

OPINION

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GUEST COLUMN

School board seeks input on bond levy

As chairperson for the Astoria School District Board of Directors, I am honored and proud to serve on the board for one of the oldest school districts in Oregon, and to be a part of the rich history that has been built here for almost 165 years.

One of my favorite events each year is our Astoria High School graduation ceremony. It has been my privilege for the last several years to witness firsthand the gratification of accomplishment shared between students, parents, staff members and the community as a whole.



JEANETTE SAMPSON

Each year, as I listen to the amazing speeches given by our young leaders, I reflect back on how hard they have all worked to stand on that stage. I know our

administrators, teachers, employees, coaches, families, as well as our board members, look forward to watching these students continue on their journey to college, military service or directly into a career path.

The school board has spent more than a year working with a citizen-based committee, engaged in deep dialogue regarding renewal of our bond for physical improvements to our schools. I would like to share some of our findings with you and to request your feedback and ideas.

The district last approved a bond for capital improvements in 2000. Since that time, we have realized the need to continue our investments in buildings that support career and vocational education as well as classrooms that have modern technology.

Our polling and research has demonstrated that safety and security are urgent priorities — including installation and implementation of cameras and door-lock systems to help keep students and staff safe while in school. It has also confirmed our knowledge that district buildings have aged, and the electrical and heating systems are inefficient. In one case, we have a boiler that is more than 100 years old — installed back when Model Ts were



The Astoria High School Class of 2018 participates in the graduation ceremony.

replacing the horse and buggy.

The bond that passed in 2000 is soon-to-be expiring, and we know we need to continue to provide the best possible learning environment for our students in the future. It is very important that, as elected Astoria School Board members, we hear from our community members about priorities our schools should be undertaking, both in terms of facility projects, as well as ideas on how we can continue to make Astoria the best place for our students to gain an outstanding education.

Over the next few months, school board members will be out in the community asking you what your thoughts are on our district. Please let me know if we can come meet with

your group. I invite you all to visit our website to share your thoughts at astoriaschoolbond.org.

Investing in the future

I want to say thank you to the citizens of Astoria for helping our students on their journey. Whether you are a district employee, volunteer, community supporter, a prior student of our district, or have kids, grandkids or other family members attending our schools, you have made significant investments in our region's future by investing in the education of our children.

These young adults are future farmers, health care workers, firefighters, law

enforcement, teachers, technology specialists, small-business owners and more, both here in Clatsop County and beyond. As a community, we should be very proud of the students who are graduating and know that the district is working very hard to meet the needs of all students who walk through our doors.

We are unique in Astoria in that every student who attends school — beginning in prekindergarten — will touch each of our schools, so every one of our buildings and our staff members in those buildings, as well as our staff who transport our students between those buildings, is critical to the success of all students attending our district.

The Astoria School District has given me many reasons to be proud as a board and community member.

The district's teachers are leading the way. They have more than 1,723 combined years of teaching experience, with 78 percent having earned advanced degrees and certifications. With national teacher turnover rates at an all-time high, we are recognized across Oregon for recruiting and retaining quality teachers who proudly serve our students and community.

Preparing for college and the workforce, Astoria High School students complete college credit-bearing coursework and vocational training concurrently with high school courses. Over the last three years, students have earned more than 4,200 college credits through our partnership with Clatsop Community College, saving students and their families thousands of dollars in tuition and fees.

Our amazing teachers and support staff, as well as valuable community partnerships, continue to be an investment into the future of our district.

On behalf of the school board, thank you again for your continued support of our students.

Jeanette Sampson is an Astoria resident, parent, active community member and chairperson of the Astoria School District Board of Directors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Replace income tax with a sales tax

In the front-page article, "Oregon most reliant state on state income taxes" (The Daily Astorian, July 3), the Tax Foundation findings are about how dramatically the taxes fluctuate and how they "tend to be more harmful to economic growth than consumption taxes," ... "and that they are a less stable source of revenue because many people see their income fluctuate with the business cycle."

I have believed for quite some time now that Oregon should replace the income tax with a sales tax.

1. The sales tax has a much broader base than the income tax.

2. Income tax systems tend to create more of an adversarial relationship between the government and its people than a sales tax.

3. We have quite a tourist industry that uses our infrastructure. Can we be like other states, and tap into that resource?

4. With a sales tax everybody would be vested. It is human nature to care more about something you are vested in.

5. And my favorite part is ... sales tax is optional. If you truly are struggling, you probably will not be in the market for a new car or other high-tax items.

6. If we follow the example in most states, food is exempt, and programs to help those in need would continue to be funded.

Alice Chaloux
Warrenton

Time to stand and fight on Supreme Court

The July 5 Associated Press news story, "Justice Ginsburg bemoans partisan divide in Congress," by Aron Heller, set against the backdrop of a Supreme Court justice nomination, reads as part of the effort to pressure Congress into nominating President Donald Trump's pick, in spite of it being written about the words of a liberal Supreme Court justice.

Republicans denied the Merrick Garland hearing for 11 months, thus preventing President Obama from carrying out his constitutional duty, as well as denying the majority of Americans a justice more in line with our values. But now the Democrats will be vilified as they try the same tactic. Well if it's good for the goose ...

Recently The Daily Astorian offered what appeared a strong stand in an editorial, "Enough — This is not America" (June 28). Yet, where was the foresight of The Daily Astorian editorial board? The kind of malice and cruelty we've witnessed with children being torn from their migrant parents, then imprisoned, shouldn't come as a surprise

to anyone. It's the direction the Fox News/ Trump train has always been heading, and still is.

Presidents come and go, but the Supreme Court can shape the nation for generations. Now is not the time for bipartisanship. Now is the time for the Democrats and allies to stand and fight.

Michaela. "Sasha" Miller
Astoria

America is against breastfeeding babies?

America is against breastfeeding babies ("U.S. Opposition to Breast-Feeding Resolution Stuns World Health Officials," The New York Times, July 8)? I have to guess that there is no bottom to the depths that the Trump administration will stoop to curry favor with corporations.

On July 8, they blackmailed Ecuador into not submitting a proposal at a World Health Organization meeting that supported breastfeeding and the reduction of the use of factory-made baby food. They did this by threatening loss of military aid and imposing trade restrictions.

The U.S. delegation also did the same with several other small countries; Russia ended this by putting this resolution up for vote. The

U.S. is the villain, while Russia is the good guy?

Chuck Meyer
Astoria

Head Start is a tried and true program

The answer to the preschool situation is simple ("North Coast preschool advocates prepare for pilot study," The Daily Astorian, July 6).

Allow Head Start to qualify children up to the 300 percent of poverty point, and fund them for paying acceptable wages. I do realize that Head Start is not a part of the public school system, but work with them. It is a true and tried program, already in place.

Doreen Walgren
Seaside

'O beautiful' is my kind of America

In these troubled times, I can think of no song that better captures the greatness and spirit of America than "America the Beautiful," our signature patriotic song.

Sadly, I sometimes forget the men and women who died for my freedom. It's often

hard for me to grasp their bravery and conviction to the freedom I sometimes take for granted.

When I first listened to legendary bluesman Ray Charles' stunning interpretation of "America," I heard him launch his recording with a dark third stanza which reads:

"O beautiful for heroes proved/ In liberating strife/ Who more than self their country loved/ And mercy more than life./ America! America! May God thy gold refine/ Till all success be nobleness/ And every gain divine."

Moving to a prayer that asks that those sacrifices not be in vain, Ray Charles implied that Americans must earn the very familiar verse that follows:

"Oh beautiful for spacious skies/ For amber waves of grain/ For purple mountain majesties/ Above the fruited plain."

"O beautiful" has captured my heart, moving me to tears and a real sense of patriotic feeling, conveying an attitude of appreciation and gratitude for our nation's extraordinary physical beauty and abundance.

When he sang, "God done shed His grace on thee," Ray Charles was transforming an anthem to a hymn. Ray Charles' rendition remains the least boastful of patriotic songs, and even so, his version teaches us all a new humility.

And that's beautiful!

Robert Brake
Ocean Park, Washington

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