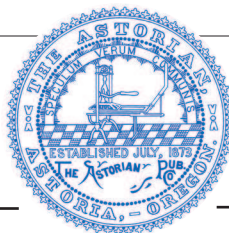


# OPINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Nuns dare go where others will not

A couple of years ago, when a group strongly supported by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary started buying shares in Smith & Wesson, Sturm Ruger and Dick's Sporting Goods, an observer might have raised an eyebrow.

All became apparent when a representative of the umbrella group — whose members include the Marylhurst nuns — appeared at the annual shareholders meeting of one of the nation's largest gun manufacturers.

The shareholder advocacy organization is called Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. It successfully pressured Ruger's leaders to compile a report assessing how it tracks gun violence associated with its products.

This demand was backed by a majority of shareholders, including BlackRock, an asset manager and Ruger's largest investor.

Colleen Scanlon, senior vice president of Catholic Health Initiatives, one of the coalition's members, summed up the strategy to the *New York Times*. "The American public will continue to seek solutions to gun violence from all stakeholders, but they will look first to hold gun manufacturers accountable for the safety of their products," she said.

The action won't stop the company producing lethal AR-15-style rifles, the type legally available and used in several recent mass shootings. But it will force Ruger to evaluate its operations and open them up to broader public



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson  
**Gun shop owner Tiffany Teasdale-Causier displays a Ruger AR-15 semi-automatic rifle in 2017 in Lynnwood, Washington.**

scrutiny.

Along with this effort, some are calling on companies like Ruger to develop safer products, such as smart gun technology using thumbprint readers, like those used on some cellphones.

Last week's confrontation caused a stir.

The *Times* described Christopher J. Killoy, Ruger's chief executive, as defiant after the vote against him. He was quoted saying that Ruger would not "adopt misguided principles by groups that do not own guns and do not understand guns."

The notion that people who don't own guns somehow have a less-valuable opinion than gun owners is absurd.

Many people who support our veterans have never served in uniform. Many people who support the right to choose have never had an abortion.

The simple but sad fact is that Americans are being massacred because of the availability of dangerous weapons. Under any definition, the unacceptable prevalence of gun violence in today's America is a public health emergency.

To its credit, Dick's Sporting Goods has stopped selling AR-15s after the Florida school shooting. Another company, Vista Outdoor, is selling its gun-making business.

Pressure is mounting.

The courageous Parkwood survi-

vors have translated grief for their dead classmates into a nationwide drive encouraging young people to register to vote. The 2018 midterms will see change.

We've noted before that responsible gun owners hold the key to finding an acceptable compromise to this sickening issue. They have a shrinking time window to come to the negotiating table or suggest their own compromises.

So much has been made of the excessive influence of special interest groups on our elected representatives that calls for change continue to escalate from all shades of the political spectrum.

The stranglehold that the National Rifle Association has on any potential right-of-center candidate perpetuates one of the biggest problems facing modern American society. A moderate Republican who supports the Second Amendment but wants to do something about the carnage in our schools must still pass an NRA litmus test — otherwise he or she will face a well-funded opponent in the GOP primary.

In recent years, the *Times* reported, Ruger has donated \$9 million to the NRA.

It is not difficult to connect these dots.

Strategies for making the United States safer come in many forms, sometimes from surprising quarters. Pressure on arrogant gun manufacturers from the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary is one we welcome.

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

### We're No. 2 — in the nation

Barely had the ink dried on my column last month about out-of-town news alerts and digital traffic-boosting listicles when international honors fell to the city of Seaside — and rather unexpectedly at that.

The lists are "Best Summer Vacations" and "Best Summer Vacations in the U.S."

U.S. News Travel considered 700 cities, parks, beaches and small towns around the world and in this country, measuring "affordability, weather and variety of things to do plus traveler and expert sentiment."

According to the rankings, Paris, France is the world's No. 1 summer vacation list, followed by Florence, Italy; Boston, Massachusetts; and Dublin, Ireland. Seaside is fifth. I mean, we're talking about Paris, the City of Lights, and Seaside, the city of surreys and fried clams.

In the rankings limited to "Best Summer Vacations in the USA," Seaside is even higher, second behind Boston and ahead of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Nashville, Tennessee; and yes, Portland, Oregon.

Seaside is described as a relaxing resort town and "beloved West Coast getaway for families."

Popular activities include biking, hiking, canoeing "and relaxing on the wide, sandy beach," they write. "Seaside also boasts a tasty local food scene that spotlights seafood, street food and more."

#### Selling Seaside

The recognition was announced by Jon Rahl, Seaside's director of tourism marketing, at the April 23 City Council meeting.

"Quite the pretty cool company that Seaside got," Rahl said.

City Councilor Steve Wright added: "I think we can all agree this is a pretty big deal."

Much of the reason why Seaside is on a list with the world's finest cities is attributable to Rahl himself.

Rahl — recently named assistant city manager — has done a world-class job of focusing the city's tourism resources and projecting them to a wider market via print, television and social media.

All you have to do is look at the brightly lettered Portland light-rail trains seductively whispering "Seaside," with dazzling pastel imagery of seahorses,

carousels, bikes and beaches. They rumble through the crowded city broadcasting to Portland's visitors — and Portland's visitors are worldwide.

On the ground, creative plays like the large orange Adirondack chair emblazoned with the word "Seaside" and strategically located in front of the Visitors Bureau invites travelers to sit right down and stay awhile.

"That continues to reap rewards for us," Rahl said.

It's not the biggest Adirondack chair in the world — not even the biggest in Oregon, added Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. But it's plenty big and visitors love to take selfies on it.

Rahl attributed the city's success to infrastructure development like the convention center expansion and renovation, along with the innovation and enterprise of hoteliers rehabbing properties and the influx of new restaurants, "which makes our destination that much more popular."

The Visitors Bureau's social media postings, Facebook videos and television ads are so emotionally resonant they are satisfying even after the fifth or sixth viewing. Their themes hit all the buttons — family, pets, scenic beauty and the great outdoors.

Rahl and his team kicked off the year by winning recognition from the Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism for Best Visitors Bureau, an award delivered by peers for marketing throughout the state.

#### Thumbs up

Editor Gwendolyn Shearman of U.S. News Travel said her team initiates the process by selecting destinations from throughout the world.

They score each destination in 11 different categories, Shearman wrote in an email.

For rankings such as the Best Summer Vacations and the Best Summer Vacations in the USA, editors also factor in the seasonality of a destination and when the best time to visit is for the everyday traveler.

Rankings are based on user ratings and editors' scores, from 0 to 5 — "phenomenal."

Editors apply these ratings to categories including sights, culture, people, food, shopping, family, nightlife, adventure, romance and accessibility.

Users vote "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" whether a destination belongs on the list.



Seaside Visitors Bureau

**A train emblazoned with the Seaside logo makes its way through Portland.**



Massvacation.com

**Boston, Massachusetts, and Seaside, Oregon, Nos. 1 and 2 in the U.S. News Travel report, share swan boats in common.**

Destinations' overall scores are a weighted average of the individual editors' averages, based on which factors users said were most important to them.

This is the first year Seaside has been included in the scoring, Shearman said, receiving high marks in the sights, family, food and accessibility categories.

"Seaside stood out this year because of its appeal to both beach-going families and outdoor enthusiasts. Plus, its location in the Pacific Northwest is a great alternative to more well-known (and more crowded) beach destinations further south."

What does it all really mean?

"We can't really predict or offer insight on how the destination's popularity may increase as a result of the list, but

we always welcome destinations promoting their rankings on social media and the like," Shearman said.

In 2018, editors have found readers are particularly interested in visiting more under-the-radar vacation spots and smaller towns in the United States, she said. "More of those types of vacations appearing on many of our ranking lists," she added.

In Seaside, all you have to do is take a leisurely stroll along the Prom on a clear 65-degree morning in May to place the city high on your own list. We're proud to have our home among the finest in the world.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.