



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian  
 Lake Oswego City Councilor Jeff Gudman, left, took on former Republican state senator and now independent Chris Telfer, right, in a state treasurer debate moderated by Republican gubernatorial hopeful Allen Alley.

## Dorchester: Seaside is too far for many attendees

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Simpson described the Dorchester Conference as “center-right” on the political spectrum.

This year’s conference featured Fox News contributor Tucker Carlson as keynote speaker and state candidates, including members of the Independent Party of Oregon.

The bruising November election drove an ideological wedge among membership, which in a presidential straw poll strongly rejected the candidacy of Donald Trump.

In the aftermath of the election, the Dorchester Conference has seen a “small but significant” drop in membership, both from the left and the right.

“I know a number of lifelong Republicans who have walked away from the party because of this last election,” Simpson said.

On the right, the Oregon Liberty Alliance describes itself as “a coalition of organizations that share a common mission to support Oregon candidates that uphold conservative values and protect our freedoms.”

“The social conservatives have a new place to go,” Simpson said. “I know they were upset with how Dorchester dealt with social issues. That’s OK — it’s a free marketplace.”

Access to Republican leadership in Salem provides another incentive for the move, Simpson said, with opportunities for “more face time” with elected officials.

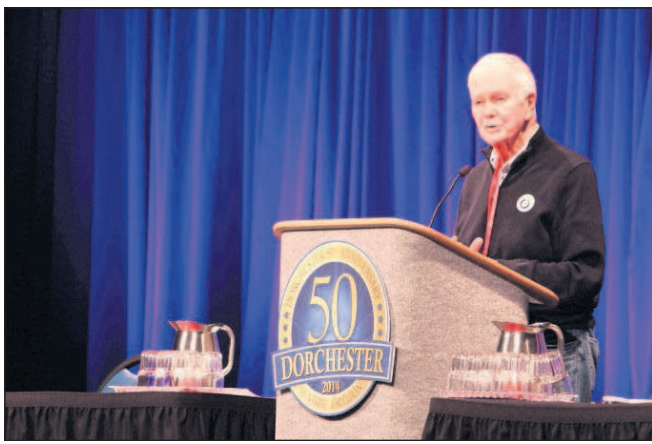
Seaside is just too far for many conference attendees, Simpson added, many of whom live in the eastern part of the state.

“One of our aims was to loop in more legislators because during legislative session it was hard to get them over to Seaside,” Simpson said. “And look at where the Republicans in the caucus are — they’re in eastern Oregon.”

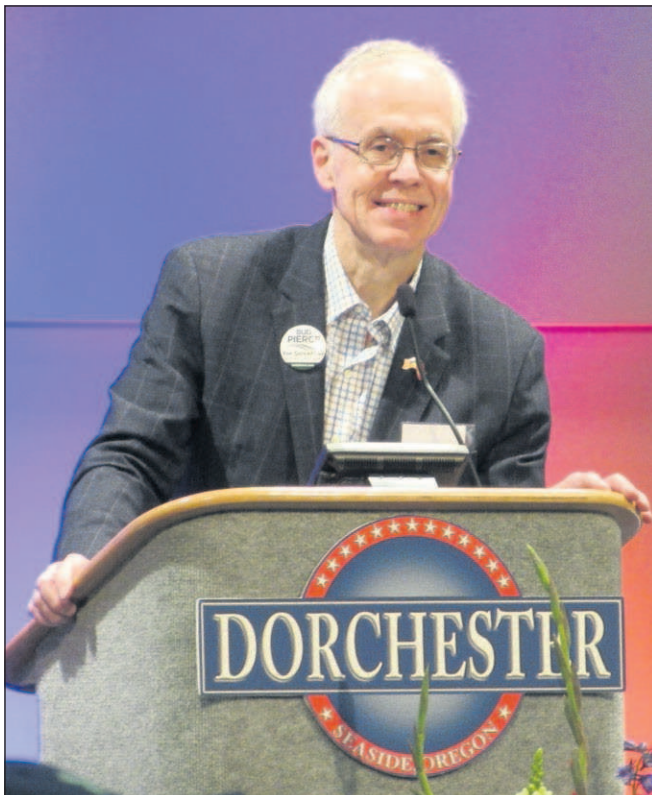
### A surprise

Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the convention center, said the organization’s decision to leave Seaside took him by surprise.

“No, we didn’t expect it,” Vandenberg said. “It’s not that unusual for organizations to want to try other areas to see



AP Photo/Jonathan J. Cooper  
 Former U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., speaks to Republican attendees at the annual Dorchester Conference in 2014. He founded the conference in 1965.



Linh DePledge/For The Daily Astorian  
 Bud Pierce, a Salem oncologist who ran unsuccessfully for governor, spoke at the Dorchester Conference in Seaside earlier this year.

what another location has to offer. Although they had no objections about Seaside, they were ready for a change.”

For Simpson, a decade-long attendee, the move is bittersweet. “The service we got from the convention center staff over the years was fabulous,” he said. “What a gift to that community that center is. And they were always great to work with.”

“I don’t take things personally,” Vandenberg said. “I understand change is sometimes inevitable, that people try different markets, different venues. We just hope they come back at some point.”



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian  
 Immediate past-President Tom Simpson at this year’s Dorchester Conference.

## Astoria: Police chief made no recommendation on status

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sanctuary city status, but could “do something so that all of us will feel secure here, that all of us will feel valued.”

### ‘It’s palpable’

Johnston, who also serves as assistant city manager, told the City Council the issue is “highly emotional.”

The police chief made no recommendation on whether Astoria should become a sanctuary city, characterizing it as a political decision for the council.

“I understand the feeling of unrest, uncertainty and fear that exists within certain portions of

our community,” he said. “It’s palpable.”

“The feelings are felt not only by those in our community who are part of a racial minority, but to a large portion of our country that feels marginalized and fearful about what the future holds.

“Unfortunately, those that are most affected by the sense of marginalization are some of those in our community who have the least power to effect change as well.

“There’s a great desire for people to do something,” he said. “And I’m somewhat worried that this could lead to the creation of something that has no meaning.”

Johnston said he worries that sanctuary city status could create a “false sense of security.”

### ‘The reality’

Federal immigration agents can operate in Astoria, so the police chief is concerned the city would be “judged on the expectation of being a sanctuary, and not the reality that we could actually provide such service.”

Johnston also said it would be harmful to Astoria Police if the city adopted a vaguely worded resolution that created the impression the City Council “was asking us to violate or ignore the law.”



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