

# OPINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Housing crunch demands regional action

## Diverse housing options key to maintaining a healthy mix of residents

A recent incident in Long Beach helps spotlight the precarious nature of coastal residents' struggles to find and keep affordable housing.

A multiunit dwelling on a back street was raided after authorities came to suspect methamphetamine manufacturing might have taken place there, based on the presence of harsh industrial acid at the scene. A meth lab would have been surprising. Though the dangerous drug has experienced a revival in use, it now originates from Mexican laboratories instead of the U.S. neighborhood operations that supplied it in the 1990s. Instead of meth, the Long Beach chemicals were being used by former tenants to recover precious metals from scrapped electronic components.

In the aftermath of a multi-agency raid and in light of previous problems at the same address, authorities evicted residents and are requiring the out-of-town owner to make substantial renovations before issuing a new occupancy permit. Long Beach has been conducting a welcome campaign to force demolition or improvement of nuisance structures.

Understandable as the evictions were, follow-up reporting found that former residents suffered genuine hardships in overcoming loss of their living place, along with some food and possessions. Bad housing that tenants have become accustomed to can be better than the alternatives.

### In South County

Another face of our region's housing dilemma is the subject of news coverage



A former resident of a condemned Long Beach apartment building looked for her neighbor. Officials deemed the building uninhabitable after discovering that another tenant was stripping gold with hazardous chemicals in late July. Now several tenants are homeless.

in south Clatsop County, where Cannon Beach debates how — or even whether — to facilitate affordable housing for its workforce and others of modest financial means.

Limited by geography, tradition and Oregon land-use laws, Cannon Beach city councilors recently debated allowing addition of another story to commercial-zone buildings to accommodate apartments, while also reducing off-street parking requirements. Other options have been previously debated and rejected.

With some of the highest non-urban home prices in the Pacific Northwest hemmed in between U.S. Highway 101 and the coastline, Cannon Beach has long struggled with the practical and philosophical implications of being unable to house many of the people it relies on to function. With even some middle-income people priced out of the market, it risks

becoming less a village than a theme park. Some employees and business owners are forced to commute from more affordable areas, effectively cutting their personal income. This makes it harder to attract and retain the bedrock citizens who make a place into a community.

However, increasing building elevations and making Cannon Beach's parking shortage even worse were a source of legitimate concerns. Preserving viewsheds and open street characteristics are high priorities in most coastal towns. Ensuring they have a diverse range of housing options also must be high on the action list.

### Good intentions vs. reality

Beyond incorporated municipalities like Long Beach and Cannon Beach — which at least have professional on-site management with good intentions — Pacific and Clatsop counties each have many substandard dwellings. Is this

simply the way of the world — that low-income folks can't expect safe and clean housing close to where they work or have support? Not having much money comes with obvious disadvantages. Property owners can simultaneously be trying to make money, be sympathetic to the plight of tenants, and unable to afford needed building upgrades.

As candidates for public offices in Astoria have said in recent news coverage, identifying housing solutions is a slow and incremental process, at best. It starts with acknowledging the problem exists and accepting that political leaders and citizens must work for answers and not throw up their hands in defeat. Steps like the ongoing conversion of Ilwaco's historic Aberdeen Packing Co. headquarters into housing will help, and can be extended to other decaying or neglected industrial/commercial facilities. Keeping a rein on short-term vacation rentals will keep housing stock available for residents. Allowing backyard "tiny houses" and above-garage apartments can increase housing density, and can be an appreciably better use of open space than lawns.

Ensuring we have a diverse range of decent housing is too big an issue for individual cities, towns and unincorporated areas in our counties with a shared economy, where employees and jobs are often separated by dozens of miles and sometimes by state lines. It's well worth exploring formation of a diverse regional housing council with strong representation by financial institutions. With a well-defined work plan, such a group could make incremental progress in ways that benefit all local communities. This would be big improvement over the present de facto answer of hoping somebody else deals with the problem.

## LETTERS WELCOME

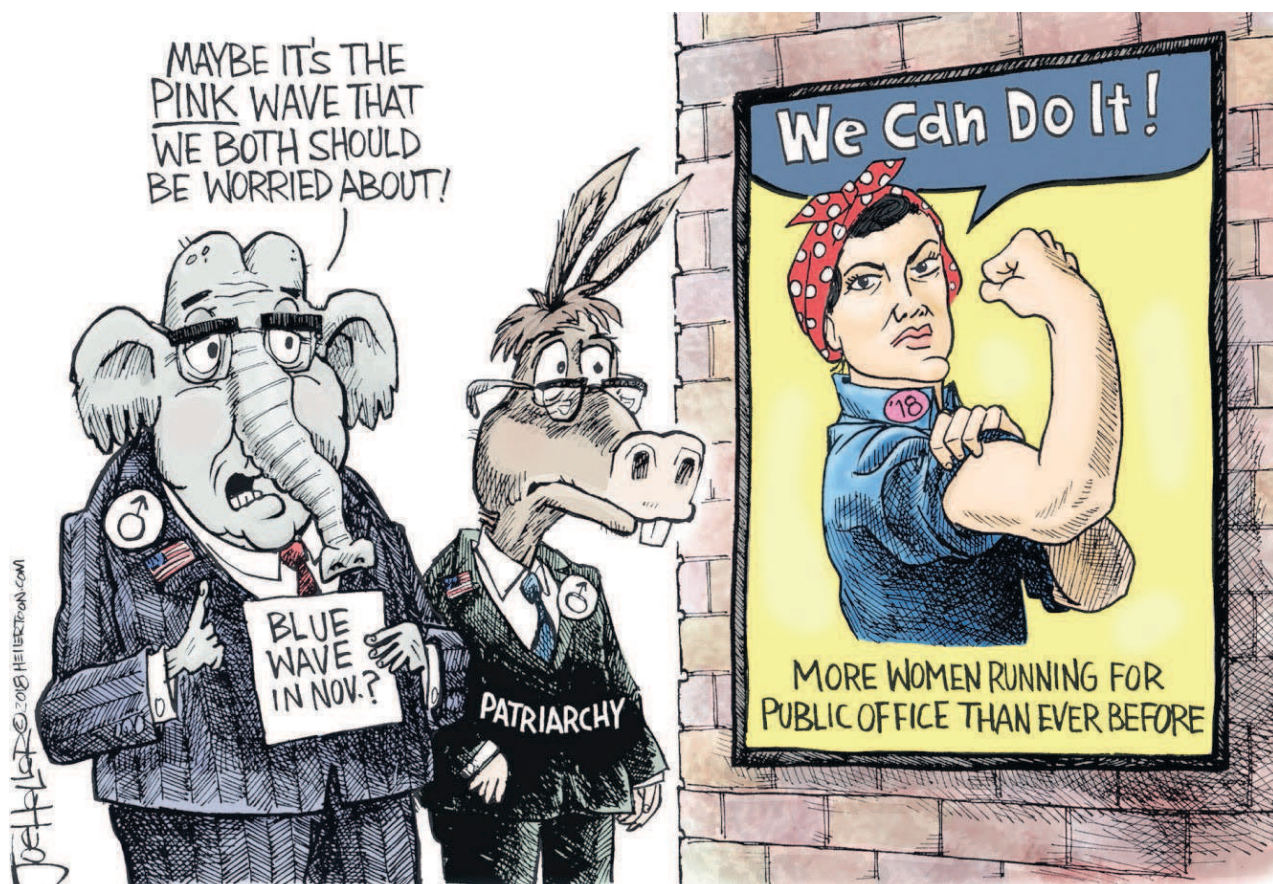
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## GUEST COLUMN

# Papers, please — ID system reminiscent of Soviet Union

At a Florida campaign rally on July 31, President Donald Trump informed the crowd, by way of promoting voter ID laws, that "if you go out and you want to buy groceries, you need a picture on a card. You need ID."



THOMAS L. KNAPP

Twitterverse mockery ensued, mostly to the effect that Trump has little experience with the real world in which no, normal people generally do not need photo identification to buy milk, bread, and the latest edition of The National Enquirer at one's local supermarket.

Maybe Trump is out of touch, but many of his hecklers are too. More disturbing than the drive for laws to address the nearly nonexistent phenomenon of voter fraud is the degree to which most Americans take current

identification requirements — many of which didn't exist even a couple of decades ago — for granted.

These days, it's difficult if not impossible to board an airplane (or get an Amtrak train or Greyhound bus ticket) without displaying a government-issued identification card.

Of course, you need a government-issued driver's license to operate a car. Prefer to walk or ride with a friend? In many states, you're required to produce ID documents on demand if a police officer claims "reasonable suspicion" that you've committed a crime (including loitering).

If you'd like to accept a job and an employer would like to hire you, you must present one or more government-issued identification papers for submission to US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Yes, you're required to present government identification papers to open a bank account

as well.

Over the last few decades, the U.S. has effectively re-created the Soviet Union's old internal passport system. Your rights to move about, to work, to conduct your financial affairs, and in general just to live your life, are subject to the government's demand that you prove your identity at any time and for any reason.

America survived for exactly a century without any such thing as photo ID — the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia required all exhibitors and staff to carry a "photographic ticket" produced by Canadian photographer William Notman.

It wasn't until well into the 20th century that most Americans started carrying a government driver identification with a photograph on it (you didn't even need a passport to enter or leave the U.S. until after World War II), and not until near the end of that century

that identification requirements started spilling into every corner of our lives.

In fact, prior to 9/11, most "conservatives" opposed most national identification schemes on perfectly reasonable privacy grounds. Their increasing embrace of an all-encompassing surveillance state — including everything from imposing REAL ID standards on the states to conscripting employers as unpaid immigration police informants — is a sad indicator of how far they've strayed from even minimal respect for freedom and privacy.

The scandal isn't that Trump doesn't know identification isn't required to buy groceries. It's that he, and most politicians of both major parties, think identification should be required for pretty much everything. And that Americans aren't resisting the idea.

Thomas L. Knapp is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism.