

OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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Change happens when someone fights for it

The New York Times recently published a special section devoted to the women of the 116th Congress — all 131 of the current female U.S. representatives, senators and delegates. The article highlights the changes happening in our country's political system, changes occurring because people went from being mere spectators to active participants.

The multi-page spread carried a brief statement about each elected official. Several of the women pointed out that they initially ran for office because a particular issue drove them to act. Rep. Judy Chu started a grassroots coalition in her hometown to beat back an anti-immigrant proposal before her city council. Rep.



BRYAN KIDDER

Lucy McBath ran for Congress after her son was murdered — she wanted to know why this could happen. Sen. Maggie Hassan ran to make sure there were equal opportunities for those, like her son, who have severe disabilities. Each woman saw an issue needing to be addressed and each decided to be the one to do something about it.

Their stories are inspiring, not only for women who are seeking greater roles of responsibility in government, but for all of us who see an unmet need in our community. Fortunately for those of us in Clatsop County, our next opportunity to move from spectator to participant is coming soon; May 21 to be exact. That is when approximately 120 positions within dozens of special districts will be up for election.

Special districts are governmental bodies formed to provide a service or function not offered by an existing municipal or county government. While the political activities in Salem or Washington, D.C. may seem beyond your ability to influence, the workings of local special districts are focused directly on your community and can touch your life in very immediate ways.

The special districts electing officers this May in Clatsop County include all public school districts; Clatsop Community College; Port of Astoria; both the Clatsop Care and Union health districts; every rural fire and rescue district, and water and sanitary district;



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

Women members of Congress cheered after President Donald Trump acknowledged more women in Congress during his State of the Union address.

Clatsop Rural Law Enforcement District; Sunset Empire Parks and Recreation District; and Sunset Empire Transportation District.

To get on the ballot for any of these special district positions, candidates must file with the county's Elections Office by March 21. You can file beginning Feb. 9. The Election Office website has all the information you need to learn more.

Running for a special district office would help highlight the issues you find important. For example, do you have a desire to see changes to the curriculum or facilities at your child's school? Now is the chance to do more than just talk about it — run for the school board and push for the classes and services needed to ready our kids for the future. Worried that when the big one hits you won't have adequate emergency response capabilities in your area? Then seek out a position on your fire protection district and propose how to best cover your locale. Think there is a need for better care options for our aging and health-challenged popula-

tion? There are health districts needing your ideas and energy. The best way to address the issues central to special districts is to run for office and work for change.

Pushing for change requires effort. One of the quotes in the Times article that brings home the importance of running for office was from Rep. Norma Torres. She said, "Change doesn't happen because it is needed — it happens when someone fights for it."

Part of that fight is the act of running for office. As I encourage people to run, the most common objections I hear are their lack of free time to devote to the position, unfamiliarity with how the district works, no money to run a campaign or the fear of public speaking.

All of those points can be obstacles, but without someone willing to step up and run, we will be left largely with the wealthy, the retired or the attention seekers running for office. Nothing against those folks, but if that winnowing process is unacceptable to you, become a candidate driven by a fire in

the belly for a cause and a willingness to sacrifice for your community.

Take heart. There are those willing to help. To make it less daunting, there will be a free Elections 101 seminar on Saturday, March 9 from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Flag Room of the Astoria Library. The seminar will go over the mechanics of running for office — how to file, form a team, raise money and follow the reporting guidelines. This is valuable information for the candidate or the campaign volunteer. The Clatsop County Democratic Party will conduct the seminar, but it is open to those of all political persuasions. The races in May are nonpartisan and the seminar is too.

Running for office is at the heart of our democracy, a system our forefathers and mothers designed to give you a say in the affairs of your community. Now is the time for you to step up, get involved and join the fight.

Bryan Kidder is chair of the Clatsop County Democratic Party and a commissioner of the Sunset Empire Transportation District.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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.



Cleaning the swamp?

That incompetent man in the White House seems to have some difficulty in cleaning the swamp. Apparently, he flooded it with his own staff. I thought we needed to get some alligators in that swamp.

We now see that Robert Mueller has seen fit to give him a hand to actually clean the swamp for him.

DIANE FINUCANE
Warrenton

Not progress

My heart sank when I saw several of the New York legislators, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo, gleefully signing a bill that allows babies to be aborted in the third trimester, even up to the day before the baby's natural birth. What are we becoming as a nation?

Whatever it is, I wouldn't call it progress, because it appears more medieval than anything else. I cannot think of a more barbarous act than these types of procedures, which is essentially the butchering of a child while it is still in

the mother's womb.

In order to kill this child legally, it must be killed inside its host. How odd to think that merely changing the locale of the baby justifies murdering it. Because it is not fully developed, that makes it OK for the baby to meet such a gruesome end?

Grade school kids are less developed than adults, should that allow their demise at the hands of medical practitioners? Oh, it might be the size of the infant that some believe justifies these procedures.

Are you kidding me? Is this morally the right thing?

CARL YATES
Seaside

This treaty was working

I am very concerned about the U.S. abandoning the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. We certainly need to challenge Russia if we have evidence that they are not complying, but to get into a dangerous and expensive nuclear arms race at this time is putting the whole planet at risk. There is too much at stake. We actu-

ally need to expand the treaty, instead. When somebody breaks a law you make every effort to enforce the law, not abandon it. There were roughly 70,000 warheads in the mid-1980s. There are now about 6,850. This treaty was working. We need to figure out how we can get Russia to comply and get China in on the treaty.

Are we going to put all this money into defense — instead of badly needed social programs and infrastructure — to simply satisfy the ego of our insecure leader? I hope not.

JEAN HOOGE
Astoria

Need more charging stations

With one million electric vehicles (EV) in the U.S. now, and a dozen new affordable ones coming on the market in 2019, it's important this community respond to support this positive change for our future survival.

We need more EV charging stations. Not only is it attractive to the climate-conscious tourist, but it would

serve those folks who don't own their homes, and need to charge their cars.

It's also a perk for landlords to have chargers who want to attract renters with these vehicles.

The city could reap revenue from parking spots with charging equipment.

As climate activist Greta Thunberg says, "The climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is wake up and change."

PAMELA MATTSON McDONALD
Astoria

And the winner is?

The KKK has, from its inception, believed in, and used, violence or threat of violence, as a means to shape the world to its racist views.

Now, more and more, we are seeing those who are offended by that view using violence to counter it.

Violence against violence. Hate against hate. Who's the winner?

And what will they have won?

JULIE SNYDER
Astoria