

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

Oregon's graduation rate is abysmal

What is it about Oregon that makes high school graduation so difficult?

"While Oregon students perform reasonably well academically, they graduate at far lower rates than their academic performance would otherwise indicate," said a report from the governor's Chief Education Office.

Truly, our abysmal graduation rate is a conundrum.

We know what boosts student achievement — having an excellent teacher in every classroom.

We know what encourages students to attend school — having supportive family; making positive relationships with peers, connecting with teachers and other role models who believe in them, and finding something through school that becomes their passion.

We have loads of data — from the state Department of Education, Chief Education Office, Chalkboard Project, national research and individual school districts — about dropout strategies and how to keep students engaged in school.

Yet our high school graduation rate remains among the nation's worst, despite rising 2 percentage points — to 77 percent — in data released last week by the Education Department.

The state Legislature is so concerned that Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek launched a joint Senate-House committee on student success. Sometime after the 2018 Legislature adjourns in March, those 14 lawmakers will travel the state, listening to Oregonians and looking for what isn't working in our schools, as well as what is.



The Daily Astorian

Friends and family packed the Brick House at Astoria High School's 2017 graduation.

CLATSOP COUNTY GRADUATION RATES

Of 412 students in Clatsop County's Class of 2017, 283 earned their diploma in four years, according to state figures, including 63.3 percent in Astoria, 76.2 percent in Warrenton, 66.7 percent in Seaside, 90.6 percent in Knappa and 75 percent in Jewell.

As they seek answers to Oregon's dropout dilemma, here are two issues for legislators to consider.

First, the Legislature butts in too much.

Bureaucracy flows downhill. Each time Oregon adopts a new school regulation or law, it increases the administrative burden, which means less time for working with school principals, who then have less time for effectively coaching teachers, and on and on.

Whenever the Legislature adds a

mandate, it should have the guts — and the insight — to cancel outdated, ineffective mandates. That should be a central function of the Legislature and of the state administration, especially because a new mandate might be needed in response to our second issue: Is it too easy to become a teacher?

Teaching is among the most noble of human endeavors, even though its pay is mediocre compared with its importance to society. Teaching is simultaneously rewarding and difficult.

Classroom-management skills are as essential as subject knowledge, but colleges put far greater emphasis on academic knowledge.

Student teaching typically is among the last courses that prospective teachers undertake. Rarely do they experience a full year in the classroom, so they can learn how to start, maintain and conclude an academic year.

Requiring one year of student teaching undoubtedly would deter some prospective educators. But it would better prepare the rest, helping stanch the high turnover among Oregon's fledgling educators.

If Oregon is to help every student graduate, Oregon must have a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in every building.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kindness and concern from a complete stranger

As a child, once I found myself looking up at a piercing blue sky, and smelling the heavy scent of gasoline dripping on me. As my mind came crowding back into its little body, I went to lift my minibike off of me, but incredible pain in my left arm prevented me from doing so.

The 80cc Honda was too heavy to lift off with one arm, nor could I just pull myself out from under it. I called for help. No one came. Finally, I worked out a solution. I unlatched the seat, which fortunately was hinged away from me, and brought my free leg up under it, and pushed the bike off with my foot.

I walked a sandy dirt road to the nearest house, a farm laborer's dwelling, and knocked. A Mexican woman answered the door. I tried to explain to her that I'd broken my wrist, but she didn't speak English. So I held up my left arm, with my right hand, which made plain to her that my wrist was completely broken.

She was suddenly full of kindness and concern and rushed me to the main farm house. I was then driven to the hospital.

This is what I know about Mexican immigrants.

MICHAELA "SASHA" MILLER
Astoria

Indivisible is a nationwide inclusive group

Driving back from Astoria to Cannon Beach from the recent Indivisible Summit, I found myself smiling. There were many reasons I felt such joy. The number one? Remembering one year ago I was one of the broken millions, devastated and unsure how to move forward. I felt the country I loved was doomed to be vandalized by a crazy man and his cronies.

Attending the meeting of a group that did not exist a year ago showed the commitment of thousands of people, just like me. There are now 6,000 groups across the country. What has been created replaced fear, and returned the strengths of the America of "we."

As a member of Indivisible for the last year, I know what sets us apart from the Trump base. It is identifying what we are for, and commitment to take action for achievable goals guaranteeing our democracy is alive and well. Take a peek at just two examples:

We are for woman's right to choose; the Trump base — no choice.

We are for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and immigration policies

that support refugees; Trump base — no and restrict, use racist tactics, and limit people by country and color.

Pundits say groups like Indivisible have to be for something, not just be against Trump. Indivisible is for insuring every citizen understands we are a nationwide inclusive group committed to being for integrity, equity and detailed objectives, solutions, and getting out the vote for our democracy.

LOLLY CHAMPION
Cannon Beach

Disgusted by wheel cover comment

Regarding the Jan. 19 article in The Daily Astorian, "For Trump voters on the North Coast, few cracks after an unsteady first year," I found the comment about the wheel cover on the Jeep belonging to the chairman of the county's Republican Central Committee disgusting: "The wheel cover on back says, 'Help save America, have your liberal spayed or neutered.'"

I feel the owner of the Jeep is now a bully, like his president. I wonder how many of his neighbors he will have spayed and neutered?

DIANE FINUCANE
Astoria

What we won't hear in State of the Union

Regarding the upcoming State of the Union Address, I'm certain of a few things we won't hear:

We have the best economy since the great recession (thanks to Obama).

Unemployment is at its lowest rate ever (thanks to Obama).

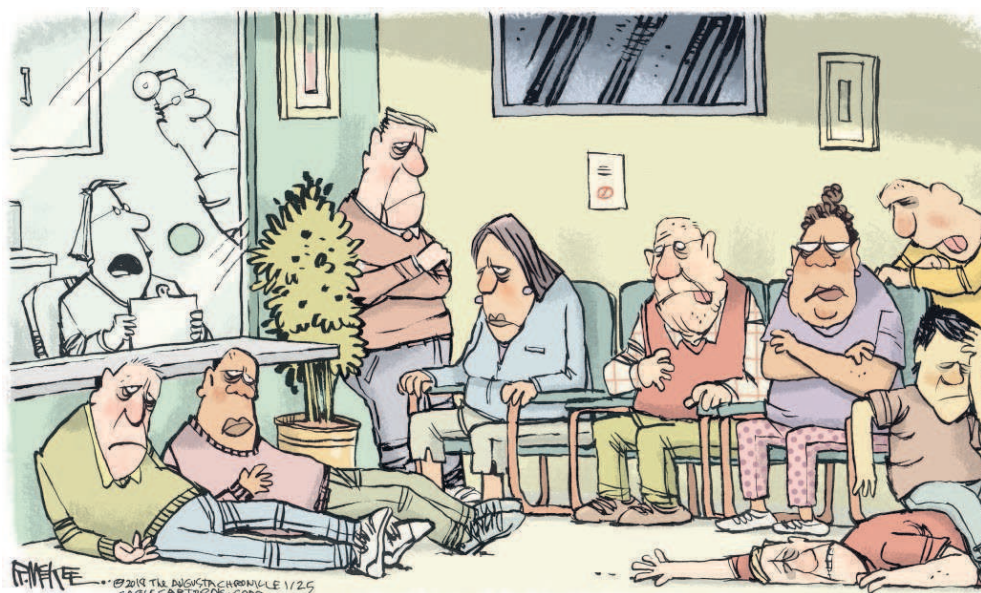
Race-based hate crimes are up 7.6 percent, 9 percent for Jewish people, and a high of 91 percent in the Muslim community; the best ever, thanks to me.

Attacks on freedom of the press ... it's fake news (I created the truth; well, me and God).

Global warming: Show me the science. I took Biology 101, I know my stuff. The flamingos are doing just great at Mar-a-Lago, thanks.

My immigration policy: If you're rich, white and blond, you're in. I say it again, I'm not a racist. I'm not a racist ... how many times must I say it? I'm not a racist. All are welcome in my s--- house, I mean White House.

Guns and my GNP. Go buy a gun. Support my NRA, gun sales are sluggish.



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.

I am the best friend to so many; Duterte of the Philippines, Erdoğan of Turkey, Putin, and my sparring partner, Little Rocket Man — got to love 'em. Who needs the Brits, anyway?

I like my moral compass. I can tell bold-faced lies, ignore the truth, fool those evangelicals, and still sleep like a baby. I will buy my way into heaven. Never liked camels anyway (Matthew 19:24).

Need I say more? Silence = complicity.
PAUL FLUES II
Astoria

Kudos to Noel Thomas

I picked up my Jan. 19 copy of The Daily Astorian, and in the Weekend Break section I noted the article "Artist's sketchbook: Facing homelessness in Astoria" (Jan. 19) by Noel Thomas. I recognized Thomas' excellent art and then realized he has also written

the article.

The point is this: What a credit to our community Thomas is. Not only is he an excellent artist, not only do we find him regularly commingling with all of us area neighbors, but Noel has come to documenting our life in the 20th and 21st century in the North Coast region.

Like the wonderful rough photos I see of Astoria and the regional coast from the 1900s and the 1920s, Noel's important and excellent art will remain, and always tell part of our story of life here.

And, Noel does not only captures attractive ships, or beautiful buildings in his work, but he thoughtfully took the time to pay attention to our homeless residents, and show that this, too, is a real and notable part of life in this area at this time.

HARRY GRASS
Astoria