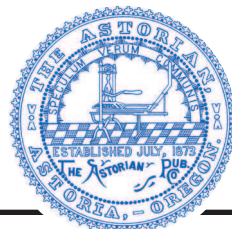


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Culture change needed in Capitol

Ascathing report about sexual harassment in the Oregon Capitol is both deeply disturbing and deeply flawed.

Legislative leaders must take its concerns seriously, instead of focusing on its shortcomings so as to protect their reputation. Regardless of what Senate President Peter Courtney, Speaker Tina Kotek and others say, they failed to adequately address sexual harassment through meaningful training, effective monitoring and swift action against offenders.

They are not alone. State archives show that lawmakers as far back as the 1990s struggled with how to address sexual harassment. The slight progress made since then is demoralizing.

A state Bureau of Labor and Industries' Civil Rights Division report issued last week found substantial evidence of unlawful employment practices based on sex. Critics of the report will say that is no surprise, because the investigation was instigated through a complaint filed by the head of BOLI, Brad Avakian.

Indeed, much of the report does read as if it were designed to reach a preordained conclusion. Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, who like Sen. Sara Gelsler had filed a sexual harassment complaint against Sen. Jeff Kruse, said she was not interviewed by the BOLI investigators and disagreed with their conclusions. The fail-



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky
Val Hoyle, center, poses for photos for well-wishers with Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, left, and Gov. Kate Brown after Hoyle was sworn in Monday as Oregon's labor commissioner. Hoyle has an ambitious agenda but an investigation pushed by her predecessor on sexual harassment in the Capitol looms — and the report drew new criticism.

ure to talk with Steiner Hayward and some other key figures is odd and diminishes the investigators' findings.

But the overall issues raised in the report remain valid.

The report was released just days before Avakian's term as BOLI commissioner ended. That leaves it up to his successor, Val Hoyle, to recommend any sanctions, including whether interns who were sexually harassed should receive compensation.

A Capitol work environment can be toxic because of the overwhelming imbalance of power.

Everyone wants to gain the approval of elected officials and is expected to treat them deferentially. For good reason, people fear they will be marginalized — politically, professionally and socially — if they complain.

"I believe harassment is based on power," lawyer P.K. Runkles-Pearson told Kotek, Courtney and other members of a legislative committee last month. "It starts with the power associated with privilege. ...

"Enhanced power relationships inherently make it difficult for anyone to make waves. And this

includes victims of harassment, those who observe harassment and those who are charged with addressing harassment."

Courtney and Kotek had asked the Oregon Law Commission to recommend improvements in how the Legislature dealt with sexual harassment. Runkles-Pearson chairs that work group. Its upcoming report — a draft was released last month — calls for a complete change in Capitol culture and offers a series of recommendations.

There is no justification whatsoever for sexual harassment of any form or in any place or against any person. Yet there are those in the Capitol, including some legislators, who still seem to believe in "boys will be boys," "go along to get along" and "quit your whining!" It will be difficult, but imperative, to help them understand what sexual harassment actually is and how it affects the victims.

"The way you change culture is that you have people in power show that they want the environment to change," Runkles-Pearson said.

So true. Instead of arguing whether the Capitol was or was not a hostile workplace, legislative leaders must ensure it is not one. Update the rules, overhaul the training and start to change the culture so the Oregon Capitol truly is a harassment-free environment for everyone.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Urban Core plan no longer represents Astorians

Those concerned about our riverfront and Riverwalk between Second and 16th Streets should attend the 6:30 p.m. Astoria Planning Commission meeting tonight at City Hall concerning the Urban Core Plan (UCP). The document continually uses the words "should" and "encourage" that require nothing of the developer, and must be replaced with "shall." This meeting may provide wording to easily deny the design/architecture/mass of another Fairfield Hotel.

This plan is more than 10 years old. It no longer represents 2019 Astoria residents, with large buildings being proposed on both sides of the trolley tracks. This will force people to leave the Riverwalk to walk through corridors between adjacent over-the-river buildings to have "managed views" of the river and ship movement. Since much of the river will be blocked we will need to change this section from Riverwalk to Buildingwalk. If you can afford to go into these restaurants/buildings, you will be able to easily enjoy the river.

They are also recommending balconies on buildings facing both sides of the Riverwalk. Imagine people on balconies interacting with those on the Riverwalk — not always in a positive way. Parking is a problem, and they are recommending reducing or eliminating parking requirements for new buildings — hoping to solve the problem in the future. Parking requirements and solutions are needed before the UCP is finalized.

You are allowed to send commissioners and councilors multiple letters/emails anytime on the UCP. Send them to Tiffany Taylor (ttaylor@astoria.or.us) — a wonderful administrative assistant who will forward them to the right people.

GEORGE (MICK) HAGUE
Astoria

Cities should protest Coast Guard's late paychecks

What do these U.S. cities have in common? Mobile, Alabama; Kodiak and Sitka, Alaska; Alameda, Eureka and San Diego, California; New London, Connecticut; Clearwater, Florida; Camden County, Georgia; Rockland, Maine; Newburyport, Massachusetts; Grand Haven and Travers City, Michigan; Cape May, New Jersey; Carteret County, Elizabeth City and Wilmington, North Carolina; Astoria, Florence and Newport, Oregon; Portsmouth, Virginia; and Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

We all have the pride of being a des-

ignated Coast Guard City. Every time the federal government shuts down, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard have to work without receiving a paycheck, because they are funded by Homeland Security. That's 42,000 Coast Guard service people who will be receiving late paychecks.

Each of the above city governments should have proclamations in place to protest to the White House and our Congressional representatives. It is an outrage to know that the Coast Guard receives late paychecks, but the president and those on Capitol Hill remain on the payroll.

LARRY ALLEN
Astoria

Support our Coast Guard community

Let's support our Coast Guard community during the federal government shutdown. While President Donald Trump continues to tweet up his temper tantrums, America's Coast Guard is going to suffer. While the government has determined they will be paid if the Trump shutdown continues, the Coast Guard will not get paid.

The Coast Guard is funded through the Department of Homeland Security. If Trump and the GOP enablers continue to ignore common sense and effective border security measures, Astoria needs to step up

and help our Coast Guard community.

ROBERT DUEHMIG
Astoria

Here are some other ideas for PERS reform

The Daily Astorian declares some Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) reforms — those that would result in less economically secure state workers — "solid ideas" ("Our View: Solid ideas for restructuring PERS," Jan. 3). So, let's look at a couple of other ideas that don't amount to an attack on public employees' well being, but still would reduce PERS public employees' costs.

1. Direct the expected \$724 million upcoming state kicker to the PERS system to reduce the unfunded actuarial liability. The Legislature is empowered to redirect that kicker from taxpayer refunds to other uses, like funding the PERS system. After all, the bottom 20 percent of taxpayers will get only an average of only \$13. Not getting the kicker would not be a hardship, so let's just divert the whole kicker to a higher purpose — PERS reform.

2. The Legislature could create a new tax surcharge on current benefits paid to the top 7 percent of PERS beneficiaries, those making over \$6,001 to as much as \$76,111 monthly. That revenue would be directed to

the PERS funding difficulties. Applying a conservative surcharge of 7 percent on the PERS income of the top 7 percent would generate new revenue exceeding \$54 million/annually at minimum. Making the flat 7 percent surcharge progressive would generate even more revenue.

Let's get these two options into the public conversation, and on the minds of our elected officials in Salem.

DAVID DELK
Astoria

Gearhart pub was community gathering place

My husband and I are so sad to hear of the closing of the Gearhart Crossing Pub and Deli. As new permanent residents of this lovely city, this vacates a significant community gathering place for friends and family.

When we bought our home here last spring, we saw the business as one of the draws for our quality of life. We knew the owners and staff worked hard, but suffered under locally induced impediments. All efforts to recreate and support this essential heart of Gearhart should be made in full. I invite the residents, City Council and interested investors to please consider restoring a vital center for the future of Gearhart.

DELORES SULLIVAN
Gearhart

