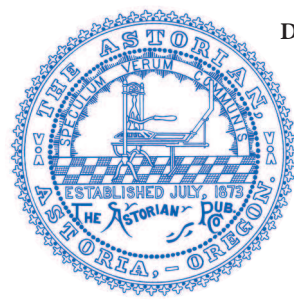


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Each week we recognize those people and organizations in the community deserving of public praise for the good things they do to make the North Coast a better place to live, and also those who should be called out for their actions.



SHOUTOUTS



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Coast Guard personnel, who recently returned from performing rescue operations in Texas after Hurricane Harvey, took time to recount their experiences for a press conference on Tuesday at Air Station Astoria.

• Members of two Coast Guard Sector Columbia River air crews, who returned this week from the Gulf Coast where they participated in rescue and relief operations in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. The two air crews were sent southward and were deployed to Sector Mobile in Alabama and then to Air Station Houston. They were credited with directly rescuing about 40 people from the floodwaters and devastation and assisting many more. The returning crewmen said seeing the storm's massive destruction was jarring and they described the scene as organized chaos. They credited their rigorous training, camaraderie and dedication to saving others in helping them throughout the deployment.

• Jason Harte, a retired Navy veteran from Ocean Park, Washington, who has been assisting in relief efforts in Texas as a volunteer with the national nonprofit Sheep Dog Impact Assistance group. The organization consists of retired military, law enforcement and fire-rescue personnel, and takes its name from the concept of sheep dogs, which traditionally protect the herd. More than 60 members from the organization's 23 chapters across the country have traveled to Texas to help. Harte said the group he is with is coordinating with the National Guard and is concentrating on offering assistance in Houston's hard-hit neighboring cities.

• Mo's Restaurants, which raised \$7,500 for back-to-school supplies for local elementary schools during July and August. The donations to the schools came from the proceeds of the Motivation for Kids Table inside each of Mo's locations, and the money will be used by the schools to purchase and provide items like binders, pencils and pens to those youngsters in need.

• TD&M Enterprises, and company president Mark Utti, for launching an effort to restore the historic Times Theater in Seaside. The theater, which closed nearly 30 years ago and is a recognizable fixture with its outdoor murals at the corner of Broadway and Columbia Street, originally opened in 1941. It closed in 1989. Utti said TD&M Enterprises, which now owns the property, has plans to restore the theater while also renovating the building to include a brew pub and event space, with the possibility of live entertainment, sports viewing and even some second-run movies. The renovation work has begun with a goal of a January opening.

• U.S. Bank, which recently awarded Camp Kiwanilong a \$3,000 grant for continuing operations. The camp's staff and board are currently working toward accreditation through the American Camp Association and are also planning the development of a pilot family camp program.

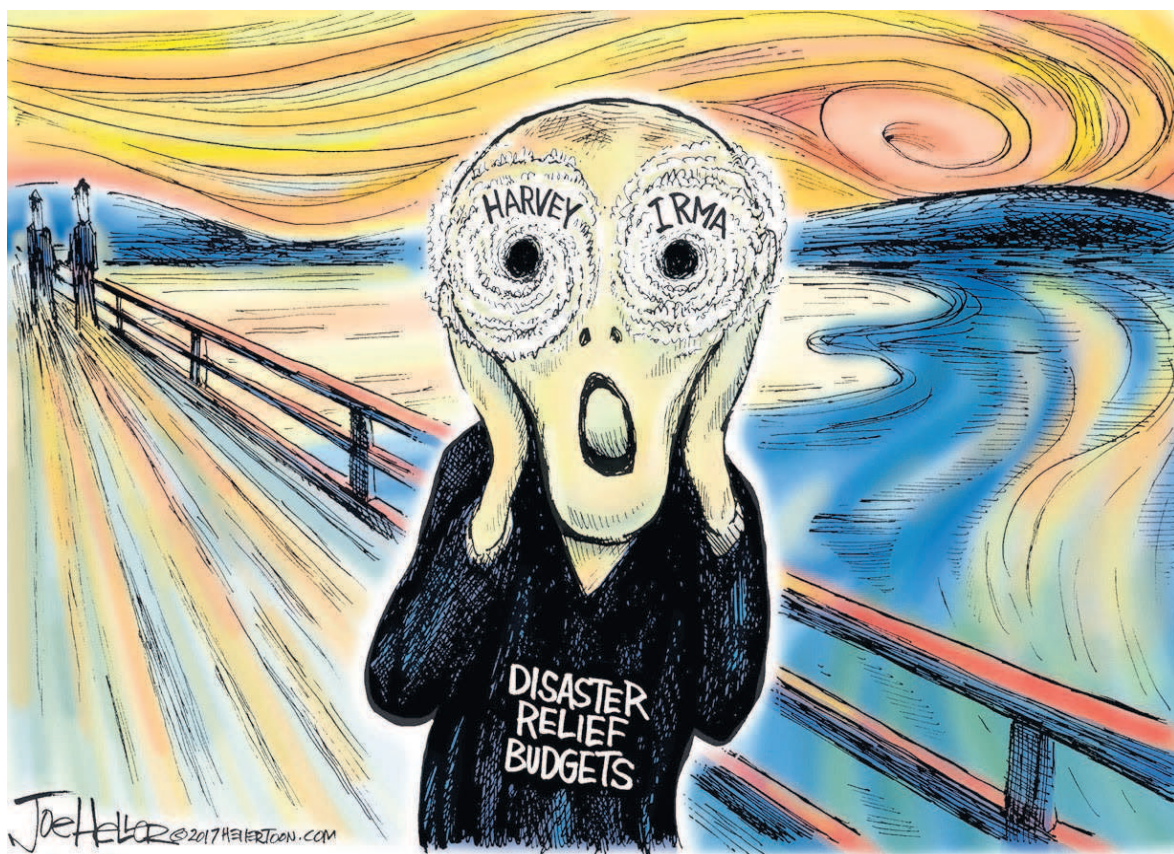


CALLOUTS

• The Oregon Department of Transportation, which received mixed results in an audit released this week by the Secretary of State's Office. On the positive side, the audit found that ODOT's new fuels tax system accurately assesses and collects fuels taxes for Oregon and other local jurisdictions. During 2016, the system processed approximately 14,000 fuels tax returns and collected more than \$565 million in fuels taxes. The audit determined the system's calculations to be correct for 99.5% of all returns. The remaining 0.5% of records differed due to rounding errors or manual overrides of calculations by department staff. However, the audit also identified design flaws that may allow for certain fuels tax refunds to be issued for more than what was owed, and has caused inaccuracies in some key reports. The audit also identified security weaknesses which could put the system and its data at risk. The report included nine recommendations to ODOT management to correct the weaknesses.

Suggestions?

Do you have a Shoutout or Callout you think we should know about? Let us know at news@dailyastorian.com and we'll make sure to take a look.



Google trying to kill bill on sex trafficking websites

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF
New York Times News Service

Sex traffickers in America have the police and prosecutors pursuing them, but they do have one crucial (if secret) ally: Google.



Google's motto has long been "Don't be evil," and I admire lots about the company.

But organizations it funds have for years been quietly helping Backpage.com, the odious website where most American victims of human trafficking are sold, to battle lawsuits from children sold there for sex.

Now Google is using its enormous lobbying power in Washington, D.C., to try to kill bipartisan legislation that would crack down on websites that promote sex trafficking.

"I wanted to bring to your attention an issue that is picking up steam in the Senate and the House," a Google lobbyist, E. Stewart Jeffries, wrote in a letter to congressional offices last month.

He urged House members not to co-sponsor the legislation targeting sex trafficking.

It's not that Google is taking ads from Backpage (it doesn't) or giving it money. But as Backpage fights off prosecutors and worries about the legislation, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, Google has emerged as its behind-the-scenes champion.

Why? Why would Google ally itself with Backpage, which is involved in 73 percent of U.S. cases of suspected child sex trafficking, which advertised a 13-year-old whose pimp had tattooed his name on her eyelids?

The answer has to do with Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which protects internet companies like Google (and The New York Times) from lawsuits — and also protects Backpage. Google seems to have a vague, poorly grounded fear that closing the loophole would open the way to frivolous lawsuits and investigations and lead to a slippery slope that will damage its interests and the freedom of the internet.

That impresses few people outside the tech community, for the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act was crafted exceedingly narrowly to tar-



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Is Google giving cover to Backpage.com and enabling sex traffickers?

get only those intentionally engaged in trafficking children. Some tech companies, including Oracle, have endorsed the bill.

"This bill only impacts bad-actor websites," notes Yiota Souras, general counsel at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "You don't inadvertently traffic a child."

U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, the lead sponsor of the legislation, says that it would clearly never affect Google.

"We've tried to work with them," Portman told me.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., another sponsor, adds that "it's truly baffling and perplexing" that some in the tech world (Google above all) have dug in their heels. He says the sex trafficking bill gathered 28 co-sponsors within a week, making it a rare piece of bipartisan legislation that seems likely to become law.

I write about this issue because I'm haunted by the kids I've met who were pretty much enslaved, right here in the United States in the 21st century. I've been writing about Backpage for more than five years, ever since I came across a terrified 13-year-old girl, Baby Face, who had been forced to work for a pimp in New York City.

Baby Face said that when she balked, the pimp threw her down a stairway. Finally, one day she was hurting badly and could not bear to be raped any more. So when her pimp sold her on Backpage in Brooklyn and waited outside the building, Baby Face pounded on the door of another apartment, begged to use the phone and called her mom. Police rescued her and the pimp went to prison.

But it's not enough to send a few pimps to prison; we should also

go after online marketplaces like Backpage. That's why Google's myopia is so sad.

The Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act won't end trafficking any more than laws end bank robbery, but 50 attorneys general around the country have signed a letter saying that this kind of legislation would help — an astonishing unanimity.

In response to my inquiries, Google issued a statement: "Backpage acted criminally to facilitate child sex trafficking, and we strongly urge the Department of Justice to prosecute them for their egregious crimes against children. ... Google will continue to work alongside Congress, antitrafficking organizations and other technology companies to combat sex trafficking."

Fine, but then why oppose legislation? Why use intermediaries to defend Backpage? To me, all this reflects the tech world's moral blindness about what's happening outside its bubble. Even if Google were right that ending the immunity for Backpage might lead to an occasional frivolous lawsuit, life requires some balancing.

For example, websites must try to remove copyrighted material if it's posted on their sites. That's a constraint on internet freedom that makes sense, and it hasn't proved a slippery slope. If we're willing to protect copyrights, shouldn't we do as much to protect children sold for sex?

I asked Nacole, a mom in Washington state whose daughter was trafficked on Backpage at the age of 15, what she would say to Google.

"Our children can't be the cost of doing business," she said.

Google understands so much about business, but apparently not that.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wake up, Marquis

As a voter in Clatsop County, I support the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon and its "They Report to You" campaign. District attorneys need to be held accountable to the voters, and Josh Marquis is no exception. After years of the status quo, a wake-up call is in order for Josh Marquis: You work for the voters.

GLENDIA PHILLIPS
Seaside

Accountability?

District attorneys like Josh Marquis need to stop being so worried about being held accountable ("ACLU puts heat on elected prosecutors," The Daily Astorian, Aug. 29). Why is he so afraid? Voters?

Instead of fighting the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon's "They Report to You" district attorney accountability campaign, dis-

trict attorneys like Marquis should embrace it. They can use it as a way to connect better with constituents, to find out what voters want, and to create a criminal justice system that reflects our shared values.

For example, I want a system that is effective, fair and just. I believe the system should be focused more on education, treatment, recovery and re-entry support, and less on incarceration and punishment tactics that the research shows are more expensive and less effective. What's so scary about that?

MONICA J. VAN STEENBERG
Astoria

Expect more from DA

As a voter in Clatsop County, I was excited to read about the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon "They Report to You" campaign ("ACLU puts heat on elected prosecutors," The Daily Astorian,

Aug. 29). Many people in our region don't realize what a district attorney is, or what makes a district attorney so powerful.

I want our current district attorney, Josh Marquis, to be more in touch with the values of the voters he represents. I hope, thanks to this campaign, district attorneys like him will more often do basic things, like answering voters' phone calls and having public policy agendas. We should expect more from people like Marquis than just maintaining the status quo.

REV. KIT KETCHAM
Astoria

Who cares, Hillary?

Hillary Clinton is currently on tour to promote her latest book titled "What Happened." The obvious answer to that title is "Who Cares?"

E. ROBERT NASSIKAS
Astoria