically in 2006, a year that Nate Cohn, The Times's polling expert, suggests offers some lessons for this year. As Cohn points out, as late as September of that year it looked as if Republicans might retain control of Congress despite public revulsion at the Bush administration. But then came the Foley scandal: A member of Congress, former U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., had been sending sexually explicit messages to pages, and his party had failed to take any action despite warnings. As Cohn points out, the scandal seems to have broken the dam, and led to a Democratic wave.

But think about how much bigger that wave might have been if voters had known what we know now: that former U.S. Rep. Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., who had been speaker of the House since 1999, himself had a long history of molesting teenage boys.

Monolith

Why do all these stories involve Republicans? One answer may be structural. The GOP is, or was until this election, a monolithic, hierarchical institution, in which powerful men could cover up their sins much better than they could in the far looser Democratic coalition.

There is also, I'd suggest, an underlying cynicism that pervades the Republican elite. We're talking about a party that has long exploited white backlash to mobilize working-class voters, while enacting policies that actually hurt those voters but benefit the wealthy. Anyone participating in that scam — which is what it is — has to have the sense that politics is a sphere in which you can get away with a lot if you have the right connections. So in a way it's not surprising if a disproportionate number of major players feel empowered to abuse their position.

Which brings us back to the man almost all senior Republicans were supporting for president until a day or two ago.

Assuming that Trump loses, many Republicans will try to pretend that he was a complete outlier, unrepresentative of the party. But he isn't. He won the nomination fair and square, chosen by voters who had a pretty good idea of who he was. He had solid establishment support until very late in the game. And his vices are, dare we say, very much in line with his party's recent tradition.

Trump, in other words, isn't so much an anomaly as he is a pure distillation of his party's modern essence.