

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Sen. Kruse's resignation is a relief

State Sen. Jeff Kruse had to go. His flouting of Oregon Senate rules against sexual harassment was egregious. His repentance, if any, was short-lived. His resignation is a relief.

When it came to changing his behavior, including his routinely breaking state law by smoking in his Oregon Capitol office, Kruse was known for promising one thing and doing another. That is why Senate leaders initially were careful to say little about his resignation, not wanting to irritate him into rescinding it.

But Tuesday's deadline passed and Kruse's Feb. 8 resignation now is irrevocable.

It is unfortunate that the Roseburg Republican set March 15 for his departure, which enables him to still draw his legislative pay until then while leaving his constituents unrepresented for the rest of the 2018 Legislature. An immediate departure might have enabled his successor, who will be a Republican, to be selected and sworn into office before the legislative session ends. March 11 is the constitutional deadline for the



Pamplin Media Group

State Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg, denied allegations he inappropriately touched female colleagues and staff members, saying he would resign so that the Senate could get on with its work.

Legislature's adjournment.

At least Kruse is out the Capitol door. His victims won't be forced to recount his shameful behavior and their painful experiences before a special Senate Committee on Conduct. The Senate won't face a potentially divisive vote on expelling him.

This ordeal demonstrates that Kruse is not the only person with much to learn.

An outside investigator found a

repeated pattern of sexual harassment by Kruse toward female legislators and female staff, including members of the Senate Republican caucus staff. Yet the caucus' statement about that detailed investigation report said, "The behavior alleged in the report, if true, is obviously not acceptable to the Senate Republican caucus."

... If true ...

Those two words underscore why victims of harassment are reluctant to speak up. Even when supported by compelling evidence — like the Kruse investigation report — they fear not being believed.

A power imbalance exists in our nation's capitols and many other institutions. Staff members, and sometimes lawmakers, owe their jobs and their political careers to the people in power — people to whom they are expected to be deferential.

When allegations arise, these powerful people often close ranks. They say the unwanted behavior was simply misunderstood. They question how "supposed victims" can remember incidents

from long ago, not comprehending that traumatic memories can last a lifetime. They cast the complainants as attention-seeking whiners.

Some of that occurred among Kruse's defenders. They did not grasp the gravity of his misconduct and its searing impact on his victims.

But other senators did. On the morning after the investigation report was released, Senate President Peter Courtney asked Kruse to keep out of the Capitol. That afternoon, Sen. Tim Knopp broke with his fellow Republicans, said he believed the women and called for Kruse to resign.

"For too long, there has been a culture in the Oregon Capitol and some places of public and private employment that women need to put up with harassing behavior to keep their jobs," Knopp said. "That culture must end now."

That is a moral imperative. For the Oregon Legislature. For our state and nation. For the world.

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Harassment, even if unintentional, is morally and ethically wrong.

LETTERS WELCOME

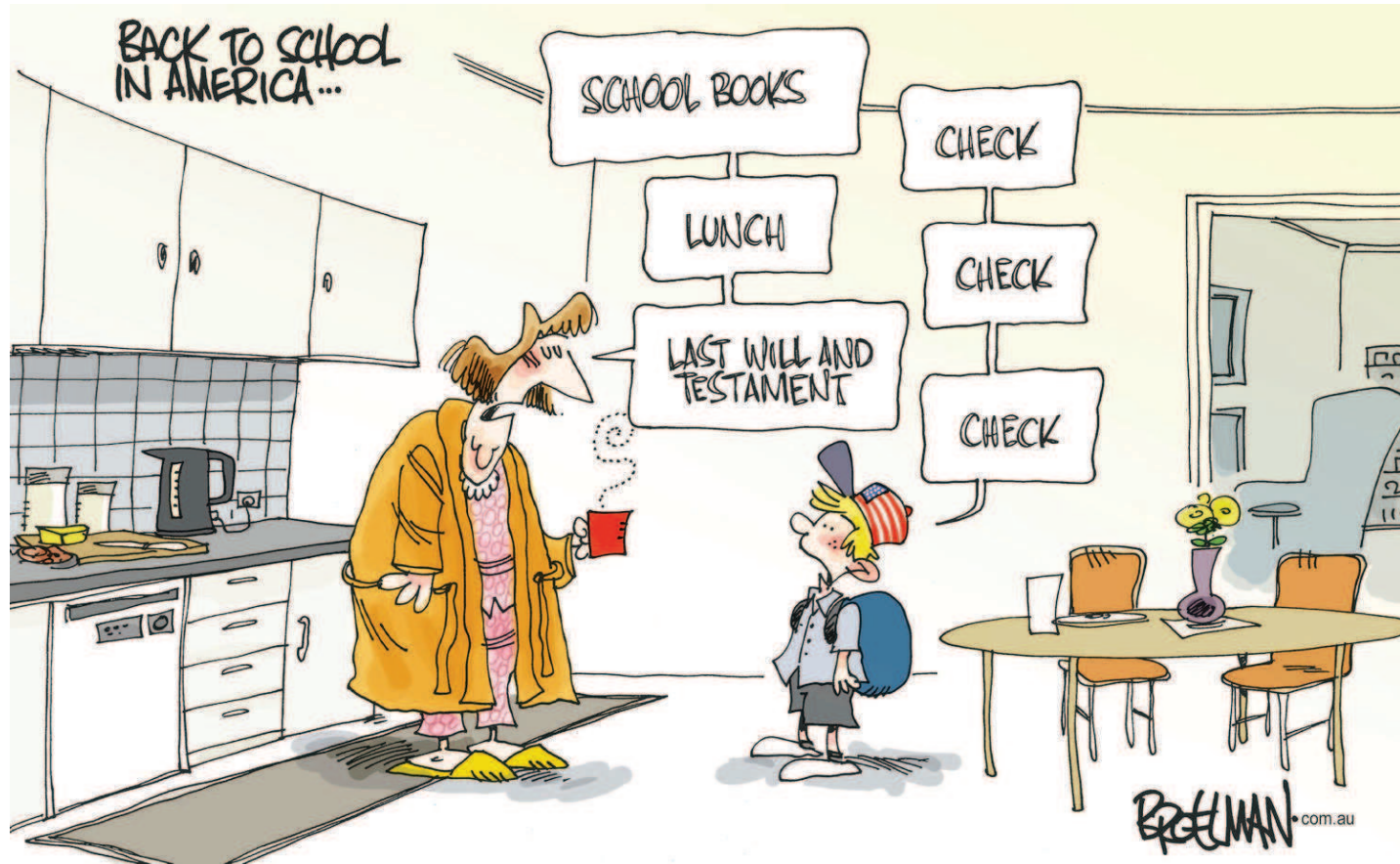
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GUEST COLUMN

Astoria schools seek public input on facilities

In our continued support of the Astoria School District's mission, we are in the process of evaluating our school facilities.

The school district has received grants from the Oregon Department of Education to complete a facility assessment, long-range facility plan and an evaluation of seismic needs; the district began this evaluation process in August 2017. The district has hired BLR&B Architects to assist.



CRAIG HOPPES

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Board of Directors approved a strategic plan in support of the school district's beliefs, mission and goals. Staff and community members also created a mission statement, which is to prepare each student to his/her fullest potential for a life of learning, citizenship and work.

The strategic plan embodies six core beliefs — statements that school staff strongly believe in, and that guide the work we do with our students. One states that our schools will be a safe and healthy place for students to learn. This is a challenge in our district due to the age

and architecture of many of our facilities. They were built with a different set of priorities, compared to the educational needs of today; 20 years ago, safety and security were not at the forefront of school-facility design.

Through the facility assessment process, we have learned the importance of every angle of school safety, and have made it a requirement to ensure our schools are a safe place for students to learn and for staff to work. We have also learned of the profound impact school facilities have on both staff and student outcomes. Facilities affect staff recruitment, retention, commitment and effort, and have been shown to affect student health, behavior, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement. The school district is determined to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning in modern and safe facilities.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the architects from BLR&B have worked with school staff and a district facility committee of more than 30 community members, parents and staff to review education research concerning facilities and student learning, and to research our school facility security and current needs thoroughly.

As part of the charge, the district facility committee has created several guiding principles help guide the work of the committee and architects. They will help to evaluate the greatest facility needs and prioritize facility projects within the district.

Astoria School District Schools will:

- Be healthy environments that support physical, mental, and emotional wellness
- Be flexible and adaptable
- Be learner-centered environments
- Promote meaningful collaboration
- Celebrate the uniqueness of Astoria

In 2000, the Astoria community passed a bond for district facility upgrades; that bond ends in 2020. The school board will make a decision whether to pursue a new bond this spring. They will consider many factors when coming to this decision — the completed facility assessment, the long-range facility plan and recommendations from the district facility committee, as well as input from the community.

The board has placed a special emphasis on what the public thinks. There are two planned opportunities for you to attend, learn, and share your opinions about the district's facilities.

On Wednesday, Feb. 21, the school

board and interested community members will tour school facilities as part of a special school board meeting. Attendees will take a look at Astoria High School and use district transportation to see Astor Elementary and Astoria Middle School. If you plan to attend, please meet in the library at Astoria High School at 5:30 p.m.

On Thursday, Feb. 22 at 5:30 p.m., there will be a community facility engagement event at Astoria Middle School. The architects from BLR&B will provide a short presentation and lead a public discussion concerning our school facilities. As part of the event, the architects have planned a building tour. Dinner and child care is complimentary to all attendees.

All information will be available in English and Spanish at both events.

Our school facilities are an integral piece of student learning. It is vital that the district receives community input as we review our needs. I look forward to hearing from you on both Feb. 21 and 22.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the facilities, please call me at (503) 325-6441 or feel free to email me at choppes@astoria.k12.or.us.

Craig Hoppes is superintendent of the Astoria School District.

