

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Don't take healthy, plentiful water for granted

Oregon is known for its pristine drinking water — so good that some corporations want to bottle it for sale. But a new threat has emerged: toxins produced by algae blooms.

State and local officials were caught off-guard in late May when cyanotoxins were discovered for the first time in treated drinking water in Oregon — Salem's water supply.

Officials were slow to alert the public, and their initial announcements created confusion. Residents were outraged, and rightly so.

Most people could drink the water without becoming ill, but the botched communications left them wondering how public officials would respond in the event of a true disaster, such as a devastating earthquake.

Since then, the state and city of Salem have gotten their act together. To her credit, Gov. Kate Brown soon pushed the issue by declaring an emergency — an administrative action that allowed the Oregon National Guard to provide water and enabled other state agencies to help out.

On Friday, the Oregon Health Authority issued temporary rules requiring water suppliers around the state to regularly test for cyanobacteria — harmful algae blooms — and alert the public when cyanotoxins are found. The list of affected systems includes Warrenton and Seaside.

"In an era of climate change that

we're seeing, these kinds of things are likely to be more frequent, longer-lasting, more intense, and it's an emerging threat we need to respond to," OHA Director Patrick Allen said.

The rules took effect Sunday and will last for the rest of the year while permanent regulations are written.

Too little research has been done on toxic algal blooms and their health effects on humans, but the OHA was smart to act.

As for our state's capital, Salem was ahead of the curve in testing for cyanotoxins. Few Oregon lakes and rivers are monitored routinely for the harmful algae blooms and resulting toxins, which can cause symptoms similar to food poisoning. Still, the blooms have been found in 16 Oregon counties during the past five years.

Drinking water for Salem and several other communities comes from the South Santiam River. The river flows from Detroit Lake, a popular recreation area that has been under on-and-off health advisories for algal blooms this year.

The city of Salem is operating round-the-clock water distribution sites — dispensing clean water from neighboring Keizer's wells — while installing a treatment process to remove cyanotoxins.

Meanwhile, Douglas County recently issued a permanent health advisory about potential cyanotoxins in

'Don't go into water that is foamy, scummy, thick like paint, pea-green, blue-green or brownish red. A good rule of thumb for you and your pet is: When in doubt, stay out!'



Sgt. Jennifer Lena/ 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Spc. Joshua White, right, of the Oregon Army National Guard, and Andy Smetana, with the city of Salem, distribute water in Salem last month.

ABOUT CYANOTOXINS

Location: Since 2013, harmful algal blooms have been found at various times in Baker, Coos, Clackamas, Clatsop, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Morrow and Multnomah counties. However, most Oregon lakes and rivers are not regularly monitored for cyanotoxins.

Appearance: Algal blooms generally appear as thick foam or scum on the water surface. They may resemble pea soup. They can be bright green, bluish-green, white or brownish-red.

Exposure: Cyanotoxins can be ingested, whether accidentally while swimming or by drinking the tainted water. Inhalation is a low risk. Cyanotoxins cannot be absorbed through the skin but can create a skin rash.

Health effects: Symptoms can include numbness, tingling and dizziness that can lead to difficulty breathing or heart problems and require immediate medical attention. Skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also receive medical attention if they persist or worsen.

Vulnerable people and pets: When cyanotoxins are present in recreational water, children and pets are at increased risk for exposure due to their small size and high level of activity. In drinking water, cyanotoxins create a greater risk to children under age 6, adults age 65 and older, people with compromised immune systems or liver conditions, pregnant or nursing mothers, people on dialysis and other medically fragile individuals, as well as pets.

Typical camping or home-use water filters do not remove cyanotoxins. Boiling may increase their concentration.

Source: Oregon Health Authority

the South Umpqua River and Lawson Bar. Other recent advisories included Lake Billy Chinook, Upper Klamath Lake and Dorena Reservoir.

Oregon's healthy, plentiful water has been in sharp contrast to much of the world. But we dare not take it for granted.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sen. Johnson has represented us well

I'm writing this letter to take issue with the letter to the editor June 26 in which the writer states "Betsy Johnson is not a Democrat, let alone a moderate one," and goes on to state Sen. Johnson should consider resigning from the Democratic Party ("Johnson out of touch with constituents," The Daily Astorian).

I am a Democrat who has voted for Betsy every election. She has represented us well during these past 20 years. She votes the way she believes is best for all, and sometimes that is not along strict party lines. She does not suffer fools. I trust her judgment, and commend her on voting the issue, not the party line.

NELSON TAYLOR
Astoria

Trump has turned the economy around

For years, Congress and presidents used America's tax laws and taxpayer dollars to improve the economies of foreign countries. That caused a growth of international corporations, and led to more wealthy people around the world.

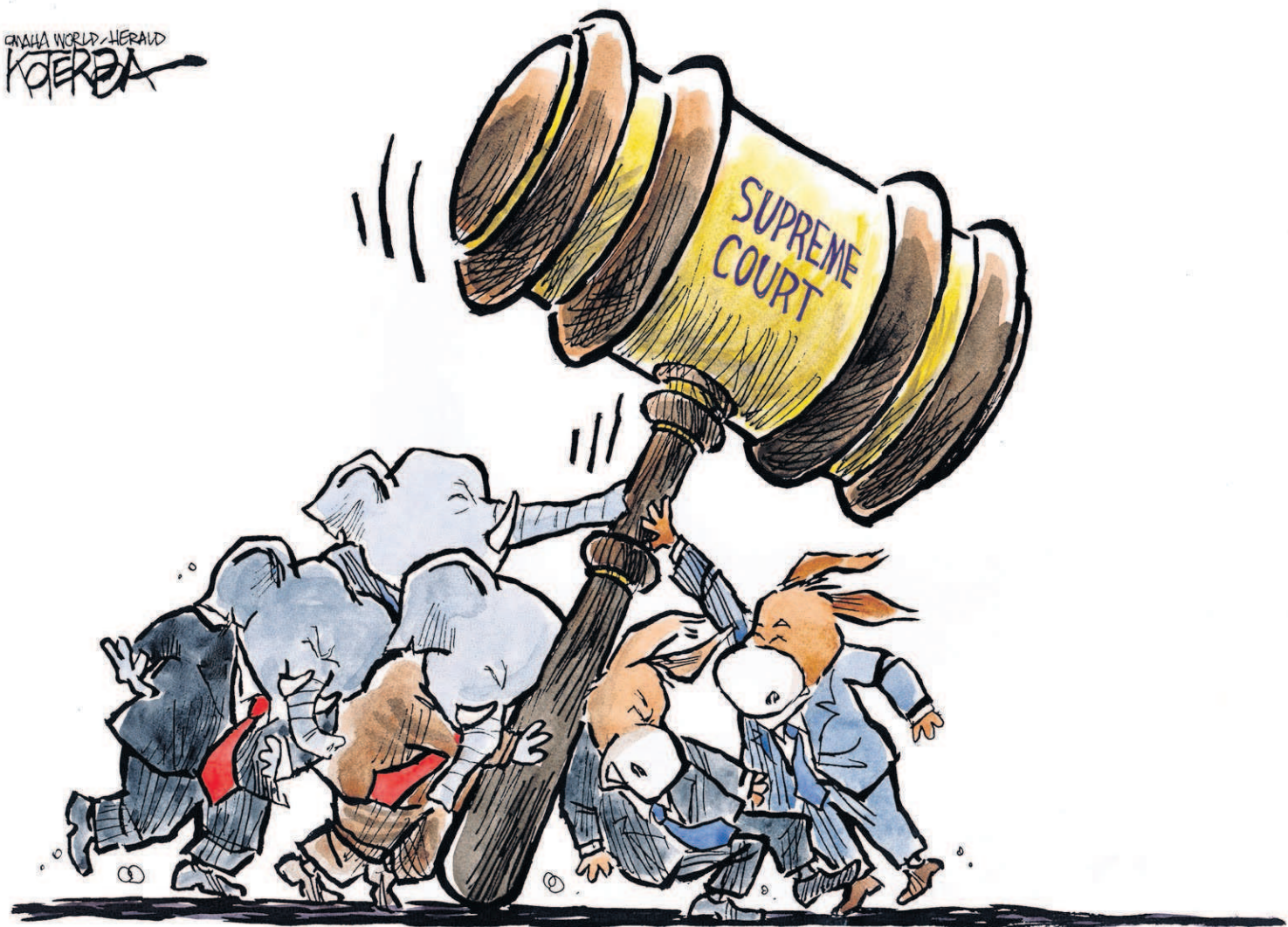
But all that new wealth didn't help average Americans. In fact, just the opposite happened. Remember President Obama's "new normal" approach, when he couldn't improve our depressed economy? Remember how he told us in 2010 to get used to "long-term" lower economic growth and high unemployment?

And yet President Trump turned the economy around in just months. And how he did it isn't at all complicated. For starters, President Trump told the country he believed a president's first duty is to America and the Constitution — not the world. And that belief was welcomed by Americans who hadn't heard a president say those words for years.

Oddly enough, that belief also helped make President Trump an outsider to the Washington establishment, including most of today's extremely liberal journalists and TV pundits.

For years, the Washington establishment had ignored hardworking, ordinary Americans. Trade policies greatly favored foreigners over Americans, and our manufacturing facilities were allowed to go to pot. By the time 2016 rolled around, those situations were seen as massive political blunders by the Washington establishment.

GRANVILLE WORLD-HERALD
KOEKBA



Democratic Party activists still continue to express bitterness about the election. Meanwhile, President Trump's common-sense economics and tax reform is quickly fixing past screw-ups by career politicians.

DON HASKELL
Astoria

Trump leading us to a very dark place

Regarding the letter to the editor "Trump's foreign policy strategy is different" (The Daily Astorian, June 15), the writer is complimentary of President Donald Trump's interaction with North Korea, and Trump's setting tariffs on our trading partners. He likened Trump to a knowing father dealing with an errant son.

In fact, Trump slathered endless praise on a brutal dictator who kills or imprisons his political enemies, and impoverishes his people. Trump is envious of the Supreme Leader's iron grip on his nation, and by his words and actions, Trump acknowledges dicta-

tors around the world as worthy of praise and emulation.

At the very same time, just days before meeting with North Korea, Trump was trashing America's relationship with our closest allies and trading partners at the G-7 meeting of democratic nations. His primary focus there was to insist on the presence of another dictator, his idol, Vladimir Putin.

He heaps praise on the brutal North Korean dictator, and insults and starts a trade war with the Canadian prime minister? Republicans, I implore you to wake up to what is going on with the person you elected to the presidency. He is leading us to a very dark place. Don't think it can't happen here. It has already begun.

ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart

Care for the children we already have

Liberals cannot help but feel betrayed that Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy

is resigning. While ruling with the conservatives on most cases, he did come through for the liberals on several key issues.

Anti-choice advocates are drooling at the mouth that President Donald Trump will get to appoint one of them to the Supreme Court.

Instead of forcing women to have babies that they cannot take care of properly, shouldn't we instead be working on caring for the children we already have here with good medical care, lead-free water, clean air to breathe, nourishing food, and a gun- and violence-free environment?

JEAN HOOGE
Astoria

Why trust the FBI?

Only in the swamp known as Washington, D.C., can it be said we as a nation trusted the FBI, only to find out its director of nearly 50 years wore dresses, and now progressives trust the agency when it's been caught with its pants down.

MATT JANES
Jeffers Gardens