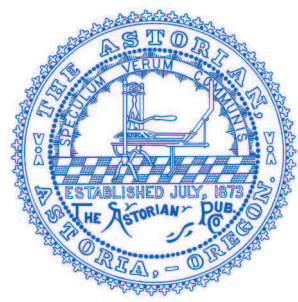


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Pot laws should be left in place by new leaders

Attentive readers may recall that The Daily Astorian wondered two years ago what the 2016 presidential election would mean for state legalization of marijuana:

“It remains to be seen whether the federal government will continue to stand by as states effectively break away from the dictates of U.S. law. It is tempting to believe that a new president elected in 2016 from either political party will acknowledge the winds of change — at least continuing to keep the Department of Justice on the sidelines, or perhaps even explicitly moving to loosen or revoke federal laws. At a minimum, there clearly is a need for additional legitimization of the marijuana industry when it comes to banking regulations aimed at illicit drug proceeds.”

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency and his appointment of marijuana foe U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., to be attorney general turns up the heat under these issues.

This Monday, Politico.com reported “With little more than the stroke of his own pen, the new attorney general will be able to arrest growers, retailers and users, defying the will of more than half the nation’s voters. ... Aggressive enforcement could cause chaos in a \$6.7 billion industry that is already attracting major investment from Wall Street hedge funds and expected to hit \$21.8 billion by 2020.”

Congress, including U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., who is taking on a key chairmanship in the U.S. House, must aggressively intervene to keep the nation from again wasting its time, money and credibility on a lost war against marijuana.

Many of us were dubious about the wisdom of legalizing another intoxicating substance in a society already plagued with addiction. But this decision has been made, has not had dire consequences and should be left alone.

# ‘God Squad’ is the wrong idea for endangered species

The “God Squad” may sound like a Quentin Tarantino movie, but actually is perhaps the hottest of environmental hot-button issues in the Pacific Northwest.

The Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association in Kennewick, Washington, recently raised the specter of the God Squad by asking the Trump transition team to override the current Endangered Species Act process.

As explained by the Columbia Basin Bulletin, the God Squad — formally called the Endangered Species Committee — was “created as part of congressional amendments to the Endangered Species Act, (and) can be called together to decide whether a federal agency, or agencies, can be exempted from responsibilities regarding the protection of listed species.”

In essence, this means allowing a species to go extinct if a determination is made that keeping it in existence is too costly.

The irrigators are frustrated by federal court decisions that have consistently determined federal agencies are shirking their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act to restore Snake River salmon and steelhead runs to a point where they are out of danger of extinction. Most recently, the court raised the possibility that it may be necessary to restore natural-flow conditions on part of the Snake River in Idaho. This would lower reservoirs. Current arrangements for pumping irrigation water would become unviable.

“These pump stations are not Tinker Toys — the dams are not Tinker Toys for children to play with ...” one of the irrigators told the Trump team.

The same can certainly be said, with considerably greater validity, of iconic salmon species that swam in the waters of the Columbia and Snake for tens of thousands of years before the Snake dams were constructed over strong objections from Astoria-area fishermen and conservationists from throughout the nation.

Farming is important. And the dams have many other strong defenders in this era of climate change.

But convening the God Squad to write off salmon would be a clumsy and infuriating blunder. It is the kind of excess that would invite a harsh reaction in the opposite direction once the nation’s political pendulum swings back again.

The current species protection scenario — irksome and expensive as it may sometime be — must be allowed to play out. The alternative is too dreadful to contemplate.



# Ryan’s dangerous silence is too much

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Paul Ryan has long been cast as Congress’ Boy Scout: earnest, honest and brimming with the best intentions, whether you agree with his proposals or not.



Donald Trump is putting an ugly end to that. Or, rather, Ryan himself is, with his example of utter submission to Trump. Other Republicans are looking to the speaker of the House for guidance on when to confront the president-elect and when to let his craziness go unchecked. And Ryan is charting the wrong course.

I’m referring to his recent “60 Minutes” interview, the apotheosis of all of his tongue biting and conscience snuffing to date. In particular I mean the part when he was asked about Trump’s reckless — and wholly unsubstantiated — tweet that millions of Americans had voted illegally for Hillary Clinton.

“I’m not really focused on these things,” Ryan said, all too blithely. Then: “I have no knowledge of such things. It doesn’t matter to me.”

*Such things?* Was he at a tea in the Cotswolds, discussing the pesky upkeep of the carriage house?

*Doesn’t matter?* No, I guess a president-elect’s effort to undermine Americans’ confidence in our political system — and, beyond that, his attachment to conspiracy theories — aren’t pressing concerns. My bad for assuming otherwise.

## Tump’s tweets

Ryan’s answer was marginally better than the one given on the ABC News show “This Week” by Mike Pence, who described Trump’s tweets as “refreshing.” An adjective’s connotations can change from era to era as a language evolves, but I still associate “refreshing” with lemonade and dips in the sea, not wild accusations of voter fraud. My command of English is clearly slipping.

Pence, of course, is Trump’s des-

igned sycophant. That’s practically written into a vice president’s job description. Ryan has no similar duty, just a growing willingness to part ways with principle.

I do understand the position that he and many pols in both parties are in. They’re alarmed by Trump, and frequently aghast at him, but they want enough peace to steer him in the directions they desire and to minimize the damage overall.

**Ryan is sacrificing too much for too little, and it’s time he rummaged through his wobbly endoskeleton and made fresh acquaintance with his spine.**

They have seen how prone he can be to manipulation, how susceptible to flattery, how influenced by the last voice in his ear. So they’re trying to stick close enough to whisper — and one of the main stories of the Trump presidency, unless it goes completely off the rails, will be their ceaseless calculations about when they can afford to stay mum and when they can’t.

But they can’t afford to stay mum when Trump, merely to stroke his own ego and assert his potency, tells a lie about election results, calling Clinton’s advantage in the popular vote a sham. Certainly Ryan can’t, because he’s a role model and because this lie epitomizes Trump’s demagogic tendencies and legitimizes fake news, the dark consequences of which are becoming ever clearer.

The disregard for truth — and indulgence of fantasy — among

people at the pinnacle of power right now is chilling. Beyond Trump there’s Michael Flynn, his nominee for national security adviser, who has tweeted pure bunk about Clinton’s ties to pedophilia and money laundering. Flynn’s son, who was his chief of staff, perpetuated the whole “pizzagate” madness. And then of course there’s Ben Carson, the housing secretary to be, with his conviction that the pyramids were grain silos.

Is Ryan really content to look the other way just for an Obamacare repeal and some tax reform?

There’s plenty he can’t count on getting from Trump, who pledged not to monkey with Medicare, which Ryan yearns to change, and is talking about steep tariffs that run counter to Ryan’s philosophy.

Ryan has at least hinted about his opposition to those tariffs. But he and other supposedly principled conservatives publicly applauded Trump’s dealings with the air-conditioning manufacturer Carrier, a degree of meddling in the free market that they would have savaged President Barack Obama for.

## Gelatin

On the subject of Trump, Ryan has spoken out of so many sides of his mouth that it’s less an oval than an octagon at this point. Last spring he even affirmed his endorsement of Trump while calling him out for racism. Behold leadership at its most gelatinous.

Discussing Trump on “60 Minutes,” he had a manner that was borderline coquettish. He said that Trump, with his tweets, was “basically giving voice to a lot of people who have felt that they were voiceless.”

Sometimes, yes. But many times, Trump is giving a green light to kooks and the finger to the dignity that Americans rightly expect of a president and that Ryan should demand of him.

Ryan is sacrificing too much for too little, and it’s time he rummaged through his wobbly endoskeleton and made fresh acquaintance with his spine. Until that happens, this sadly groveling Boy Scout will be lost in the woods.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Obscene profits

No one “weathers Walmart” (“Be proactive in competing with Walmart, others,” *The Daily Astorian*, Nov. 22). Walmart’s aim is to kill local business. And it works. That’s why the corporation is so rich. Neither Fred Meyer (Kroger) nor Safeway are local businesses, as the editor ought to know. The businesses affected will be the real local businesses, like the food co-op, the shops downtown, the last local pharmacies, the two local florists.

The demise of small towns always occurs when Walmart move in. Check it out on a map. Walmart has its own supply chains, so they take over the markets completely. After a while, you can’t shop anywhere else, because it’s the only place left.

It’s unfortunate that people from here — and moving here from elsewhere — feel the burning desire for a Walmart on Clatsop Plains. This once beautiful wetland is now junked, and there’s no place for the

elk to live anymore. Very discouraging, watching the world burn up so people can buy cheap socks from China.

We who consider such things can only hope this Walmart is among the first to go dark and moldy, as the company “downsized,” due to hits its obscene profits are taking from Internet sales.

SUE SKINNER  
 Astoria

### Distorted message

The recently published letter “Excluding others” (*The Daily Astorian*, Nov. 25), critical of the editorial “Give each other the benefit of doubt” (*The Daily Astorian*, Nov. 14), was a case study of a manufactured offense where none was given.

Coming on the heels of the riots following the national election, the editorial was a well-reasoned and articulate appeal for the better natures of our personal integrity and

community strengths to rise above the destructive actions of undisciplined malcontents.

Through strained assumptions and faulty conclusions, the letter writer attempted to mischaracterize the editorial into something it most clearly was not: a call for white Christian dominance of the culture.

It is one thing for us to hold strongly divergent opinions on how best to move forward. It is quite another to shamelessly distort a message of good will from those with whom you disagree.

We have an enormous amount of work to do to bring understanding and healing to our fractured land. *The Daily Astorian*’s editorial was a commendable step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, the letter writer’s absurd criticisms were a decided step backwards, and a sad demonstration of why this mess will likely continue.

ROBERT JOHNSTONE  
 Astoria