

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

America is headed toward legal pot

As President Donald Trump mulls his next choice for U.S. attorney general, we hope he chooses someone with a realistic view of legalized marijuana in Oregon and other states.

Billy Williams, the U.S. attorney for Oregon, will be a key player in the attorney general's future decisions. Williams will chair the Attorney General's Marijuana Working Group. His appointment was announced by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on the same day that Trump ousted Jeff Sessions as attorney general.

Although it's not why Trump dumped him, Sessions vehemently opposed marijuana use. Marijuana remains illegal under federal law, but the Obama administration had told federal agencies to back off enforcement in states that legalized its use. Sessions rescinded that directive.

Sessions is now gone, recreational use of marijuana has been legalized in 10 states and medical marijuana in 33 states, and Trump has signaled he might support lighter federal enforcement.

Williams has been a vocal critic of Oregon's approach to legal cannabis. His office has prosecuted people who tried to ship marijuana out of Oregon, which is illegal under state law as well as federal law. He criticizes Oregon's oversupply of legal marijuana, which he contends has re-fueled the black market. He says the state's cannabis regulations and recordkeeping have been inadequate.

His concerns are legitimate. But, like it or not, legal marijuana is a reality and it is past time for the U.S. Department of Justice to recognize that.

It is ludicrous that the federal government still classifies marijuana in the same category of dangerous drugs as heroin and LSD, and that Congress has been loath to support federal research into the medicinal uses of cannabis.

It is disruptive to the economy that



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Containers filled with marijuana at Sweet Relief in Astoria.

federal law blocks legal cannabis businesses in Oregon and other states from many of the banks, credit-card processing and other financial avenues that other legitimate businesses use. For financial institutions that do handle marijuana accounts, the resulting paperwork can be almost prohibitively expensive.

Cannabis remains largely a cash-and-carry business — from buyer purchases to payment of taxes — and those large amounts of cash make businesses and tax collectors a target for thieves. Other businesses also are wary of working with cannabis firms for fear that federal law enforcement will prosecute them for "aiding, abetting and conspiring" in

marijuana activities.

The cannabis industry in Oregon is maturing. Because the market is saturated with cannabis and shops selling it, prices have fallen by half — or more — and outlets gradually are consolidating. Business experts say these consolidations are necessary if local ownership is to remain viable when marijuana is legalized nationally and tobacco firms and other multinational corporations jump into the market.

America is headed that way. Almost two-thirds of Americans support legalizing marijuana.

In the Nov. 6 election, the rural Oregon towns of Ontario, Joseph,

Klamath Falls, Gates, Sumpter and Clatskanie either rejected or rescinded prohibitions against selling recreational marijuana. Numerous other cities and counties voted to tax marijuana sales. Nationally, Michigan became the first Midwestern state to legalize recreational marijuana. In the South, Missouri approved medical marijuana.

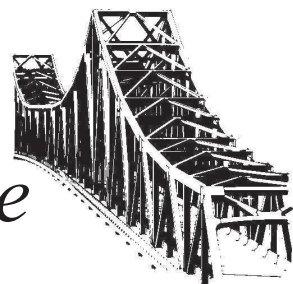
Dozens of pot bills will be introduced in Congress next year, some with bipartisan support. During the next decade, the overwhelming majority of states are projected to have some form of legalized marijuana.

Yet the U.S. Department of Justice remains woefully behind the times.

Water under the bridge

Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers



10 years ago this week — 2008

North Coast football fans will stage an invasion of Hillsboro later this week, as two of its teams did it again — advanced another round in the state playoffs.

The Astoria Fishermen will play Friday to get into a state championship; the Knappa Loggers will play on Saturday.

Astoria demolished North Bend 46-7 Friday at John Warren Stadium, as quarterback Jordan Poyer ran for four touchdowns in his final appearance on Gyro Field.

A Tillamook man was shot in the legs and buttocks when his 12-gauge shotgun accidentally discharged during a duck-hunting trip on Tillamook Bay.

The Oregon State Police says the man's dog is the prime suspect.

Sgt. Todd Hoodenpyl says 23-year-old Matthew Markum and his 20-year-old brother were using an 11-foot aluminum boat to go from land to their decoys Saturday morning. When the men left the boat, a shotgun blast put a hole in the side of the boat before striking Markum's leg.

Markum's father, Henry Markum, confirmed that the dog, whose name is Drake, jumped into the boat, setting off the 12-gauge.

Henry Markum said neither he nor Matthew are mad at their pet. He added that Drake is a good dog and the shooting is "just one of those things."

Hoodenpyl noticed while securing the shotgun that the safety was in the off position, something which is an important reminder to anyone transporting or carrying a loaded weapon.

Forget the Prom or the cute shops on Broadway. No need to head to the mall or the video store. The cove? Who cares? Seaside's new library is the hottest destination in town.



1969 — Starting the job together Monday were Mrs. Judith Thomason, meter maid, and a brand new gas-driven cart acquired by the city of Astoria for \$1,844.55 to replace a worn-out electric cart.

And for Library Director Reita Fackerell, that's cool.

The library has been open only two months, and already the circulation and visitation figures are out of sight.

A three-alarm fire in downtown Astoria killed a man and wiped out half a city block Thanksgiving night. A large turnout of firefighters fought the blaze — and the fire chief's decision to call for extra help right away may have saved other buildings.

The windows of the former flower shop at 951 Commercial Street were black and hot, and smoke was coming up from the building when Astoria Fire and Rescue arrived on the scene at 10:48 p.m. Thursday. Officials immediately called for a "two alarm."

50 years ago — 1968

After the Lewis and Clark expedition returned from the unknown far west in 1806, Capt. William Clark made his home in St. Louis, where he became territorial governor, commander of the armed forces and superintendent of Indian affairs.

The Clark family has remained in St. Louis ever since, and this week Capt. Clark's great-great grandson, William Clark Adrian, came west to see the scenes of his famous ancestor's exploits on the Pacific seaboard.

Escorted by James Thomson, superintendent of Fort Clatsop National Memorial park, and Jean Hallaux, chamber of

commerce manager, the Adrians came to Astoria via the north side of the Columbia River. Here they visited Fort Clatsop and were to go on to Seaside to see the salt cairn and to Cannon Beach, where a whale came ashore in Lewis and Clark's day.

Construction West Ltd. began hauling sand and base rock to the Northwest Aluminum company plant site so grading work can continue despite wet weather.

Temporary roads will be put in so that dump trucks can haul dirt across the slippery clay of the 200-acre cleared area.

75 years ago — 1943

An on-the-spot KAST broadcast from the lobby of the Astoria USO against a background of subdued hubbub, will come directly to the homes of this area tonight between 8 and 8:30 p.m.

On its regular nightly radio hour, War Chest Inc. will thus feature its main beneficiary — the USO — which will receive \$11,373.13 from Clatsop County's War Chest fund. And the beneficiary will furnish the atmosphere — the real-life hum of a busy servicemen's center — happy chatter, clink of soda fountain glasses, rustle of newspapers and magazines, possibly even the click of typewriter as a serviceman composes a letter home.

This direct broadcast from the lobby of the USO will introduce servicemen who have found friendly association and realization in the USO — Astoria's and others — and will feature a message from Lt. Goodenau for the naval station, port docks, giving the welfare officer's point of view.

Astorians were shivering Tuesday and Wednesday mornings and rightly so, for official records at the Astor experiment station reveal that the mercury skidded to 29 degrees on both mornings. This was the first killing frost of the year.

The Clatsop post of the American Legion purchased the large building formerly occupied by the Montgomery Ward store on Exchange Street for \$13,500, and announced it would be made into a new "home" for the Legion after the war.

Kenneth "Kiki" Simonson, former Astoria High School athlete, returned here this week for a brief furlough, during which he will marry Miss Pat Foote this weekend before returning to Pensacola, Fla., to instruct in marine aviation.