

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



DAVID F. PERO, Publisher & Editor

JIM VAN NOSTRAND, Managing Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN, Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM, Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN, Production Manager

CARL EARL, Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Sexual harassment at the Capitol is always inexcusable

Sexual harassment occurs in too many workplaces, and capitols seem a prime breeding ground because of the inherent power imbalance. Victims of sexual harassment — whether lawmakers, lobbyists or legislative employees — often are reluctant to speak out for fear of losing their political influence or their jobs.

It took courage for two state senators — Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, and another unnamed woman — to report what they considered sexual harassment by a colleague, Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg.

Kruse has denied the allegations, which are under investigation by legislative officials. What we do know, from a letter by Senate President Peter Courtney stripping Kruse of his committee assignments, is that legislative officials in 2016 instructed Kruse “not to touch women at work. Period.”

One hundred and thirty women have signed a letter casting light on the issue of harassment and sexism, urging lawmakers and others at the Capitol to “create a culture where it is expected that people (both men and women) will speak up when it is happening in front of them, and ensure that it is safe to report it when it happens in private.”

Women who signed the letter include existing and former Democratic and Republican lawmakers, legislative staffers and lobbyists.

Some Oregonians may argue that changing generational standards make it difficult for people, men especially, to know how to act. Not so. Harassment or intimidation in the workplace is never OK.

For anyone who is uncertain about what to do, here are tips: If you're unsure whether a remark will be heard as sexist, demeaning or harassing, don't speak it. If you wonder whether a hug is appropriate, ask the person. If you want to compliment someone's shirt, do so nicely — without praising the person's body or letting your eyes linger. Better yet, find praiseworthy aspects of a person that do not involve appearance.

Sexual harassment is never acceptable, never understandable, never tolerable, and certainly not at the Capitol. Of all people, lawmakers have a responsibility to know and heed the rules and laws they create.

The Legislature's personnel rules clearly state that sexual harassment can constitute “unwelcome conduct in the form of a sexual advance, sexual comment, request for sexual favors, unwanted or offensive touching or physical contact of a sexual nature, unwanted closeness, impeding or blocking movement, sexual gesture, sexual innuendo, sexual joke, sexually charged language, intimate inquiry, persistent unwanted courting, sexist insult, gender stereotype, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature ...”

Before each legislative session, every legislator and every legislative employee — hundreds of people — must attend mandatory training on maintaining a harassment-free workplace and other policies. No one is exempt from that training.

Yet sexual harassment still occurs. And it's still inexcusable.

Sexual harassment is never acceptable, never understandable, never tolerable, and certainly not at the Capitol.

WHERE TO WRITE

• **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D):** 439 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. Fax 202-225-9497. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005. Phone: 503-469-6010. Fax 503-326-5066. Web: bonamici.house.gov/

• **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D):** 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Web: www.merkley.senate.gov

• **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D):** 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Web: www.wyden.senate.gov

• **State Rep. Brad Witt (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court Street N.E., H-373, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/witt/ Email: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

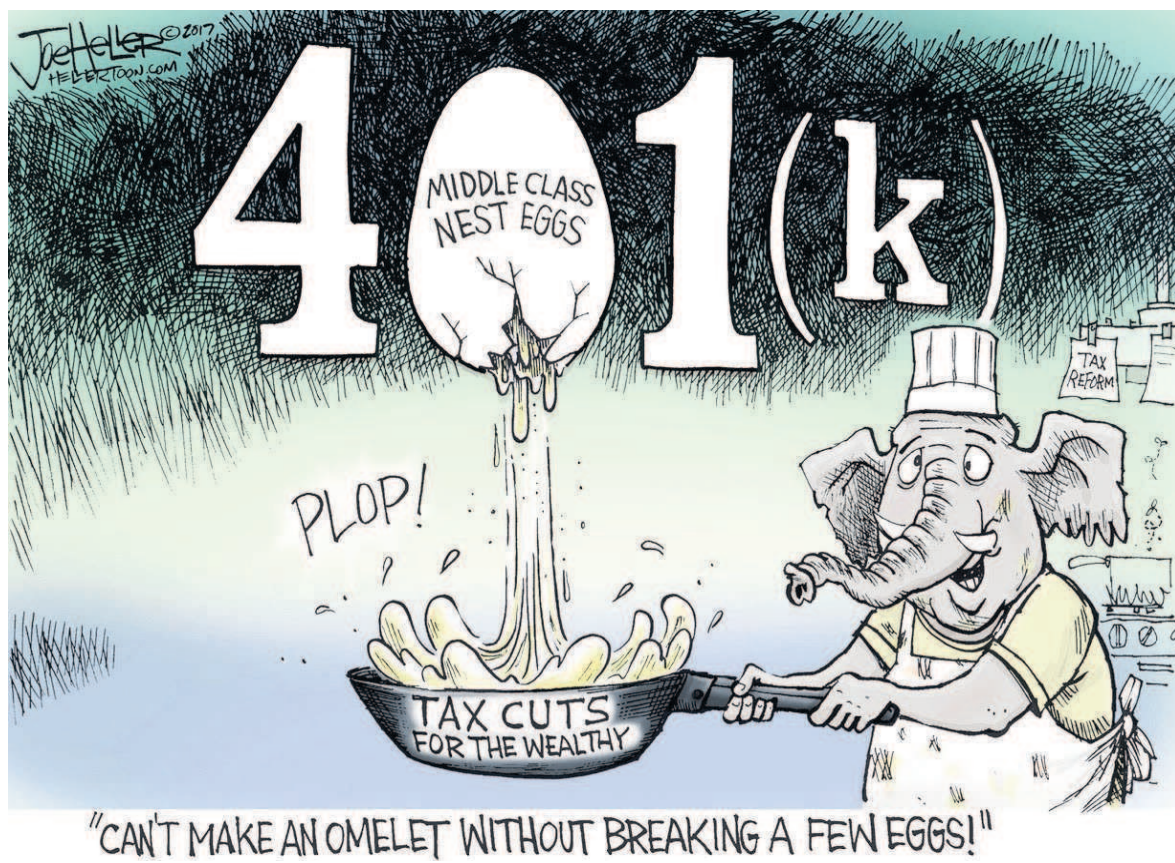
• **State Rep. Deborah Boone**

(D): 900 Court St. N.E., H-481, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.deborah.boone@state.or.us District office: P.O. Box 928, Cannon Beach, OR 97110. Phone: 503-986-1432. Web: www.leg.state.or.us/boone/

• **State Sen. Betsy Johnson (D):** State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., S-314, Salem, OR 97301. Telephone: 503-986-1716. Email: sen.betsy.johnson@state.or.us Web: www.betsyjohnson.com District Office: P.O. Box R, Scappoose, OR 97056. Phone: 503-543-4046. Fax: 503-543-5296. Astoria office phone: 503-338-1280.

• **Port of Astoria:** Executive Director, 10 Pier 1 Suite 308, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-741-3300. Email: admin@portofastoria.com

• **Clatsop County Board of Commissioners:** c/o County Manager, 800 Exchange St., Suite 410, Astoria, OR 97103. Phone: 503-325-1000.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Former community development director believes Astoria should focus on entrepreneurship, empowerment and education.

My vision for Astoria

By KEVIN CRONIN
Special to The Daily Astorian

I was often asked one question when I served as the community development director at the city of Astoria. “What’s your vision for the city?” This question has always perplexed me. In reality, it’s never up to one person or

a small group to create one vision for an entire city.

To deflect the question, I had a somewhat canned response along the lines of how the comprehensive plan outlines a 20-year horizon for growth management or a de facto retort about how the mayor and City Council set the vision and goals, and staff just focuses on implementation. I couldn’t honestly answer the question because I never felt I had the authority or the gumption to articulate my vision.

How things have changed! I’m taking the opportunity now, without a title hanging over my head, or direct responsibility, other than as a private citizen who loves Astoria and is committed to ensure a bright future and prosperity for the next generation, including my children. This is one person’s vision that will hopefully facilitate a community-wide conversation.

I call my vision the 3 E’s: entrepreneurship, empowerment and education.

This vision is centered around achieving three objectives:

- helping our youth succeed;
- bridging local government with community-based solutions;
- and creating more wealth for individuals and families to succeed in a global economy.

Entrepreneurism: Implement Advance Astoria, a five-year action plan for economic development. Astoria needs to expand and diversify its economy to complement the tourism industry and provide better paying jobs that are less dependent on the boom and bust real estate cycle and consumer-based spending habits. The City Council deserves credit for establishing the goal for sustainable economic development in 2015 and for adoption of the strategy in July.

However, it’s time to move forward and sustain the momentum created through Advance Astoria and prioritize some key actions that are clearly delineated in the strat-

egy. For example, local entrepreneurs have wanted a one-stop, go-to commercial kitchen to experiment with new recipes and develop food and beverage products that have become a hallmark in Astoria. The city can work with the Oregon State University Seafood Lab to upgrade an existing, underutilized kitchen if it can find a partner to help schedule and operate the kitchen. This is also a recruitment tool to attract new entrepreneurs who want to relocate and invest in our area.

With a focus on entrepreneurship, empowerment and education, the city can forge a new path while still respecting its rich history and unique culture.

Empowerment: Establish a John Jacob Astor Volunteer Day for Astoria. Reading “Astoria” by Peter Stark should be required reading for Astoria citizenship. It’s a fascinating read on the life of amazing German-American pioneer John Jacob Astor. Astoria should honor its founder by celebrating his birthday (July 17) or the inception of its founding in 1811. The way to honor Astor, and, more importantly, our citizenship, is to have a citywide volunteer day dedicated each year. This could coincide with Regatta week or with pre-designated national days of service. Everyone can pitch in and focus on specific projects that benefit all Astorians, such as improving our wonderful parks, eradicating invasive plants in our forgotten city-owned open spaces, creating temporary art installations, or working with local nonprofits on completing their proverbial to-do lists. A small army of dedicated volunteers can get a lot done in a day’s work. It instills a common value of shared sacrifice and a greater good of community-based service learning in our youth, and it’s a chance to get to know your neighbors. As a former two-term AmeriCorps volunteer and former board member

of Oregon Volunteers!, I get the importance of volunteerism and the value it brings to the table, so let’s recognize the power it can have in our community.

Education: Incubate an Early Learning Initiative to educate all preschool children entering Kindergarten by 2020. Mounting peer reviewed evidence has demonstrated that cities who educate their children at the preschool age are proven to be better prepared to enter school, ready to learn and have less behavioral issues. This has a ripple effect on our criminal justice system and creates a culture of learning from the beginning. Under this program, preschool would be free for all 3 and 4 year olds and would provide funding for new centers to open that would complement our existing child development center network that have long waiting lists. If a local funding source can be secured, it would be matched with existing state and federal dollars. This program dovetails with the Way to Wellville initiative and others that are dedicated to better public health, education and workforce development outcomes.

After reading my vision you might have noticed it has nothing to do with land use planning, density, or zoning. That’s the point. Traditional planning approaches for our city are still an important aspect of city government, but the time to act is now by implementing key actions that will have the biggest impact on our youth and our city for generations to come. Community development needs to be broadly defined in order to create new public-private partnerships that are proactive and responsive to a global economy. Cities that continuously innovate are the ones that will be poised for economic prosperity and sustainable growth.

This vision may not be bold enough for some but it’s attainable, financially feasible and bipartisan in nature, which is a hard thing to find these days. To be competitive in a global economy, to empower local neighborhoods and accomplish policy objectives with limited resources, the city needs a new model of doing business to be successful. With a focus on entrepreneurship, empowerment and education, the city can forge a new path while still respecting its rich history and unique culture.

Kevin Cronin is Astoria’s former community development director.