

# OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN  
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND  
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN  
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM  
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN  
Production Manager

CARL EARL  
Systems Manager

## OUR VIEW

# Governor's PERS solutions are modest at best

The message to Oregon legislators from Gov. Kate Brown's staff last week was that PERS has an immediate problem.

Yet the solutions proposed by the governor are modest at best.

The problem is the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System has too little money to pay its projected pension benefits. That gap, the size of which ranges from \$15 billion to more than \$20 billion depending on what assumptions are made, is PERS' unfunded actuarial liability. And to fill that gap, schools, cities, counties and the state are spending increasingly larger shares of their budgets on PERS.

Each PERS employer, of which there are about 915, has its own unfunded liability. School districts generally are in the worst shape, with their unfunded liability averaging 176 percent of their payroll.

Brown will ask the 2018 Legislature, which convenes Feb. 5, to pull money from other sources and put it into an account to help school districts pay for PERS. She suggested that money could come from Oregonians' unclaimed property, increased collections of debts owed to the state, lawsuit settlements, a potential tax amnesty program, higher-than-usual capital gains and estate taxes, and other sources. Revenue from new Oregon Lottery games also could help



AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

Thousands of unionized state workers rally at the Capitol in Salem in 2011 to protest proposed retirement benefit cuts. The Oregon Supreme Court later ruled that some of the 2013 cuts to public-employee retirement benefits were unconstitutional.

Instead of shying from productive reforms, the governor and legislators should embrace them with the knowledge that they dare not count on the PERS savings until the subsequent litigation is settled.

schools, along with community colleges and universities, pay for PERS.

The governor's proposed legislation also would create — but not pay for —

a matching fund to encourage employers to act faster, instead of letting their current budget needs overwhelm their eventual PERS obligations. For example, the state might match 25 cents for every dollar paid by a PERS employer. It would be up to the 2019 Legislature to fund that matching program.

Those are good ideas. Still, it's disappointing that this is all Brown could come up with from last year's blue-ribbon task force on the PERS unfunded liability. And it's even more discouraging that she won't take up PERS benefits reforms. Not in this year's legislative session — maybe not in next year's, either.

Brown says she doesn't want to try approaches that will be thrown out by the Oregon Supreme Court. Instead, she and the Legislature must recognize their Catch-22: The only way to know whether further reforms will pass legal muster is to enact them and have them tested in court.

Instead of shying from productive reforms, the governor and legislators should embrace them with the knowledge that they dare not count on the PERS savings until the subsequent litigation is settled.

That would be a more courageous approach than Brown's modest PERS proposals for the 2018 Legislature.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Make your voice heard on offshore drilling

I commend The Daily Astorian's strong stance opposing the Trump administration's move to allow oil and gas drilling off our nation's shores: "Offshore drilling here? Absolutely not" (Jan. 9), and "Drill here but not there? Heck no" (Jan. 12). This reckless move goes against the will of the majority of Americans, who want to protect the ocean from this kind of dangerous exploitation.

To make things worse, this decision comes soon after the Trump administration weakened regulations designed to help prevent oil spills, keep workers safe, and protect the environment. These rules were enacted to prevent another catastrophe like the horrendous Deepwater Horizon spill, which forever changed the Gulf of Mexico. History shows that where we drill, we spill. We can't afford that risk in the Pacific Ocean, which is already facing acidifying waters, harmful algal blooms and other consequences of climate change.

The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management will hold a public hearing on the proposal from 3 to 7 p.m. Feb. 6 at the Red Lion Hotel, 3301 Market Street NE, Salem. I hope that Oregonians will make their voices heard on this matter.

Additionally, the administration's decision to exempt the state of Florida from offshore drilling for what appear to be political reasons is appalling. Our national energy policy shouldn't be based on the president's preferred gubernatorial candidate or the location of a Trump golf course.

Risking the health of our oceans for the financial gain of private companies defies common sense and is reckless, wrong, and unnecessary. In Congress, I'll continue to advocate for investing in clean energy technologies, and I'll fight against Trump's drill-at-all-costs agenda.

CONGRESSWOMAN  
SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Beaverton

### We need voters' pamphlets

In Sunday's showing of "Selma" at the Liberty Theatre, and the candlelight march and discussion at the Blue Scorch that followed, we celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King's commitment to voting rights as the lynchpin of citizenship for African Americans.

The Clatsop County Commission has recently debated including funding in the county budget for a voters' pamphlet at every election. This discussion amplifies Dr. King's message for all Americans.

First, an informed electorate is foundational to a well-functioning democracy. Someone else said it first, but it still rings true.

Second, we have a limited local media market, especially among young people, so the voters' pamphlet is often the only source of information on issues and candidates.

Third, one of the reasons that candidates are hesitant to run for local offices is the burden of raising funds for campaign literature. The voters' pamphlet provides very necessary information to the electorate which reduces the funds necessary for campaigns.

Fourth, it is one of only a few places where both sides are presented on issues and candidates.

Fifth, lack of a voters' pamphlet signals that the election is of lesser importance than others. All elections are important.

PAMELA WEV  
Astoria

### Why can't we cope with everyday life?

I was thinking about some of the things we spend money, or time, on in this country, and what a waste much of it is. In fact, some of these things are very morally wrong and harmful to our minds and bodies.

Think about how much booze is consumed in our country alone. How many marriages have fallen apart from it, or kids left with just one parent? How many drunk drivers have ended others' lives?

Then, how much has smoking affected our lives? Our lungs were not made for smoke, but fresh clean air. Tobacco raises our heart rate, makes everything smell terrible, costs around \$800 to \$1,000 a year, and takes an average eight years off your life.

What about drugs? Wow, how sad many are addicted to these substances, illegal or prescription medicines. How many lives have been ruined by them? Millions, I'm sure.

Why do so many turn to such things? Why can't we seem to cope with everyday life? Remember when we didn't have a fraction of these problems? Now it's an epidemic, God help us. A country is only as strong as its people; every empire has fallen from within before it comes crashing down. Look at history, folks.

We really need a miracle to turn the tide, to wake us up, to change our very nature. We need Jesus Christ to forgive our sins and give us a new life. Ask him for help.

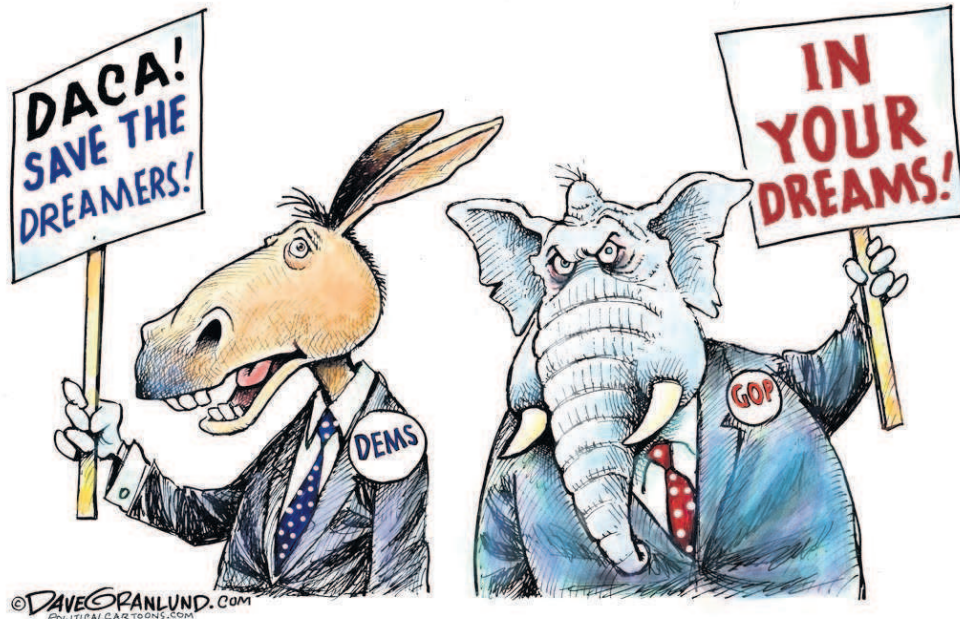
ROBERT REGISTER  
Seaside

### What president is doing does not represent us

I want to express my horror and outrage at the despicable words and attitudes spouted over the past weeks by the man who may have been falsely elected president of our country.

To hear the blasphemy coming from his mouth often, and in the ugliest of ways, is sickening and enraging me.

I want us all to remember that we must stand firm in our convictions and commitment to equality, compassion, and justice. We are true Americans, whether we are immigrants or native born, people of color or white, dis-



## LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar, and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the

writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters in poor taste will not be printed.

Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at dailyastorian.com/submit letters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or 1555 North Roosevelt in Seaside, or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.

abled or able. We represent the true America. The man and his cronies who are trying to change our democracy to a tyrannical and heartless kleptocracy do not represent the ideals and mission of the U.S.

We must resist, in the name and memory of those many individuals who have lived and died for freedom for all of us, in civil rights battles, in courtrooms, in jail houses, in simple acts of rebellion against evil.

I ask all of us to double down on our acts of kindness, of resistance, of commitment to our ideals and the promises of a multicultural, pluralistic nation, the United States of America, a nation which respects and honors diversity, exercises its strengths and works on its weaknesses.

We are Americans. What our so-called president is doing does not represent us. He is an American only by birth, not by attitude or behavior or heart. We are Americans, and we have a duty not to blindly obey a false and evil leader. We are Americans and we will resist evil.

REV. KIT KETCHAM  
Astoria

### Fight for what you think is right

Our country is based on freedoms. A basic freedom is the right to have and practice our beliefs as long as our beliefs

do not hurt others. At times, this can be controversial.

Beliefs are a cherished freedom. This is what our democracy is about. Two recent letters to the editor in The Daily Astorian are clear examples of different beliefs. Both letters use the Robin Hood theme. One compares Prince John to President Donald Trump ("Robin Hood," Dec. 1). The other compares Prince John to President Barack Obama ("We are heading in the right direction as a nation," Dec. 13).

Here are some of my beliefs: Everyone has what I call a belief system. Beliefs are developed from childhood forward. This is what shapes decisions. Strong belief systems may never change — but can. This usually occurs through evolution of time or by traumatic events. Minor examples of traumatic events are not believing in flu shots until you get the flu, or not believing in seat belts until you have a fender-bender.

By evolution of time, I mean a gradual process of objectively thinking about what you believe, examining your reasoning which is based on fact, and then deciding on possible change. To me, the challenge is to look at your beliefs, examine them and fight for what you think is right. We have this privilege in a free country.

NORM HOOG  
Astoria