

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Congress — not local cops — responsible for ICE

This is a complicated time to be a rural sheriff or small town police chief. There is a nationwide opioid crisis and a worrisome resurgence of methamphetamine use in the Pacific Northwest — with associated thefts and break-ins. Meanwhile, federal immigration enforcement under the Trump administration has heightened conflicts and tensions between neighbors.

Immigration isn't the business of local law-enforcement agencies, which have plenty on their understaffed schedules without getting involved in issues for which they are neither paid nor trained. As a matter of public policy, national and local leaders decided long ago that protecting all residents against crime is a goal best served by maintaining a separation between criminal and immigration law. If immigrants have to fear arrest by local cops because of flaws in their legal status, they are less likely to call for help or assist in combating crimes that hurt everybody.

It has never been controversial to seek, arrest, prosecute, imprison and deport undocumented immigrants who commit felonies or serious misdemeanors. Often preying on their immigrant neighbors, criminal gangs on the West Coast were targeted as much or more by the Obama administration as they are by Trump. Against such individuals, we all have common cause with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.



Associated Press

Trump administration deportation policies put local enforcement in awkward situations.

Controversies and conflicts arise in the case of detaining and deporting otherwise law-abiding immigrants who overstay visas or come across the border illegally in seek of work. In this area, they usually end up in aquacultural, agricultural and service-industry jobs that are regarded as unappealing by citizens — tough and dirty work at all hours of the night and day. Many citizens in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the nation find it contemptible and economically self-defeating to target them.

"It ought not to be — and it has never before been — that those who have lived without incident in this

country for years are subjected to treatment we associate with regimes we revile as unjust," a U.S. District Court judge said recently in ordering the release of an immigration activist. "We are not that country."

However, a substantial number of other citizens are deeply offended that immigration laws have long been scoffed at.

Officers are detaining suspects in courthouses more often, and ICE teams no longer shy from taking additional people into custody when they knock on doors to arrest a targeted person, the Washington Post reported on Feb. 11. "What are we supposed to do?" an

ICE spokesman asked. If ICE fails to uphold its duties to enforce immigration laws, he added, "then the system has no integrity."

Anytime there is such a sharp split in opinion, local office holders and appointees must trend gingerly. No matter their personal views, sheriffs and police have no business diverting resources to help ICE, while neither may they impede immigration enforcement. Officials in Pacific County — which has been featured in national and international news stories about ICE — have to straddle this societal fault line. There's no indication they have transgressed boundaries in either direction, for or against ICE or immigrants. But this hasn't kept them out of hot water with all constituents.

Law officers face a similar dilemma throughout the region and nation. Lessons from Pacific County include the need for agency leaders to know precisely what information they are receiving or providing ICE. They must act with good conscience in upholding state and local laws, steering clear of national disagreements.

Immigration laws — whatever we individually think of them — originate in Congress. By choosing who to elect or send packing for home, citizens will have their chance this November to tell ICE whether a majority of us like what it is doing.

LETTERS WELCOME

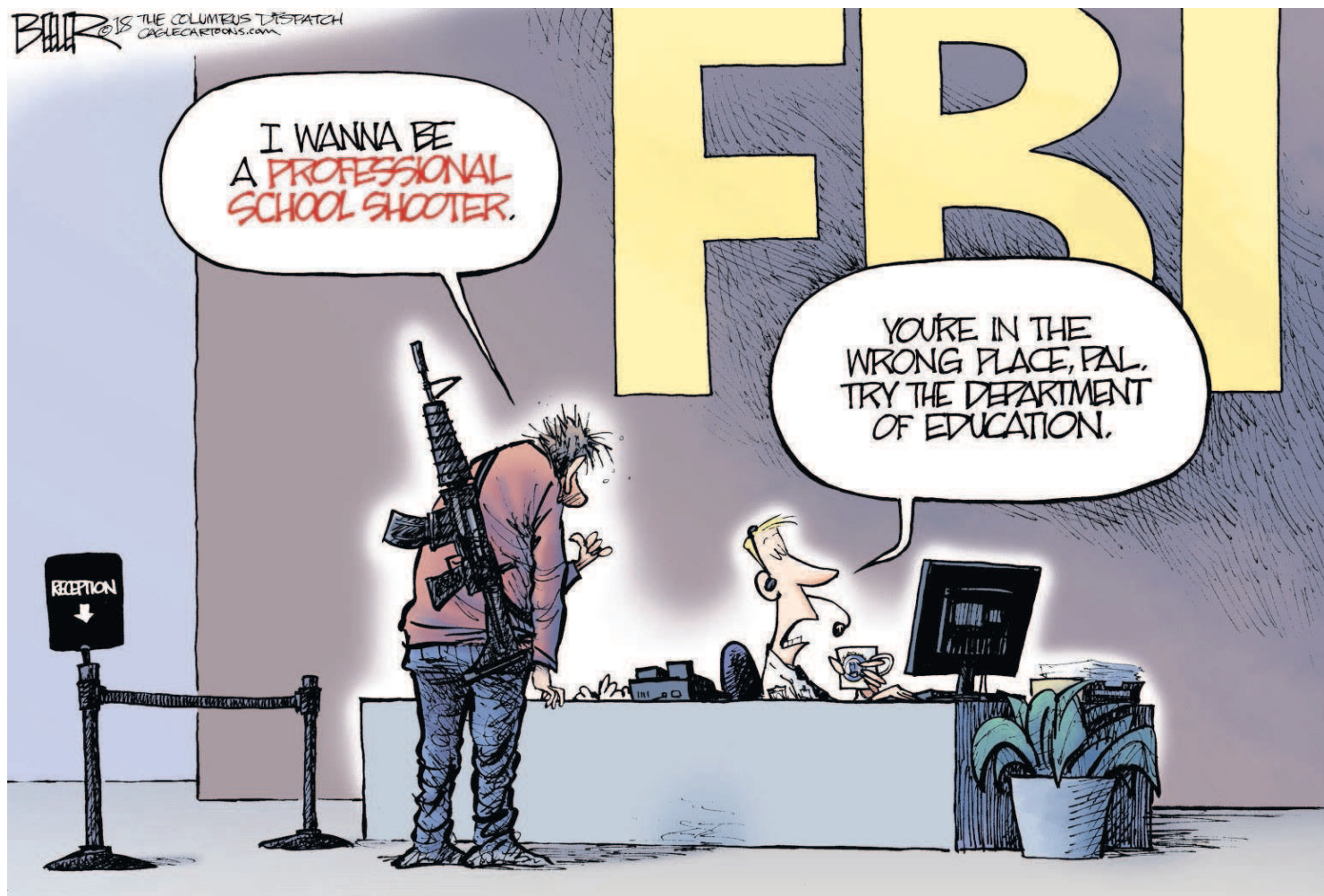
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Need less of a police state mentality

I was surprised and dismayed by the Astoria City Council's recent stance on homeless individuals ("Astoria police outline approach to the homeless," The Daily Astorian, Feb. 9). Bad behavior is not acceptable in homeless, or more fortunate folks, but that's not a homeless issue.

Illegal activity should not be allowed, but that's not a homeless problem. So that leaves the issue of public urination and defecation, and unauthorized camping.

Perhaps a simple, and humane solution would be more public restrooms. And to be clear, it's not camping; it's homelessness. I believe the City Council could approach the issue with less of a police state mentality.

JD WELLS
Astoria

Students calling out Trump, Congress on gun violence

Most women don't like President Donald Trump, and every day the tally grows. I predict that during the midterm elections this fall, women will vote in droves, and there will be a huge adjustment in the Congress that will make it very difficult for him to continue doing the kinds of dreadful things he does. He may just return to the Trump Towers and call it a day.

The smart, articulate, surviving students of the Parkland (Florida) High School have been dismayed that in his response to the killings, Trump did not use the word "gun." They felt his words were needlessly divisive. These are wonderful, savvy kids who know what they know, despite their pain and loss.

They are taking up the cudgel for the nation, and invite us all to join them in their fight for gun control. They have a list of all the folks in Congress who take donations from the National Rifle Association, and are calling them out, including Trump, whose contributions from the NRA are in the millions.

The students are calling for anti-gun violence demonstrations in Washington, and other cities, on March 24. Change is coming.

MARY TANGUAY WEBB
Astoria

We've pushed God out of our culture

A few weeks ago I answered another writer who could not understand why America has been experiencing so many mass killings of late. My premise was that students all across the nation, and the public, have been indoctrinated with humanism.

Pushing the idea of a close and personal God out of our culture has led some to the conclusion that they were not accountable to

anybody. But, when inconvenient evidence that is contrary to humanistic dogma shows up from time to time, it is so very interesting what the educators and the leaders in our society do with it.

For instance, recently the discovery of soft and spongy blood tissue found in dinosaur bones was announced by some scientist. If this is true, and the evidence is quite compelling, then it becomes obvious that these creatures were not over 70 million years old.

Although remarkable for shaking up some firmly held notions about Darwinism, the end result hasn't been as earth shattering as it could have been. Why? It is my opinion that given the choice between discarding the religiously held beliefs of evolution, and admitting that the Darwinism has been wrong for 150 years or more, most would rather ignore the facts placed before them and continue in their blissful ignorance.

CARL YATES
Seaside

Americans need to come to their senses

The same question always emerges: How can we keep school massacres from happening again? The answer, inevitably, is ... more guns. But it shouldn't take a Saturday Night Live skit to illustrate how ludicrous

arming everybody is.

Maybe we're asking the wrong question. Maybe we should ask, "Why do we place a higher value on owning firearms than we place on keeping firearms out of the hands of crazy people?"

The answer is simple. It's good business for gun and ammunition manufacturers. The National Rifle Association (NRA) is still joined at the waist with gun manufacturers, as securely as Siamese twins, Chang and Eng.

I have to hand it to the gun industry's impressive little sales cycle. Every massacre draws attention to their products, yet somehow never to the people ultimately responsible for their production. We Americans are too stubborn, arrogant, and insulated to understand that developed nations like Japan and Australia have already solved or ameliorated the gun problem.

That old adage about people killing people, not guns killing people, is absurd. But that shouldn't come as a surprise, since it was scripted by the NRA. A more accurate rewrite would be: People with access to guns kill people.

Other nations want to believe that Americans can be counted on to do what's right, if only after we've exhausted every other option. I'll continue to hold out hope — hope that someday Americans will come to their senses and "do the right thing."

ROBERT BRAKE
Ocean Park