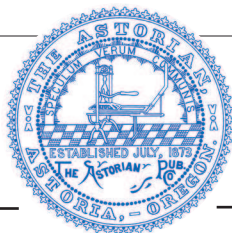


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Don't discourage children from reading

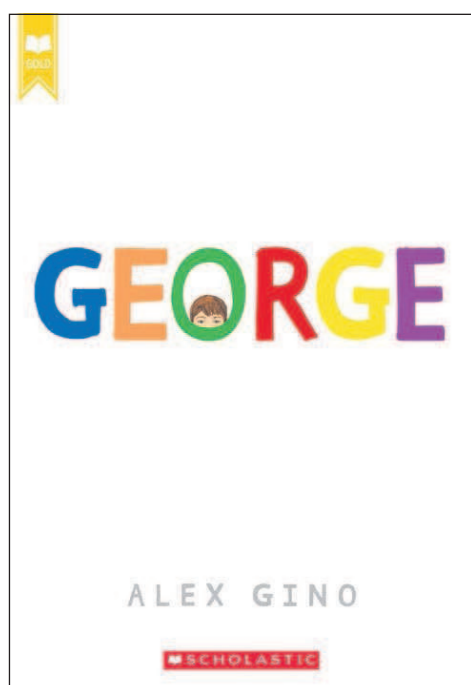
Just when you think you've seen it all, you read about a school district discouraging children from reading books.

That's what the Hermiston School District decided last week: Rather than reckon with the chapter book "George," told from the perspective of a transgender character, the district instead chose to pull all of its students out of the state-wide Battle of the Books competition and re-read past titles instead.

The competition, which provides an incentive to encourage students to read quality literature, has been wildly popular in Hermiston in past years.

But not in 2018-2019, when third-through fifth-grade students have been herded away from children's books like "Pip Barlett's Guide to Magical Creatures," "Waylon! One Awesome Thing" and, yes, "George," written by Alex Gino.

It's a bad decision on the face of it — discouraging students from an academic pursuit is something that would reflect



Scholastic Corp.
'George' by Alex Gino is the story of a transgender boy.

poorly on any educational institution. But the way that the Hermiston School District announced its decision inflicted

additional harm.

The district sent out a vague letter, noting only that it would not participate in the competition because the book "George" was incompatible with the district's curriculum. They could have been more clear and open about the issue and how they came to their decision. They could have empowered students and parents at the same time. They could have said: "Here's this book 'George,' here's what it's about, here's how you can check it out of the library. Read it yourself, because we're not sure all parents of third graders would want their child to do so. We want you to know what it's about."

Likely many parents would have taken them up on the offer, and some of them would have found the book harmless and let their child read away and take part in the competition. Others would have made the opposite choice and waited to address the topic in their own way.

But since the reasoning was unclear,

the transgender elementary students in the Hermiston School District will get the worst of it. The message they likely received from school administration: Your story is too different. We're not ready to hear from you. We're not ready to deal with you. We're not ready for your students and classmates to consider your struggles.

One of the blurbs touting the book says: "Readers going through a similar experience will feel that they are no longer alone, and cisgender readers may gain understanding and empathy."

That's the goal of any good book. And scientists the world over have proven that fiction is a remarkable tool for promoting knowledge, understanding and empathy. Books can help, but only if you read them. Libraries and schools should promote them, not avoid them.

We encourage all students and parents to read as many books as you can this year, including "George." You'll be better for it, and so will your school.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

County waging war on the forest sector?

Is the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners more interested in making statements for Portland-based environmental groups and political parties than representing the county's working families? Local media has picked up on this and I've noticed the growing influence myself, especially on forestry issues.

I've lived in the county my entire life, and spent my career in wood manufacturing. I've watched the board's relationship with the forest sector degrade from one of cooperation and respect to disregard and misunderstanding.

I believe the statement the board sent by opting out of a timber harvest breach of contract lawsuit, and membership on the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties, was crafted and pushed by Portland groups, and tied to their long-term strategy to reduce timber harvests across Oregon at all costs, regardless of the impacts to communities like ours.

This uninformed war on the forest sector will continue unless we get more people in office who understand we deserve better than to be a pawn in a larger political campaign. We need thoughtful, independent leadership that brings people together to find solutions that benefit everyone. I'm glad some of the candidates running for the commission this year seem to fit that bill.

MICHAEL MOORE
Warrenton

Vote 'yes' for health district levy

Your support of Clatsop Care Health District operating levy Measure 4-192 will help continue and enhance the quality care many have and will receive in our community.

The financial turnaround the district is going through is a direct result of dedicated employees, along with community, client and family support.

Please join me in voting "yes" on Measure 4-192.

MIKE AHO
Warrenton

Kujala very involved in the community

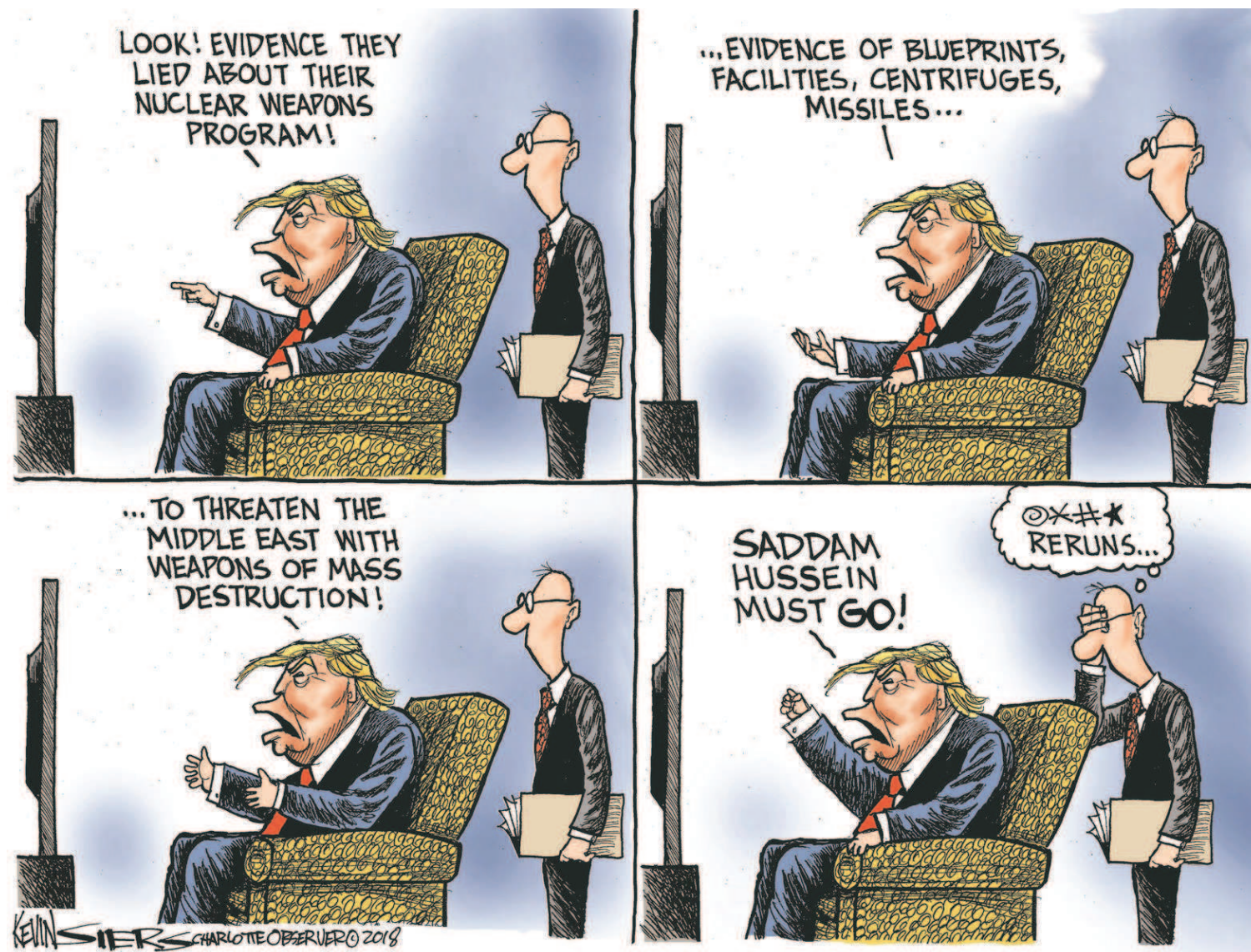
I met Mark and Alana Kujala while working with the Scandinavian Festival. Both have been very involved in the community, and I enjoyed working with them. Mark was a Warrenton city commissioner for 12 years, and mayor for five, and that experience will be good on the Clatsop County Commission. Mark listens.

BRUCE T. SMITH
Seaside

WBA not involved in politics

In response to "Will Kujala have for county issues?" (The Daily Astorian, May 4): In this letter, the writer states that, "Mark and two other candidates were grouped together and supported by the Warrenton Business Association." The writer also goes on to describe a sign erected in Warrenton that leads a reader to believe the sign was supported by the WBA.

I want to set the record straight that the WBA is an organization that supports Warrenton business and livability in the War-



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.

renton area. We are not an organization that is involved in local individuals running for offices.

The WBA was not involved in the activities that the writer has stated, and was not involved in any way in the erection of a sign on a highway in Warrenton. The WBA is a group of business men and women who have a common goal of making Warrenton a great place to live and do business.

MIKE MOHA
Chairman, Warrenton Business Association
Warrenton

Vote Kujala for county commissioner

Mark Kujala has worked hard to promote the Warrenton-Astoria region. He has the most experience of all the candidates running for Clatsop County Commission District 1. Over the years, he has proved to be an attentive listener to the public, a strong advocate for our local industries, and someone who works well with a team. He also knows what it's like to be a small

business owner, which requires hard work, dedication and focus — especially while maintaining elected office and volunteering with local nonprofits.

I am confident he is the right person for the job, and I hope you will join me in voting for Mark Kujala this May election.

ERIC PAULSON
Warrenton

Vote Orr for state representative

I'm not voting for Tim Josi. He, through a political action committee, takes money from the company that clear cut the watershed and poisoned the drinking water of Rockaway Beach.

Today, I theoretically agree with Tiffany Mitchell's position statements, but what happens next time around, when she takes money from an entity that is actually out to do us harm? What happens when the interests of the entities she takes campaign money and elite campaign staff from conflict with the interests of the poor, the unrepresented, the

weak or the voiceless?

I support John Orr because he's competent and experienced. I know he's been fighting on the side of the people since we fought to save the Little Beach estuary from the Sahalie condo development back in the 1990s. I support John Orr because he's independent. He's not taking money from corporations or special interests. He's only taking contributions from individuals (you).

He's not desperately striving to be a part of the neo-establishment like Mitchell, and he's not a part of the rapidly fading order that was once Tim Josi. We need to get the money out of politics. John Orr is competent, and that's what matters.

MICK TAYLOR
Manzanita

Thanks for donating furnishings to seniors

The Clatsop Care Health District would like to give a huge thank you to Holiday Inn Express in Seaside for donating furniture, art, lamps and home décor to our Memory Care and Retirement village.

The residents are extremely grateful for all the new furniture, and how cozy their home looks. Families are even more grateful to have little nooks around the buildings to sit and visit their loved ones. We couldn't achieve this without Brandon Kraft and his crew at Holiday Inn Express.

Clatsop Health District is a not-for-profit serving our elderly population in Clatsop County. We have four entities in the health district: Clatsop Care Center, Clatsop Retirement Village, Clatsop Memory Care as well as Clatsop Home Health.

Thanks a bunch from the bottom of our hearts here at the health district.

JENNIFER WHITMYER
Clatsop Memory Care