

OPINION

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OUR VIEWS

The logical ends of political hate

Bumper stickers proclaim, “Kate Brown is not my governor.” T-shirts, magnets and decals declare, “Donald Trump is not my president.”

Those items are reprehensible.

They are far from the magnitude of the shootings at a Pittsburgh synagogue and the mailings of pipe bombs to high-profile detractors of President Trump.

But they are dangerous to our political souls and those around us, if not to our physical bodies. Kate Brown in Oregon and Donald Trump in America hold public offices that represent all of us, regardless of whether we agree with them or not.

Public disagreement and civilized protest can be a sign of a healthy republic, but defining your life by the protest can be destructive.

It certainly appears to have been for Cesar Sayoc, who has been charged with sending pipe bombs to prominent Democrats. His ardent support for Trump isn't what defined his life — his hatred toward others is.

Ronald Lowy, a lawyer for Sayoc's family, described it well in a New York Times interview: “He lacked an identity. He created a persona.”

That persona was stoked anonymously in a like-minded online community, and his actions, while ultimately failing their intended purpose, showed the logical conclusion to such rage.

In Pittsburgh, the consequences of that anger were tragic, as 11 people were gunned down during religious worship.

Although it will come as news to many partisans, political views can be polar opposite and legitimate. Neither Brown nor Trump deserves vilification. Neither one merits being called an extremist.

Trump has intensified America's political and cultural divides through his polarizing, us-vs.-them mentality. Sadly, many Democrats have responded in kind. There is no good end to this

game. Such rhetoric might be appropriate for a football coach; but in politics, America needs more of the rugby or lacrosse style in which opponents battle fiercely on the field and then join for pizza afterward.

This is not a plea for everyone to play nicely, although that would be good. We know that one editorial cannot cause a person to say, “By golly, now I know I shouldn't vilify my political foes — just like I shouldn't run with scissors or play with lighters!”

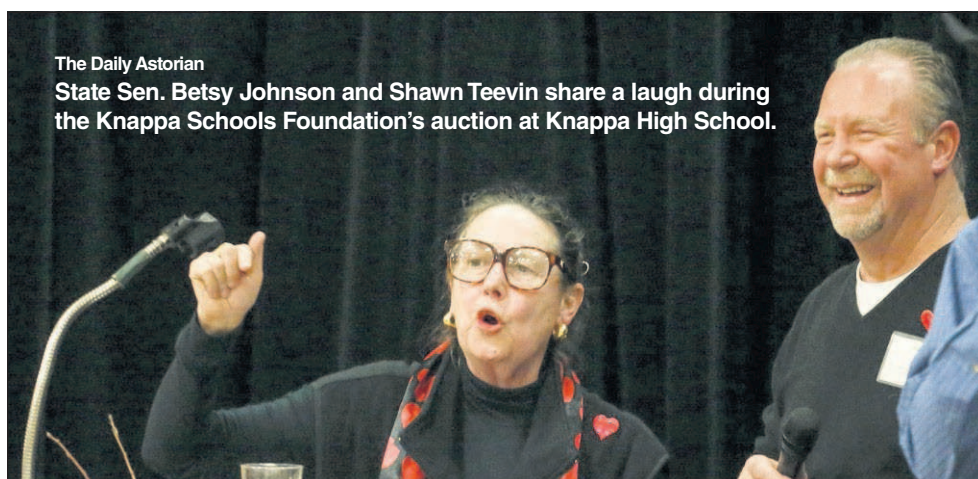
Rather, we humbly suggest that if people are dismayed by the current political tenor — we believe most are — that they take it upon themselves to change the tone. This might sound like a contradiction, but the place to start is with those who share their views — the candidates, political parties and organizations whom they support.

No one can change the other person, regardless of how much arguing takes place. Research indicates that such arguing usually cements a person's existing view. Instead, people have greater opportunity to influence the like-minded individuals who already have their trust. Together, help them see the value in pulling back on the rhetoric and reclaiming truth instead of pushing insinuation.

Consider what could happen if voters demonstrated irrevocable civility and demanded civility from the candidates they supported. Until that becomes the societal expectation, the current political climate will only worsen.

A place to start is Oregon's gubernatorial race, where both major candidates and their allies have been competing over who can wallow deeper in the gutters of political slime, mistruths and negativity.

Kate Brown and Knute Buehler are both decent individuals, though you would not know that from the opposition campaign ads. Both deserve respect for aspiring to the office of governor. Neither is perfect. Yet after the election, one will have the task of unifying Oregon.



The clearest choice on the ballot

Our final and most emphatic endorsement goes to state Sen. Betsy Johnson, who is a force of nature on behalf of her constituency.

Her re-election campaign has been no less vigorous than prior years even though she does not have serious opposition.

Ray Biggs, a little-known member of the Constitution Party from Columbia City, is running against her. While we admire anyone who steps up to the plate, especially doing so to prevent an incumbent being re-elected unopposed, Biggs has not offered any sound reasons why anyone would want to replace Johnson with him.

Johnson's commitment to a lifetime of public service was learned as a girl watching the example of her father, Sam Johnson, who served seven terms in the Oregon House in the 1960s and 1970s and was mayor of Redmond, and her mother, Becky, who served on state boards.

Charitable contributions through the Samuel S. Johnson Foundation, which her parents created, have considerably enhanced organizations throughout Oregon.

A resident of Scappoose, Betsy Johnson served the Port of St. Helens and the Columbia County Health District, and lobbied on behalf of aviation interests before working for the state, managing the aeronautics division of the Oregon Department of Transportation, which she helped create.

Following in her father's footsteps, she served first in the House then took

over the District 16 Senate seat when Joan Dukes retired. This will be her fourth term in the upper house in Salem, representing the differing communities in Clatsop and Columbia counties with equal vigor.

When critics complain about politicians not representing the people, Betsy Johnson is the asterisk. “Everyone except Betsy, of course.”

She is a tireless dynamo, working long hours on myriad subjects from logging to fishing to education to health. It is remarkable that Johnson seems to find more hours in the day than just about anyone you will meet.

Trained as a lawyer, skilled as a pilot, Johnson's approach is deeply rooted in a respect for every resident of the state, carrying on Oregon's traditions within the legal framework, making modifications where necessary as society changes. And she does so in a refreshing, personable manner which exhibits her caring nature.

People unused to voting for Democrats might pause. But there is no need. Johnson's commitment to encouraging bipartisan consensus in Salem is something she lives out on a daily basis.

In fact, anyone who has followed her career would laugh at the idea of her being the proverbial “cookie-cutter” Democrat. Many liberal Democrats fault her because she sometimes votes with Republicans, especially on gun and criminal justice issues. We believe that shows she is in sync with her constituents.

We urge a positive check mark next to Betsy Johnson's name.

GUEST COLUMN

I will vote

By **JULIE FOSS**
For *The Daily Astorian*

No matter where I am, who is running, or what the position is, I will always vote. I will always mail my ballot in or go to the nearest voting booth because my voice is a unique one nobody else has. Not a single other person in this country articulates their thoughts the same way to formulate opinions the way I do; not one person has experienced the same challenges to help form opinions of importance.

My life is unique, and therefore my vote is a reflection of what I find important. As a child of a Coast Guard member, I acknowledge and respect service members for their sacrifice. Not only has my dad sacrificed parts of his life, but I have as well.

As a first generation Egyptian-American, I also have connection to an entire spectrum of experiences that are quite different than just being connected to the military.

I have watched Islam, my religion, be persecuted by people who claim to hold American values.

I understand and sympathize with immigrants of all kinds because these are the experiences of my mom and grandparents. That is why I will always vote: to support candidates who want to see equality and support for all people in this country.

My vote reflects a multileveled spectrum of opinions, and what I have to say is important to create a balanced America.

Another reason I will always vote is my passion for equal health care. Four years ago, I had a 12-hour spinal surgery to position spinal rods in order to straighten drastic curvatures. Having scoliosis and going through that experience has caused me to find all health care issues of extreme importance.



ESSAY CONTEST

High school students in Clatsop and Pacific counties participated in an essay contest sponsored by Indivisible North Coast Oregon and the American Association of University Women in Astoria and Seaside. The theme was “I will vote.”

- **First place** (\$250): Julie Foss, senior, Astoria High School
- **Second place** (\$150): Travis Popkin, sophomore, Naselle-Grays River Valley School
- **Third place** (\$100): Maggie Blaser, junior, Astoria High School

I realize that medical situations can affect one's life when least expected, and I find it important to vote someone in who pushes an agenda that includes equal access to health care.

I was fortunate enough to receive care at

a children's hospital that covered all costs for families, but not everyone is in a similar situation.

I represent a unique and diverse demographic that includes race, religion, family life-style and medical situations. My opinions on

voting reflect that as well. I will always vote to make sure my voice is represented, that I vote for someone who strives to improve diversity. Everyone has different experiences, good and bad, that shape the way they think, and I will always vote for someone who realizes that.

Julie Foss is a senior at Astoria High School.