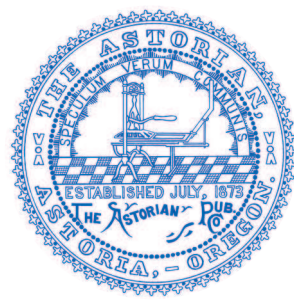


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## OUR VIEW



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

A Job Corps student jumps from the Ironwood training vessel during an emergency training exercise — part of the seamanship program curriculum.

## Maritime training vital to region's economic success

Our location at the intersection of the Pacific Ocean and the Pacific Northwest's great river, coupled with generations of expertise concentrated here, makes the Columbia estuary an obvious place to base a maritime center of excellence.

If there is anything that should be embraced as a strongly beneficial bipartisan issue, it is the concept that America should be doing more to foster skills that lead to good-paying jobs and a robust economy. A thriving maritime sector is essential to international trade, which in turn has always been one of the cornerstones of American business.

To its credit, Clatsop Community College has long been on the leading edge of understanding how maritime education leads to high-quality jobs and healthier ocean-based businesses. Today's vessels require specialized qualifications that the college is already providing at its Marine and Environmental Research and Training Station. It can and should do even more.

The Domestic Maritime Centers of Excellence Act of 2017, planned for introduction in Congress this year, is a step in the right direction. It deserves support by members of both parties. U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Oregon, is a cosponsor of the legislation. It will be most likely to succeed if citizens let other lawmakers know we advocate for it.

As described in our Feb. 20 story, designation as a maritime center of excellence would translate into technical assistance, surplus federal equipment and federal funding. Such aid would piggyback on state funding the college hopes to obtain to add a second story to its training station's main administrative and classroom building.

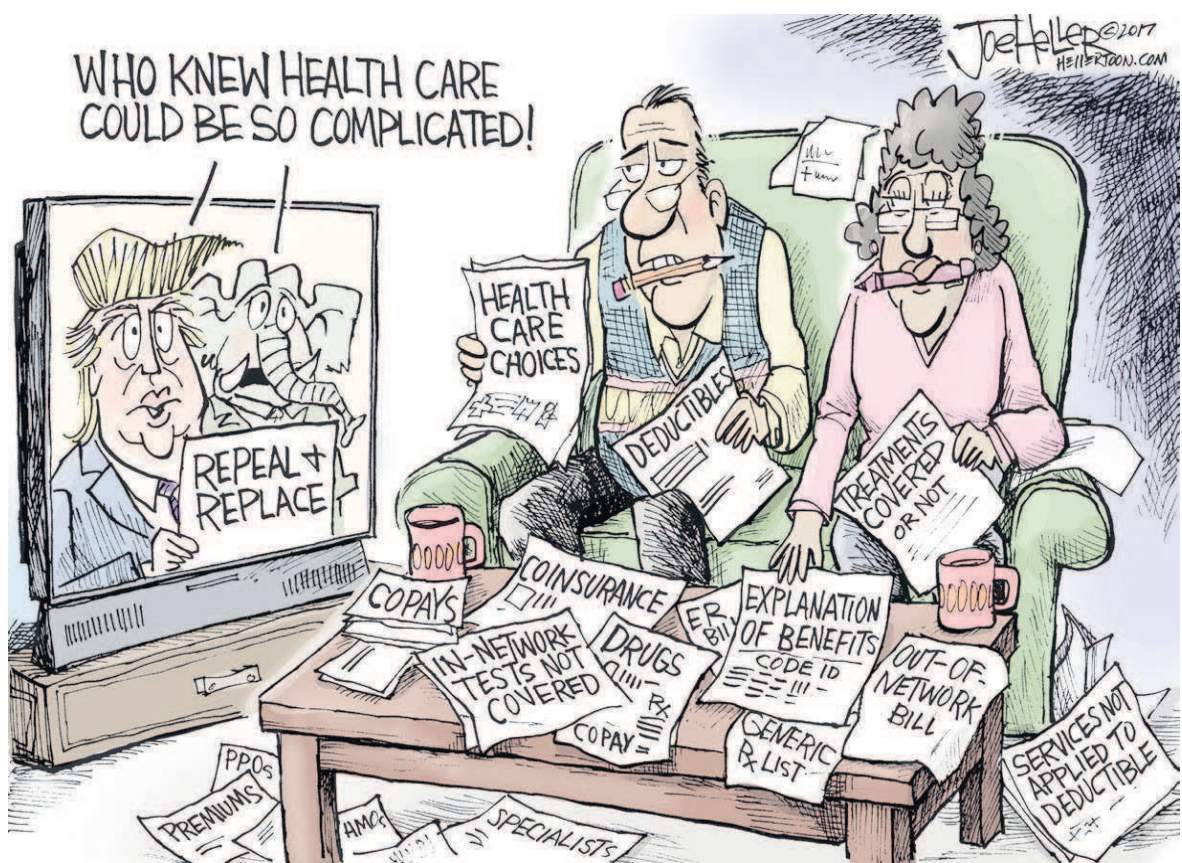
Archaeological digs and historical accounts prove the Columbia River estuary was in many ways one of the Pacific's first major international trading hubs. The affiliated tribes of the Chinook Indian Nation dominated this coast for centuries,

eventually greeting foreign traders here, linking the Northwest interior with Asia, Europe and the U.S. East Coast. Asia's economic importance to America is going to do nothing but increase this century. Geography will continue to favor Astoria and surrounding communities — but it is up to us to be smart and make the best use of our assets.

Although modern international shipping is certain to continue docking upriver in order to take advantage of easy access to rail and interstate highway connections, the Columbia estuary's close connections to the ocean and U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River make this an ideal place for maritime education and support industries.

Strategic investments in maritime education are vital to local and national prosperity and should be pursued.

**Asia's economic importance to America is going to do nothing but increase this century. Geography will continue to favor Astoria and surrounding communities — but it is up to us to be smart and make the best use of our assets.**



## Trump's military preening



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

President Donald Trump, flanked by Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Paul Ryan, gestures on Capitol Hill Tuesday before his address to a joint session of Congress.

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

Why do I get the sense that fighter jets are Donald Trump's biceps, warships are his pectorals and what he's doing with his proposed \$54 billion increase for the Pentagon is flexing?

Maybe because that's a strong-man's way. Maybe because so much with him is preening. Or maybe because so little of his military talk adds up.

In a sweeping speech to Congress on Tuesday night that largely diverged from his splenetic norm, he laid out his vision for a better America, and a key part of it, he said, was "one of the largest increases in national defense spending in American history."

But he also lamented what he deemed our country's military follies of recent decades, sowing confusion in a careful listener. If we were winding down, why were we building up? If caution was the order of the day, why did it require such lavish investment?

Trump's address was an opportunity to change the narrative of his presidency from one of an administration in disarray to one of a man on a methodical mission, and to accomplish that, he donned a new kind of tie and a new kind of tone: less truculent, more inspirational. He began with a mention of Black History Month and a condemnation of hate crimes.

But his remarks didn't have sufficient details or offers of compromise to turn the page or to erase all the nonsense to date. Just a day earlier, at a meeting with the nation's governors, he maintained that when he was young, America was the proud victor in all of its wars.

Really? World War II wrapped up before Trump came along, and the Korean War, which ended when he was 7, was no unfettered American triumph.

Then came Vietnam, which found Trump in college and unable to serve because of a podiatric ailment so debilitating that he couldn't recall which foot was affected when

he was asked about it in 2015. Surely, though, he remembers how Vietnam went. It didn't continue some glorious winning streak.

In Trump's telling, everything about the America of yore was superior, everything about the America of today is wretched, and somehow, magically, he has solutions that even the most practiced hands don't.

That was a theme of his military musings during his campaign, when he touted a secret plan for defeating ISIS that he conveniently couldn't divulge, lest he trample on its secret-ness.

He subsequently ordered his top military advisers to come up with their own strategy, which makes a skeptical voter wonder what happened to his. Are the generals and he going to compare plans — I'll show you mine if you show me yours — to determine whose is mightiest? For now that's still a secret.

**The military is one of his many mirrors. If it's more muscular, so is he.**

Details aren't his thing. He's all over the place. One moment, his chosen generals are sages for the ages. The next, he fingers them for any flaws in the Yemen raid during which a Navy SEAL, William Owens, who was called Ryan, died. "They lost Ryan," he said on Tuesday morning.

But on Tuesday night, before Congress, they were geniuses anew, architects of a brilliantly successful operation. I was moved to see the effect of Trump's words on the SEAL's widow, Carryn, who stood in the audience, tears streaming down her face. I was also floored by the opportunistic shifts in Trump's take on those events.

He used his speech to complain once again that America was paying too much of the defense bill for our allies. He said that he was finally getting them to pony up.

If so, why do we need to pump tens of billions of additional dollars into the military, especially when we already spend more on it than the seven countries that spend the next most combined?

We can't afford the increase, not if Social Security and Medicare are off limits, not if he follows through with the tax cuts he promised, not if he's going to embark on the infrastructure projects that he's (rightly) calling for, not unless he's willing to gag Paul Ryan and shove him into some Capitol broom closet while the debt balloons.

And that increase doesn't square with all that Trump has said about being more reluctant to embroil us in military conflicts than some of his predecessors were.

I suppose he could argue that maximum military readiness is a deterrent, but does America's count of aircraft carriers really give jihad pause? The wars that we're fighting aren't traditional ones, and they hinge on the kind of diplomacy and foreign aid that Trump is giving short shrift. But then soft power doesn't gleam or puff up the ego the way that new fighting equipment does.

His approach is provocative, antagonistic. He berates and bad-mouths allies in a fashion that threatens to push them away while promising a barrier along America's southern border and an upgrade of our nuclear arsenal.

He's saying that we can and will go it alone, and while that attitude may be emotionally satisfying to many Americans, it's not at all certain to keep us safe.

I suspect that it's emotionally satisfying to Trump most of all. He's determined to cast himself as a figure of epic proportions and has to size everything around him accordingly.

Hence his (latest) grandiose description of his election in Tuesday night's address. "In 2016, the earth shifted beneath our feet," he said, going on to mix metaphors as they've seldom been mixed before. "Finally, the chorus became an earthquake."

And hence his desire to upsize our armed forces. The military is one of his many mirrors. If it's more muscular, so is he.