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EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK

A useful exercise in civic discourse

Filling out an election ballot can be puzzling when you don’t know much about the candidates.

Many people just vote the party line. Many don’t vote at all.

I like to believe that most people want to exercise their right to vote, and want all the information they can get before checking off those boxes and dropping the ballot in the mail.

That information is often scarce at the local level. That’s why a big shout out should go



JIM VAN NOSTRAND

to the Astoria chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), which organized a forum earlier this month at Astoria High School so that local residents could get to know the candidates better.

Almost all of the candidates for Clatsop County commissioner, District 32 state representative and the 1st Congressional District, even those from the Portland area, made the journey to Astoria for the opportunity to meet the public. U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici could not make it, but was represented by Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear, who read a statement on her behalf.

Trish Garner, the AAUW’s state public policy director, served as the moderator, and had the unenviable task of laying down the law when candidates rambled past their allotted time. She did it deftly, with humor and a light touch.

The list of AAUW members to thank includes Sara Meyer, Liz Bartell, Pam Alegria, Jan Horning, Jan Nybakke, Roz Edelson, Rosalie McCleary, Janet Weidman, Ellen Silverman and Robin Rodgers.

Graham Nystrom, the station manager at Coast Community Radio, recorded the forum and has made the audio available to listen to anytime on the KMUN website.

Many thanks also to the Astoria School District for making the high school auditorium available for the event.

Full disclosure: The Daily Astorian co-sponsored the forum and participated in some of the initial planning. But it would not have happened without the drive and determination of the civic-minded women in the local AAUW chapter.

Names, faces, voices

As someone who just moved to the area last year, I found the forum particularly useful. I was able to associate names with faces



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Candidates participate in an April 3 forum in Astoria.



An audience at Astoria High School listens to candidates speak at an April 3 candidate forum.

and voices.

The candidates ranged from savvy political veterans to newcomers to the public stage. They had two minutes to introduce themselves. Then they had a minute to answer each of

several questions from the audience, posed by Garner.

Two minutes might not seem like much, but it can seem like an eternity when the microphone is passed your way and all eyes

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote ‘yes’ for health district levy

The Clatsop Care Health District has provided residential and rehabilitation services for our residents for 40 years. As community health care needs evolved, services such as assisted living, memory care, and home health have been added.

Now is the time for us to support the Health District as it has supported and cared for our community. Measure 4-192, a 5-year operating levy, will provide an average of \$600,000 per year to support programs, improve disaster preparedness, upgrade technology and address deferred maintenance at Clatsop Care Center and Clatsop Retirement Village.

Our residents will benefit directly through an additional bus for resident transport, new programs for those with dementia, training for additional staff, improved security, and better internet access for residents and their families.

Please join me in supporting Measure 4-192 for the good of all Clatsop Care Health District residents, their families, and our community.

KAREN BURKE
Astoria

Vote Orr for state representative

As a lifelong resident of Clatsop County, I am pleased to endorse John Orr as our state representative for District 32. I’ve known John for a number of years, and find him to be a dependable and intelligent man. He practiced law in Astoria for 25 years, so he knows what it means to work and establish himself as a professional who is dedicated to his community.

John has a degree in environmental law, which is important to us, as we do live in a very fragile ecosystem that requires leaders who understand the law, as well as the needs of our watershed. His interest in groundwater management is vital to our future.

John wants to help us to better utilize our natural resources and has a special interest in biomass energy. He supports our fishing industry, while delving into ways to best maintain and enhance our salmon habitat.

As a retired teacher, and the grandmother of two school-aged granddaughters, I appreciate John’s interest in school improvement, focusing on issues that will support both students and teachers.

I am impressed that John Orr is operating a

grassroots campaign. He is not funded by large corporations, and as our state representative, he will not be swayed by corporate interests and lobbyists.

He’s amiable and will willingly answer your questions. I urge you to join me in marking your ballot for John Orr for state representative for District 32.

Vote early and you’ll avoid getting telephone calls reminding you to vote.

DEBBIE TWOMBLY
Brownsmead

Vote McCartin for county commissioner

I like the term “people’s advocate.” That is the term George McCartin uses to describe himself in the voters’ pamphlet, and the kind of person this county needs more of.

McCartin has attended more council and commission meetings than anyone I know. Who would be a better citizen representative? As a commissioner, he would be our district and community liaison to the county government. Look him up in the voters’ pamphlet and vote.

MARY TANGUAY WEBB
Astoria

Too much money in politics?

Did anyone else notice this article, “Industry, incumbents back Josi in state House race” in The Daily Astorian, April 19? These are the candidates vying for state representative, 32nd District, and the funds they’ve raised in cash to spend on their campaigns: \$3,675 Vineeta Lower; \$12,382 John Orr; \$18,266 Tiffany Mitchell; and \$71,280 Tim Josi.

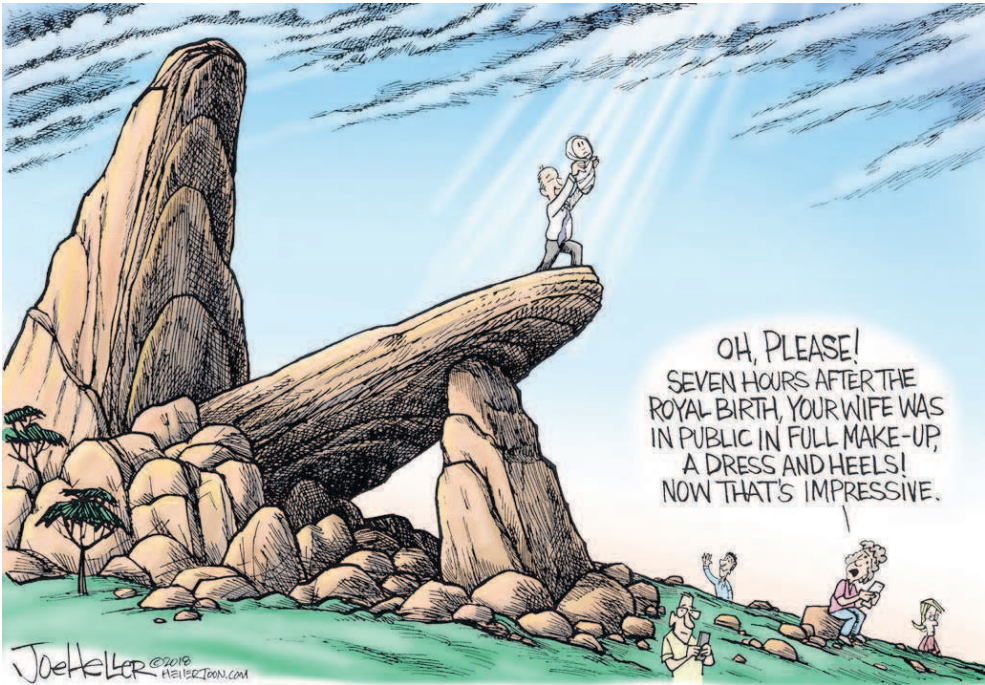
Isn’t too much money in politics a huge problem?

RD SMITH
Gearhart

Vote Mitchell for state representative

Strong public schools and affordable college are essential for young people to get a good start in life, and Tiffany Mitchell’s support for a sound educational system is just one of the reasons I am endorsing her for state representative from District 32.

She understands that teachers are on the



front line of creating a viable future for our children, and need our support. I know that Tiffany believes in more stable funding for all levels of education, as well as more good-paying jobs in our community.

Tiffany has had to deal with the reality of student loans while, at the same time, making ends meet and keeping a household together. She will champion our concerns in Salem, and I wholeheartedly recommend her to my fellow voters.

DEBBIE BOOTH-SCHMIDT
Warrenton

Vote Wev for county commissioner

Several qualified candidates are running for the Clatsop County Commission. Having looked carefully at qualifications and experience, one person stands out. Pamela Wev is far and above all others: a college degree in political science, an advanced degree in urban and regional planning, plus over 40 years working with ports and cities on zoning and planning issues.

Pam Wev is ready to “hit the ground running” on the Clatsop County Commission. Her expertise and experience will be a great asset.

Vote Pam Wev, Clatsop County Commissioner, District 3, on May 15.

BOB WESTERBERG
Former Clatsop County Commissioner
Astoria

ON THE WEB

Listen to the forums at
bit.ly/candidate-forums

are on you. I had brief flashbacks to high school drama club, when I had to speak on stage for the first time. These folks seemed like Shakespearean actors in comparison.

And two minutes is an actual eternity to today’s attention-deficit-disorder audiences. Years of producing news video, for example, has taught me that you have 10 seconds to grab a viewer’s attention before they start scrolling to the next item on their smartphone. And even if you convince them to keep watching, they’re going to bail after a minute anyway.

That’s why newspaper writers try to pack as many details as possible into the first couple of paragraphs of a story — few people read to the end. That’s why television reporters will boil a 15-minute interview into a 15-second sound bite.

Many people in the audience said afterwards that they would have liked more time for the eight county commission candidates, whose panel was compressed into 45 minutes. That’s great feedback, which I’m sure the AAUW will take into account next time we do one of these.

I applaud everyone who took the time to speak and to attend.

Get ready to vote

The county delivered ballots to the post office in Portland on Wednesday. They should appear in your mailboxes in the next few days. If you haven’t received one by next Wednesday, May 2, give the clerk’s office a call at 503-325-8511.

Completed ballots must be mailed in time to arrive at the Clatsop County Elections Division no later than 8 p.m. May 15. Postmark does not count. You can turn in your ballot at an official drop site location to make sure it gets there on time.

Make sure to read Friday’s newspaper for preview stories on the county commissioner, state representative and congressional races, plus a four-page voters guide featuring statements from the candidates.

We will publish endorsements for all three of those races next week. We plan to wait until the general election in the fall to weigh in on the governor’s race and other statewide contests.

Jim Van Nostrand is editor of The Daily Astorian.

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.

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