

# OPINION



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

editor@dailyastorian.com

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**KARI BORGEN**  
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**JIM VAN NOSTRAND**  
Editor

**JEREMY FELDMAN**  
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**JOHN D. BRUIJN**  
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## GUEST COLUMN

# Our families need to be supported

Like all of us, I have been extremely troubled over the last several weeks to watch as our hardworking federal employees, especially Coast Guard members, have been used as pawns in a fight going on thousands of miles away in Washington, D.C. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country, and hundreds of families up and down our coastline, have been victims in the longest U.S. government shutdown in history.



**TIFFINY MITCHELL**

In the midst of a terrible situation, the community came together in support of our friends and neighbors. From the Be the Light pop-up food pantry in Astoria, to the Rockaway Kiwanis in Tillamook County, and the many other organizations and individuals who have stepped up to help, it's clear that the federal government should take a lesson from our communities about what it means to be compassionate, work as a team, and the power of individuals to overcome barriers larger than themselves to accomplish good.

After hearing the heartbreaking story of an Astoria-area Coast Guard wife and her family's struggles to support themselves with savings, it occurred to me that, as a state representative, I was in a position to do right by our public servants. And while news of this relief may make those efforts feel inconsequential in light of the government's reopening, at least temporarily, I wanted to make sure that our communities had assurances that this burden will



**Be the Light food pantry, organized by a small army of local volunteers, provided groceries and daily living needs to more than 2,300 people over two weekends.**

never happen again.

As someone who used to work for a government agency that dealt with unemployment insurance, I theorized that there must be some way, in statute, that the state of Oregon could change its laws to allow for exceptions to its traditional program requirements for federal employees. Though requirements vary from state to state, I knew the basics of the program and what functions we'd have to look at to accomplish a specific outcome.

After spending time working with Senate President Peter Courtney, Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Employ-

ment Department, I am excited that we have figured out a way forward. The bill (Senate Bill 722) that has been developed, of which I am co-chief sponsor, will change the nature of the Oregon unemployment compensation program to allow for that very exception to exist. Our Coast Guard members and other Homeland Security employees, who are required to work under government shutdowns, will similarly be eligible for benefits through a mirror program created specifically for this scenario and funded by the state. I hope this legislation moves quickly through the Legislature

so we can be prepared should the government close again in the middle of February.

Our families need to be supported, and it is our duty to make that happen. I couldn't be prouder to represent communities that have come together to support others during such a difficult time. Working on this bill as my first piece of major legislation to help my community and all Oregonians, in tandem with many others, is precisely why I ran in the first place. Thank you for the opportunity to let me serve you.

*Tiffany Mitchell represents House District 32 in the Oregon Legislature.*

## LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian, should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published.

Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters in poor taste will not be printed.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### We're better than this

I take great exception with the reaction to the posting of KKK flyers downtown ("Man behind KKK flyers in Astoria comes forward," The Daily Astorian, Jan. 26). The foundation of the KKK is hate that has resulted in lynchings and murders over the years. This hate is based on skin color.

The KKK is classified as a hate group, and the response locally reverts to the First Amendment. The individual who posted the flyers is seeking "like-minded" individuals, and is hiding behind the Constitution to justify hate.

"The KKK wants you" goes way beyond a solicitation for like-minded folks. It appears to be a recruitment attempt. The community needs to respond loudly and clearly to curtail this kind of hatred.

The police chief was correct to mention free speech. That said, the original poster creator's word that he is not associated with the KKK isn't sufficient. In these times, where racial division is being advocated by the current administration, it is important to shine a light on persons who advocate or support hate.

I would hope that local law enforcement contacted the FBI regarding this issue. We're better than this.

**RICHARD McINTOSH**  
Astoria

### Take the hood off

This week I have followed The Daily Astorian's coverage of the KKK fliers. These articles have given the unnamed individual the publicity he desires, but doesn't deserve.

He is creating the momentum for hate crimes to exist in our community. Yet, he

doesn't want to be identified publicly in the paper, or accept responsibility for his actions, even complaining when evidently others have identified him on social media.

The Daily Astorian's coverage makes it appear that the Astoria Police Department's focus is protecting this individual from being victimized, instead of preventing the perpetuation or normalization of racist acts in our predominantly white community that already struggles to make people of color feel welcome.

Dude, if you mean what you post, have the guts to identify yourself, and take off the hood.

I am a man of color living in this community. To say that racism does not exist here is far from the truth. In fact, I have experienced several racist incidents in the area in the past year.

I have, however, witnessed that our community leaders are working to create a better atmosphere for everyone. Last year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day I watched "Selma" at the Liberty Theatre in Astoria. It was not a packed house, but there was a good crowd, which leads me to believe that this community has intolerance for such behavior.

Unfortunately, systemic protection of racist people doesn't help. Maybe one day we will all feel safe enough to list our names.

**DAVID HARPER**  
Astoria

### Park is a fragile finger of wilderness

The beaches and dunes of Fort Stevens State Park draw people from all over the world. For those of us who live here in the North Coast, we recognize that it is a fragile finger of wilderness that we treasure and need to take better care of.

The following are of concern to the many regular walkers that I have met:

- **Dumping in the dunes:** Unfortunately, there are those who drive through the dunes in their trucks and jeeps and dump garbage, old car seats, mattresses and television sets.

- **Human waste in the dunes:** In fishing season, the trucks line up on the river beach. Some of the fishermen don't want to lose their spot to go to facilities at Area D. So, they defecate in the dunes. The smell is unpleasant and could be a health hazard.

- **Littering:** The most common items are plastic shotgun wadding, plastic shopping bags, cigarette lighters, bottles and broken toys. Most of these items are left at the beach or in the marshlands.

- **Speeding trucks on the beach:** They are a danger to walkers and wildlife.

These problems need to be addressed and solved for the good of Fort Stevens State Park.

**JENNIFER NIGHTINGALE**  
Astoria

### What message are we sending?

I support legal immigration for anyone who wishes to come here to the U.S. and participate in pursuing the American dream by contributing to society in a decent and lawful manner. To that end, we all have a responsibility to send messages that reinforce decent and lawful behavior.

I wonder what messages are being sent by the teddy bear vigil ("Vigil held for man detained by ICE," The Daily Astorian, Jan. 28). For one, it implies our justice system is doing something wrong. Are we saying if a law is inconvenient or disliked, you're justified in breaking

it? What are we saying to the millions of immigrants who are patiently waiting (sometimes for years) as they apply for legal citizenship?

It appears Ruben Vera Perez decided to ignore that law and engage in more dangerous law-breaking behavior.

Is it because he has a job and family that he should get special treatment? The majority of inmates are married with families prior to their incarceration. Why should Mr. Perez take obeying the law seriously, when he is treated like a martyr for suffering the consequences of his own behavior?

What message do you send the victim(s) if Mr. Perez decides to drink and drive again? I believe the 28 people killed daily by a drunk driver are more deserving of a teddy bear vigil.

**BRENTON KAHLE**  
Astoria

### I wish I was not writing this

I do not like to write this.

Oregon is no longer the only state in the union with no legal limits on terminating human babies in the womb. New York just passed a constitutional amendment that abortion can be done up to the due date, with no doctor present. If the baby survives the procedure, whoever is in attendance can legally finish the job after birth.

When this legislation passed the New York Senate by 30-something to 20-something, there was a standing ovation (with cheers) from the Senate floor. A "Catholic" governor signed the bill into law.

I wish I was not writing this. I hope you do not enjoy reading it.

**JEAN HERMAN**  
Astoria