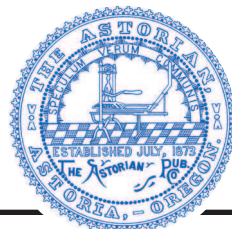


OPINION



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editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Let's do all we can for federal workers

Questioning the fundamental usefulness of government is the backbone of some American political factions, notably including the now seldom-mentioned Tea Party. Most of these righteous skeptics don't live off the grid in libertarian enclaves or hatch anarchist plots. Instead, they are good people all around in every community, wondering what the heck all our taxes and deficits pay for.

No matter whether a U.S. citizen is anti-government or not, we all will be increasingly noticing just what government does, now that a significant fraction of it has been turned off by a political squabble.

Any attempted discussion of the ongoing partial federal government shutdown inevitably ignites bitter infighting between those who believe President Trump can do no wrong and those who think he's a lightweight conman doing the bidding of radical talk-show hosts. However, here in this mutually reliant West Coast enclave so far removed from the Eastern elite, we need not and should not resort to useless finger pointing. It's fair to say that nobody in Washington, D.C. gives a moment's thought to local political analysis in the form of angry Facebook posts.

What we must do is mitigate harm to local people and assets, while calmly pulling toward future election results that put an end to these ridiculous and damaging she-nigans. In these maritime communities, one of our most immediate concerns must be for members of the U.S. Coast Guard and their families, who face the increasingly real prospect of not receiving January pay on time. Thankfully, a sense of duty and honor keeps them focused on their principal seasonal mission of helping Dungeness crabbers stay safe. The helicopters and motor lifeboats continue coming and going from the mouth of the Columbia, safeguarding lives and a vital part of our economy.

It's important that we extend every courtesy to our Coasties. Although it won't in every case be easy to do so, landlords, local util-



Chinook Observer

It's unfair to leave members of the Coast Guard in any doubt about when they will next get paid.

ities, lenders and others will earn the community's lasting gratitude by extending deadlines and waiving late fees for the hundreds of Coast Guard families who are stuck in a financial mess not of their own making.

Although their numbers are fewer, the same goes for employees of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and other federal agencies with a presence here. As is true

district and 43,500 in Washington's 3rd Congressional District receive this aid.

Around half of these households include one or more disabled people, more than 40 percent include children, and around one-third contain senior citizens.

While this sorry situation grinds on, we all must do our best to help with local food drives, and contribute cash to food banks so they can address what is certain to be a surge in requests for help. State legislators

pull together to help decrease the pandemonium."

It turns out that the U.S. government does many valued things, even on this remote and self-sufficient coast. Even those who aren't crabbers or related to one must appreciate the extent to which federal spending supports our most valuable fishery, saving lives while also protecting our coast from other kinds of harm. Few, we hope, would be so Darwinian as to think disabled people and children in disadvantaged households should simply go hungry. Even the president's most avid supporters must see the unfairness of asking agents of Customs and Immigration Enforcement to do their work without any guarantee of timely paychecks.

This shutdown, like those in the past, will eventually be resolved. It's likely most furloughed employees will receive back pay — even those who, unlike the Coast Guard and ICE, aren't still actively on duty. But we should be sure to elect people to Congress and the White House who are prepared to maturely and sensibly confront our national spending addiction, border protection and other priorities without resorting to destructive gamesmanship.

Shutdowns are a ridiculously blunt weapon, when what we really need are national leaders ready to make intelligent decisions.

SHUTDOWNS ARE A RIDICULOUSLY BLUNT WEAPON, WHEN WHAT WE REALLY NEED ARE NATIONAL LEADERS READY TO MAKE INTELLIGENT DECISIONS.

elsewhere in the nation, private contract employees are out of work, too — and can't expect back pay when the shutdown ends. All deserve our help and encouragement. We hope they won't hesitate to let community leaders know if they can use help in obtaining dispensations, so that we may engage on their behalf.

Beyond the stark impacts of the government shutdown on some federal workers, this situation threatens to delay payments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as food stamps. More than 37,000 households in Oregon's 1st Congressional Dis-

and agencies may need to shuffle spending priorities to ensure our fellow citizens don't go hungry.

Much remains uncertain, starting with whether the shutdown will be allowed to go on for months — as the president has suggested. How will lack of federal salaries and aid reverberate in the local economy, as spending on everything from groceries to cups of coffee begins to dwindle? Is it time to convene emergency community meetings to plan responses?

As a young Astorian commented early this week, "a lot of people will go without and we need to

old. But to the practiced eye, modern fire engines are a whole different animal with many advantages over their predecessors when it comes to safety features, communications equipment and fire fighting capacity.

That's why city leaders are so pleased that the Astoria Fire Department had secured a \$228,143 federal grant to purchase a new urban/wildland interface fire engine.

50 years ago — 1969

Astoria's largest fishing vessel will soon be under construction for Bumble Bee Seafoods at the J.M. Martimac Shipbuilding corporation yard in Tacoma, Wash., it was announced Monday by John S. McGowan, Bumble Bee president.

"Completion of the 650-ton tuna purse seiner late in 1969 will mark Bumble Bee's first direct entry into the tuna purse seine fishery in the tropics," McGowan said.

The new fast seiner will have an overall length of 165 feet and a beam of 34 feet.

Immediate action to control wandering dogs in Astoria will be requested of Clatsop County commissioners, the city council decided Monday night in authorizing City Manager Dale Curry to arrange a meeting with the county group and mayors of the other cities.

"We're no further ahead with the problem than we were three years ago," Curry said, "although the county has doubled its budget for dog control."

The hike in interest rates is not expected to affect the Astoria area as much as other parts of the country due to a nation-wide building boom, financial officials said Wednesday.

It will have less effect here as Astorians are more savers than borrowers," said Dean Tatom of the Bank of Astoria. "Of course, if Portland rates raise, we'll have to go along."

The boards of the Lewis and Clark and Warrenton-Hammond school districts voted Wednesday night to recommend merger of the two districts, which encompass some 1,300 youngsters.

The boards said Wednesday night in a joint meeting that merger probably couldn't take place before July 1, 1970.

75 years ago — 1944

The executive committee of the Clatsop County chapter of the Oregon State Teachers Association will refer to the general chapter at its next meeting the committee's resolution asking for an increase of teachers salaries to a minimum of \$1,500 a year, it was learned this week.

The minimum salary was increased by the last legislature from \$75 a month (on a nine-month basis to \$1,200 a year.

The port of Astoria has signed a lease with the Navy providing for an annual rental of \$90,000 on the port docks presently leased by the Navy for commissioning the Kaiser carriers, and has already received an installment of \$60,000, it was learned Tuesday night at the port commission meeting.

A critical situation faces operators of service stations in the Astoria district by reason of failure of the motoring public to take seriously OPA gas coupon regulations. According to a representative oil company distributor, service station operators will probably be forced to close their doors because of their inability to "cash" illegally filled-in coupons they have accepted from customers for gasoline purchases.

Renewishment of gas coupon stocks depends entirely upon the number of legal coupons the service station operator has available, the wholesale distributor points out. It is understood that OPA investigators have been active in the Astoria district recently and that many violation of gas coupon regulations have been uncovered.

Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke
From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2009

Astoria's deteriorating 17th Street Pier, which serves two U.S. Coast Guard cutters and visiting river cruise ships, will get a new lease on life.

At Monday's meeting, the Astoria City Council voted to award a \$96,382 contract to Bergerson Construction to repair it.

The 17th Street Pier is in such bad shape the city had to impose weight limits on it several years ago that prohibit vehicle access. The restriction forces delivery trucks to park on land, meaning crew members must hand-carry supplies to their vessels, City Manager Paul Benoit said.

A committee of 10 local financial and development experts gave the Port of Astoria a nod of approval this morning to borrow Clatsop County video lottery funds for the North Tongue Point purchase.

The unanimous "yes" vote from the panel will serve as a recommendation to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, which will vote on the loan Jan. 28.

The classic design and uniform color of most fire engines make it hard for the average person to tell if one of the polished machines is the latest model or 20 years