

## Health care disconnect

I recently heard a snippet of a radio commentary. A gentleman, who identified himself as a libertarian, was speaking. He indicated that he did not favor health care for all, or health care as a right. He indicated that he did not want his hard earned money to go to someone who did not work as hard as he does. At about the same time, I heard a police car, or ambulance scream down the road. These two events seem incongruent.

The gentleman supports police and fire protection for all, but not health care for all. Put simply and personally, sometimes he cares whether or not I die, and sometimes he does not. Mr. Libertarian does not want me to die from a burglary at the local grocery store, but he does not care if I die of pneumonia. He does not want me to burn to death in a house fire, but he does not care if I die of cancer. Why is one death of more importance than another? Why does he care about me in one situation, but not in another?

I do not understand the disconnect in this line of thought. Basic care such as police protection, fire protection and health care need to be part of the everyday life of myself and my fellow Americans.

KATHLEEN ADAMS  
Hammond

## A simple matter

I can't believe our politicians can't figure out how to charge \$3 a month to single-metered multiple units ("City water customers could help pay for parks," The Daily Astorian, June 6). Just bill the landlord \$3 a month for each apartment on that meter. I am sure the landlord can figure out how to add the fee to the rents.

DICK DARBY  
Astoria

## Give workers a shot

It is amazing. The city wants to raise water again, \$3 a month. Well, my wife and I are the only ones in our house, that we rent, and we pay all of our utilities. Our water bill is very large.

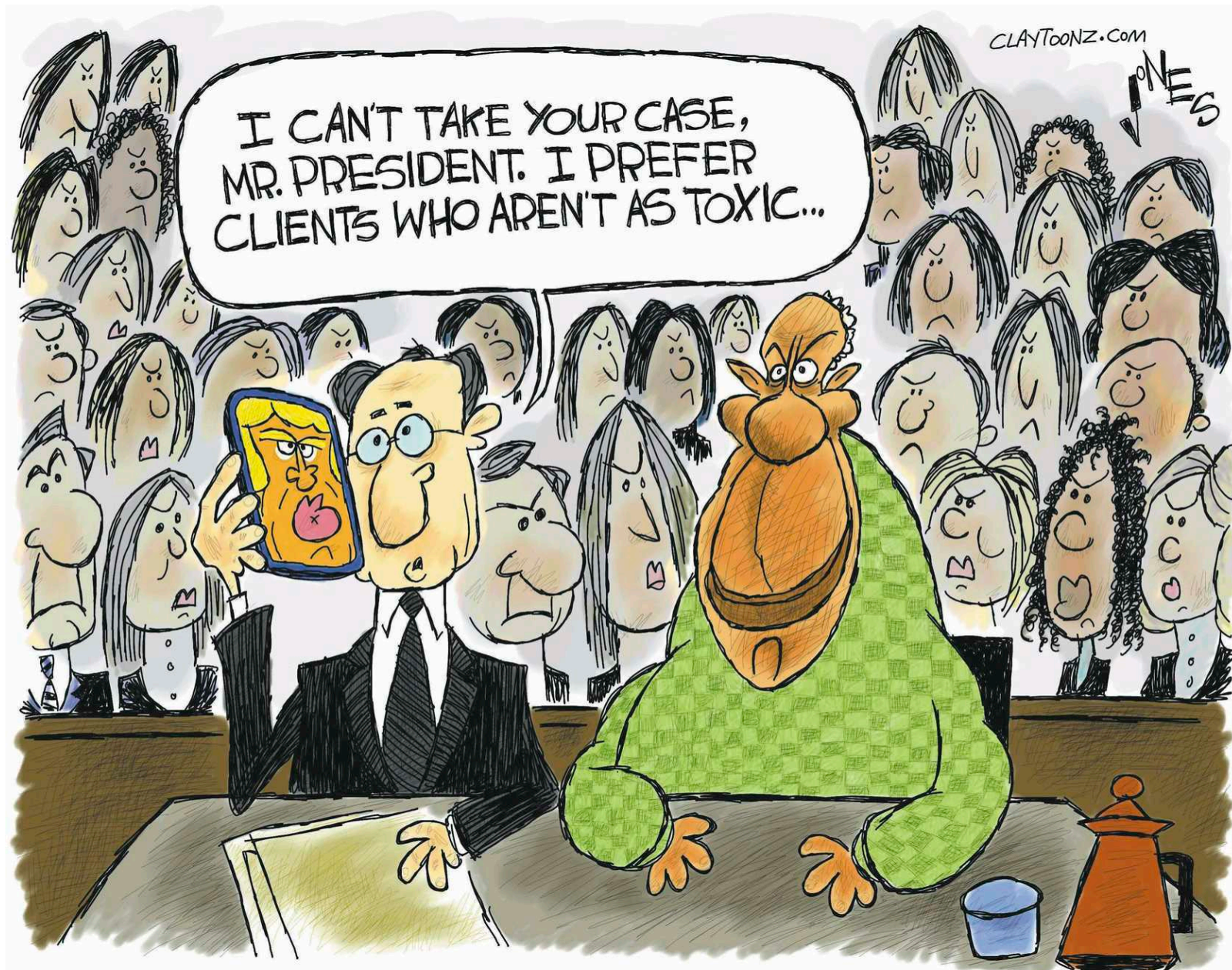
In The Daily Astorian help wanted section, I noticed the city of Astoria was taking job bids for maintaining city parks and cleaning city restrooms. Why not hire a person like me, with all the skills it takes to do everything, instead of hiring a landscaping company or a janitorial company?

Look at my resume, city of Astoria. Give us working Joes a shot. I have a family and bills to pay, too.

VALIANT R. LEFFEL  
Astoria

## Parking for customers

Summer is here. Downtown is busier — a lot more people, and few parking places. I own a business downtown, and would love it if the employees would not park in front of our shops, and park else-



where. I know parking is limited, but if customers have nowhere to park, then they really aren't customers after all.

I know that parking has not been enforced for several years now, and will not be enforced in the near future. I also know that I haven't any solutions for the limited parking places, but I wish the employers would talk to their employees about this. Summer is when we make the money to survive the winter, but that will not happen with no customers due to unavailable parking spaces.

Also, we need a few speed limit signs on Commercial Street in downtown, so people are aware of the 20 mph they are supposed to be driving. I am aware that this letter will get me nowhere, but after seeing the same cars day after day after day parked in front of the places of their employment, I just had to vent.

VICKI McAFEE  
Astoria

## Gearhart as we know it

The Gearhart community has been under siege for over a year now, bombarded with flyers from vacation rental corporations and speculators offering financial incentives for converting homes in the single-family residential zone into illegal commercial use as short-term vacation rentals.

As a recent example, the anonymous Vancouver, Washington, entrepreneur "Joseph" flooded our mailboxes with a postcard promising "top dollar for your home" because "I need to purchase another rental property in the area."

Last year our City Council, after years of deliberation and public input, set up a defense against this onslaught against our quiet permanent and seasonal community. Passing an ordinance grandfathering existing short-term rentals (a great concession), it regulated them to both minimize their impact on our neighborhoods and gradually reduce them to a manageable number, while making more homes available for long-term rental as a solution to the countywide housing crisis.

Though that 2016 ordinance was recently validated by the state Land Use Board of Appeals, it is now threatened by a new initiative petition to repeal and replace it by allowing all homes in residential neighborhoods to be commercialized as short-term, largely unregulated vacation rentals. That action would violate the Comprehensive Plan — the city's covenant with the community — which recognizes "the importance of the city's residential neighborhoods and the need to protect them from the negative impacts of the transient rental of property"; likewise, the Comprehensive Plan calls for permanent

"housing availability for all residents of the Gearhart area."

It is to be fervently hoped that the repeal and replace petition fails. If it succeeds, it will mean the end of Gearhart as we know it.

PENNY SABOL  
Gearhart

## Gearhart vs. big money

With the repeal and replace petition now circulating against the city's 2016 ordinance regulating and limiting short-term rentals, Gearhart is up against big money. According to the Oregon Secretary of State, the out-of-state sponsor has already invested close to \$16,000 (cash and in-kind services) in the petition drive; additional contributions from pollsters, lawyers, and, of course, realtors bring their total war chest up to \$20,000 and more (<http://bit.ly/2sVCNpl>).

The repeal/replace petitioners now claim to have already acquired the 175 signatures required by law, with little prospect of gullible signers withdrawing their names before the July 8 deadline. So, Gearhart taxpayers are faced with another expenditure of close to \$10,000 for a special election in November.

This is big money talking, and it won't stop there. The petitioners are in it for keeps. The question is, will Gearhart be able to stand up once

more and fight for what amounts to its very survival as a community?

RICK SABOL  
Gearhart

## Better health care

In the middle of our daughter's medical struggles in Germany came the added worry that when she returns to the U.S., her pre-existing condition might not be covered if her work circumstances were ever to change. That frightening knowledge came to her when she was receiving top-notch care from providers in Germany, who work in a system that costs the patient half what it costs here. It is not socialized medicine, but it links private and public entities in ways that for decades have provided guaranteed health care for each citizen.

And now our House and Senate leadership want to make our embarrassing national health care situation worse in an effort to replace the Affordable Care Act under cover of secrecy, without any hearings, and making decisions that will likely take away health insurance for millions, and add to the angst of families like our own.

The process and the content of their work is wrong and must be resisted. We can do better ... much better.

JOHN and JACKIE WECKER  
Astoria

# The great Muslim civil war — and us

By CHARLES  
KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — The U.S. shoots down a Syrian fighter-bomber. Iran launches missiles into eastern Syria. Russia threatens to attack coalition aircraft west of the Euphrates. What is going on?

It might appear a mindless mess, but the outlines are clear. The great Muslim civil war, centered in Syria, is approaching its post-Islamic State phase. It's the end of the beginning. The parties are maneuvering to shape what comes next.

It's Europe, 1945, when the war was still raging against Nazi Germany, but everyone already knew the outcome. The maneuvering was largely between the approaching victors — the Soviet Union and the Western democracies — to determine postwar boundaries and spheres of influence.

So it is today in Syria. Everyone knows that the Islamic State is finished. Not that it will disappear as an ideology, insurgency and source of continuing terrorism both in the region and the West. But it will disappear as an independent, organized, territorial entity in the heart of the Middle East.

It is being squeezed out of existence. Its hold on Mosul, its last major redoubt in Iraq, is nearly gone.



Arab 24

**U.S. forces patrolling on the outskirts of the Syrian town of Manbij, in Aleppo province, Syria, in March. Syrian government and allied troops have inserted themselves into the battle against Islamic State militants by capturing key areas on the flanks of the coalition-led battle to seize Raqqa. They have positioned themselves as indispensable possibly spoilers in the fight to uproot the militants from Syria.**

Raqqa, its stronghold in Syria and de facto capital, is next. When it falls — it is already surrounded on three sides — the caliphate dies.

Much of the fighting today is about who inherits. Take the Syrian jet the U.S. shot down. It had been attacking a pro-Western Kurdish and Arab force (the Syrian Democratic Forces) not far from Islamic State territory.

Why? Because the Bashar Assad regime, backed by Iran, Hezbollah and Russia, having gained the upper hand on the non-jihadist rebels in the Syrian heartland (most notably in Aleppo), feels secure enough to set its sights on eastern Syria. If it hopes to restore its authority over the

whole country, it will need to control Raqqa and surrounding Islamic State areas. But the forces near Raqqa are pro-Western and anti-regime. Hence the Syrian fighter-bomber attack.

Hence the U.S. shoot-down. We are protecting our friends. Hence the Russian threats to now target U.S. planes. The Russians are protecting their friends.

On the same day as the shoot-down, Iran launched six surface-to-surface missiles into Syrian territory controlled by the Islamic State. Why? Ostensibly to punish the jihadists for terrorist attacks two weeks ago inside Iran.

Perhaps. But one obvious objective was to demonstrate to Saudi

Arabia and the other Sunni Arabs the considerable reach of both Iran's arms and territorial ambitions.

For Iran, Syria is the key, the central theater of a Shiite-Sunni war for regional hegemony. Iran (which is non-Arab) leads the Shiite side, attended by its Arab auxiliaries — Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Shiite militias in Iraq and the highly penetrated government of Iraq, and Assad's Alawite regime. (Alawites being a non-Sunni sect, often associated with Shiism.)

Taken together, they comprise a vast arc — the Shiite Crescent — stretching from Iran through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to the Mediterranean. If consolidated, it gives the Persians a Mediterranean reach they have not had in 2,300 years.

This alliance operates under the patronage and protection of Russia, which supplies the Iranian-allied side with cash, weapons and, since 2015, air cover from its new bases in Syria.

Arrayed on the other side of the great Muslim civil war are the Sunnis, moderate and Western-allied, led by Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt and Jordan — with their Great Power patron, the United States, now (post-Obama) back in action.

At stake is consolidation of the

Shiite Crescent. It's already underway. As the Islamic State is driven out of Mosul, Iranian-controlled militias are taking over crucial roads and other strategic assets in western Iraq. Next target: eastern Syria (Raqqa and environs).

Imagine the scenario: a unified Syria under Assad, the ever more pliant client of Iran and Russia; Hezbollah, tip of the Iranian spear, dominant in Lebanon; Iran, the regional arbiter; and Russia, with its Syrian bases, the outside hegemon.

Our preferred outcome is radically different: a loosely federated Syria, partitioned and cantonized, in which Assad might be left in charge of an Alawite rump.

The Iranian-Russian strategy is a nightmare for the entire Sunni Middle East. And for us too. The Pentagon seems bent on preventing it. Hence the Tomahawk attack for crossing the chemical red line. Hence the recent fighter-bomber shoot-down.

A reasonable U.S. strategy, given the alternatives. But not without risk. Which is why we need a national debate before we commit too deeply. Perhaps we might squeeze one in amid the national obsession with every James Comey memo-to-self?

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