

## Stop utility hikes

Open letter to the Astoria City Council: This is my second request to please avoid taxing the poor to solve the city's budget shortfall. Just a few dollars here and there add up to a huge problem to those who are barely able to stay in their homes.

Six percent anticipated surcharge on sewer, a fee for parks on the water bill, and an additional fee for recycling?

Please reconsider. Our Social Security checks do not keep up with the utility hikes. Are there no other options to raise funds other than to add fees onto the essentials that we cannot do without?

TERRIE REMINGTON  
Astoria

## Dear Left

Dear Left: I've been involved in politics since I left the military under Jimmy Carter. He's the one who made me the conservative I am today.

Over the years, I've been personally attacked. I've been called everything under the sun. I've been flipped off, yelled at and threatened. That doesn't bother me — I was raised with the sticks and stones theory. Today, our young people need safe places because words now break bones. Really?

I've lived in this great state most of my life. I've watched it change to the point that people are struggling to make a living here on the coast. We have chased away business, and blocked new business from coming this way. About the only new jobs we see pop up is within the service industry. They don't pay very well so people need to take two, or three jobs just to pay the bills.

Astoria has the highest property tax in this county. A friend of mine pays more property tax on his business in Astoria than he does on his ranch. I know the Left wants to blame the big bad business people, but who else brings jobs to the area?

We need to take a look at the root of the problem. The Left has taken full control of this county. Now ask yourself this: Have they done a good job for all the people, or just a few? The only way to make this county great again is to take away the power from the ones who are hurting all of us.

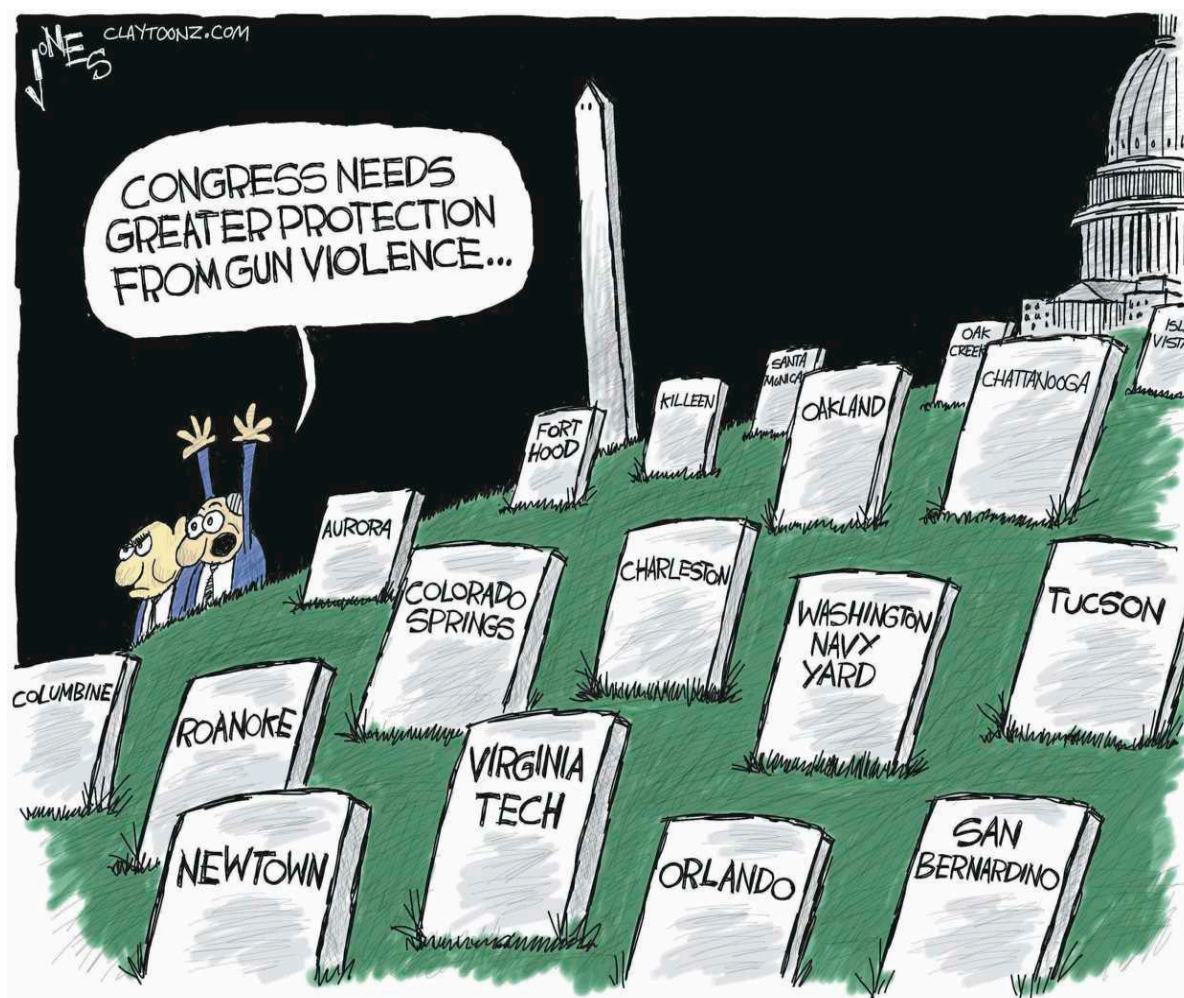
I ask you to help me, and help turn the political landscape of this county around. Remember what President John Kennedy said? "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

JIM HOFFMAN  
Chairman, Clatsop County  
Republican Party  
Gearhart

## Low growth predicted

The preliminary population forecast for Clatsop County cities has just been released by Portland State University. The state has designated that public agencies are to use this estimate for land planning purposes over the next 14 years.

On a county basis, Clatsop County, with a present population of 38,100, will only add 4,000 people over the next 50 years, a sizable reduction from numbers prepared earlier by the county. This is a very small population growth, with Astoria and the unincorporated areas



having almost no growth, and Warrenton having almost all the future growth.

Seaside, Gearhart and Cannon Beach will each only add several hundred new residents over the next 50 years. Hopefully, this should put an end to plans by the city of Seaside and the Seaside School District to expand the urban growth boundary of Seaside. There is no need for additional land outside the existing urban boundaries for hundreds of new homes and businesses in Seaside.

There is also no need to expand the Seaside urban boundary for the new schools. There is a perfectly good solution to protecting the students from tsunamis and providing new upgraded school facilities that doesn't require changing the urban boundary. Why should we the taxpayers pay \$40 million for student capacity growth when it's not coming?

The state land use planning laws have successfully limited urban sprawl by making sure that growth boundaries are not ignored. Don't let the city, and the school district, proceed with these misguided attempts to destroy the area's farms and forests.

JOHN DUNZER  
Seaside

## Let big users pay

Yesterday a well-spoken, well-meaning young woman knocked on my door in an attempt to sell me on buying green energy (electricity) for a bit more than I am presently paying for the product. I pointed out to her, and she agreed, that I use essentially the bare minimum billable amount at present. But it got me thinking, not for the first time, on the issue.

At great public cost in both monies and aesthetic values, we in the Pacific Northwest have created hydro-powered electricity. The woman at my door explained that is largely sold out of state. I suspect even at present I am paying considerably more per electrical unit than the industries purchasing this power.

So, me and many other like-minded "greenies," who are conscientious and mindful of our use, are essentially penalized for our thrift already. Here's an idea: Establish a minimum electrical use that is free (except, of course, all the hidden costs built into our society, like taxpayers paying for all those dams, etc.), and increase the per unit cost to large users to offset the expense. You know, use a lot, pay a lot.

In my way of thinking this is a more reasonable solution than duping young idealists into selling a bad idea, cloaked as a progressive move.

SAM DEVEREAUX  
Astoria

## In the doghouse

When I was 10, we had a pet roadrunner. My stepfather brought it home as a fledgling. Two things still nag my conscience about that beloved bird's life and death. First, I sat on it, and hobbled it. The other thing that haunts me is that our cat, who killed the roadrunner, found no forgiveness for just doing what a cat does. I know my stepfather must have had a role in his vanishing from our lives a day or two after our feathered friend died. I feel the pang of betrayal to that cat, to the love he had for us, and gave to us.

Sometimes to not repeat one error, we commit another. It's very difficult for me to know how much of my values to impose upon my furry friends (mis amigos) and at what point I'm just enslaving other conscious beings, and denying them their own path of self creation, their own arc of evolution. Our society won't mandate that humans act humanely, but some will condemn me for allowing my dogs to be dogs.

However, I've been very near-sighted. In the fog and confusion of my own life, I seem to have sat on the roadrunner again, a folly in judgment and choice that will echo in my mind for a long time to come.

I owe many in the city of Astoria and the Astoria Police Department an apology for failing to rein in the

harm and nuisance my dogs, Newt and Syria, have caused. I've been incredibly myopic in my thinking. Since truth is the thing I'm aiming for, I'm sure it will be the last thing I ever hit.

My dogs most recent assault on Astoria's laws and sensibilities — they killed a fawn. Newt and Syria are in the pound. They need to be separated, and they need good homes. Syria's easy, she's a lover. Newt, well he's always been his own person, so whatever human relationship comes next, it will be shaped both ways, just without his testicles. Sorry bud, I tried.

My love to these dogs, and the people of this community, and my apologies as well.

M. ALEXANDER "SASHA"  
MILLER  
Astoria

## Gearhart vote requested

All we are asking for is a vote. The question is, does the ordinance restricting short-term rentals in Gearhart, that was pushed through by the City Council, represent the wishes of the majority of Gearhart residents, or a minority of residents exerting their personal agenda?

The ordinance represents dramatic and far-reaching impact on personal property rights and value, and deserves to be voted on by the people of Gearhart, not just decided on by a City Council.

Rental properties have been an integral part of Gearhart for generations; they are crucial to the economy and health of this community. They provide jobs, tax revenue and support local businesses that could not survive without them.

We recognize that there are issues with overcrowding, loud parties and septic, but these should be handled on an individual basis, not by passing broad brush, onerous legislation that eventually eliminates these rentals by disallowing their rental status after a sale.

We all want Gearhart to remain the wonderful place that it is today. Rentals have been characterized as being bad for the community, but

in fact they bring a diversity and richness of character that has been the backbone of Gearhart for many generations.

Let's put it to a vote; let the people of Gearhart decide what's best.

LORI and BOB BRESLAUER  
Gearhart

## Nuclear warmongers

Yes, of course it is worth the effort for the congressional Democratic neocons and liberal/progressive interventionists, along with their Republican war crazy allies like John McCain and Lindsey Graham, to get Donald Trump out of office by creating an international crisis leading to nuclear war with Russia and China.

Think I'm nuts? With Trump — who talks of detente and peace with Russia — out of the way, the war psychopaths can use Mike Pence, who has neocon foreign policy views, to do their bidding. Think I'm over the top? The Russian generals and high level Chinese officials are convinced that the U.S. is planning a nuclear first strike against them.

For starters, check the insightful columns of Reagan administration Treasury Undersecretary Paul Craig Roberts on his official website ([www.paulcraigroberts.org](http://www.paulcraigroberts.org)). He is highly knowledgeable, fearless and has been exposing our lunatic death wishing politicians' preparations for just this scenario for quite some time.

But hey, better to have nuclear winter than all of Trump's crazy tweets. These guys are Stanley Kubrick's 1964 dark comedy about nuclear war, "Dr. Strangelove," incarnated. But they're even crazier. That war was a mistake that the presidents of the U.S. and the Soviet Union were trying to stop. Today's congressional nuclear warmongers are like the film's character, Gen. Jack D. Ripper, who was convinced the Russians were "poisoning our precious bodily fluids."

Happy apocalypse in this time of American imperial madness.

STEPHEN BERK  
Astoria

## Trump's tax returns

What the Republicans need today is a rebel Republican like former U.S. Sen. Lowell Weicker of Connecticut. During the Watergate hearings, Weicker explored President Richard Nixon's tax records from 1968 to 1972, arguing that Nixon had illegally categorized his presidential papers as tax-deductible "gifts" to the National Archives. If there were an independent Republican in the Senate today, this same kind of investigation might prove that President Donald Trump's tax returns have not been released because they would reveal their own "illegality."

When it comes to Trump's never-ending defense of his lies by condemning the free press as "fake news," he should listen to Sen. Weicker, who said in 1975, "With minor exceptions, research shows that every major scandal in public office over the past 20 years was uncovered by the press." Trump will discover that not much has changed during the intervening years.

REX AMOS  
Cannon Beach

# Ideological exploitation reduces shootings to sport

By CHARLES BLOW

New York Times News Service

In 2011, after U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords of Arizona was gravely injured and six others were killed by a shooter in Tucson, I was moved to commit an entire column to condemning the left for linking the shooting so closely to political rhetoric.

Yes, Republican personalities and officials in the wake of Barack Obama's election had spoken openly about "Second Amendment remedies" and being "armed and dangerous" and "revolution," but it was not possible to connect the dots between that irresponsible talk and the Tucson shooter.

Now, here I am again, only this time extending the same condemnation to the right for doing the same after four people, including U.S. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, were shot at an Alexandria, Virginia, baseball field where Republican members of Congress were practicing in advance of a charity game.

The shooter, identified as James T. Hodgkinson, appears to have had strong liberal, anti-Trump, anti-Republican views — among other

things, he was a volunteer with the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign — but at the time of this writing, authorities had not announced a motive for the shooting.

The very real possibility that the shooting was politically motivated was clearly on the minds of many, including U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Ill., who was at the baseball field during the shooting. "This could be the first political rhetorical terrorist attack, and that has to stop."

Let me be clear: I don't have a problem with viewing these incidents through a political lens. Not to do so is naive and ridiculously self-blinding in a way that avoids reality.

As Katy Waldman wrote for Slate last June:

"Things that happen for political reasons, and have political consequences, demand that we scrutinize them through a political lens. Crying 'politicization' is itself politicization — a way to advance whatever slate of politics favors the status quo. Often people invoke policy goals in order to get things done; what's at stake is whether these tragedies should be regarded as irreducible lightning strikes or problems with potential solutions."

What I abhor is ideological exploitation that reduces these acts to a political sport and uses them as

weapons to silence political opponents and their "rhetoric," rather than viewing them as American tragedies that we can work together to prevent through honest appraisal and courageous action. Every shooting in this country is a tragedy, and they happen with disturbing frequency here.

As The Washington Post reported, Wednesday's shooting was the 154th mass shooting so far this year in America. That's 154 mass shootings in just 165 days. Violence, particularly gun violence, is the American fact, the American shame.

This country has a violent culture, is full of guns, and our federal lawmakers — mostly Republicans, it must be said, because there isn't any real equivalency — are loath to even moderately regulate gun access.

Pretending that America's gun violence is a function of collective political rhetoric rather than the nexus of personal mental defect and easy access to weapons is a way of dodging, well, the bullet.

So, here I must take a stand in defense of rhetoric. While rhetoric should never promote violence, it needn't be timid.

I was impressed by the official responses from Washington. Even President Donald Trump's response was sober and direct, not marred by his typical lack of tact, not like

the way he tried to exploit the Pulse nightclub shooting last year. U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan delivered a stately speech from the House floor, and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi echoed his sentiments in a noble act of bipartisanship.

At the top, the responses were pitch perfect, but the political debate isn't confined to the top. It trickles down into the cesspool of social media, which has grown exponentially since Giffords was shot. At that time, Facebook had only about a third of its current number of users, Twitter had about a fifth of its current users, Instagram was just three months old, and Snapchat didn't exist.

On social media, where anonymity provides cover for vitriol, violent threats are a regular feature.

When Gabby Giffords wrote on Twitter, "My heart is with my former colleagues, their families & staff, and the US Capitol Police — public servants and heroes today and every day," she was met with a sickening number of hateful responses, including one that said, "To bad it was not her." (Yes, it should have been "too," but grammar isn't a major concern in a statement that grotesque.)

It is true that political rhetoric can set a tone that greases the skids for a small number of people who

are prone to violence to act on those impulses. We have just gone through a political cycle where that was on full display.

But some rhetoric is necessary and real. I believe Donald Trump and the Republican-led Congress are attempting to do very serious harm to the country and its most vulnerable citizens, and I will never stop saying so in the strongest terms I can summon. For many people, this isn't an abstract policy debate between partisans. For them, these debates — about repealing the Affordable Care Act, for example — are about life and death. But that has nothing to do with the promotion of physical violence; it has everything to do with protecting this country from administrative and legislative violence.

We have to object stridently to proposals that will hurt people, and not be chilled by a deranged man with a gun. Violence is abhorrent and self-defeating, but vociferous resistance to national damage has nothing to do with that violence and must continue unabated.

You can, as I do, have sympathy for the victims of Wednesday's shooting and condemn the shooter, while at the same time raging, nonviolently of course, against an agenda that places other Americans in very real danger.