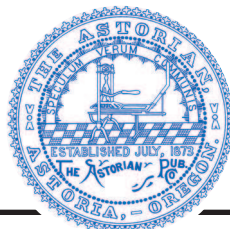


# OPINION



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Richardson's courage needed in politics

**D**ennis Richardson was a courageous man.

It may seem an easy eulogy for a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot who flew missions during the Vietnam War, hauling ammunition into the battlefield and injured soldiers out.

But Richardson's courage, while surely forged during wartime, didn't solely manifest itself in battle. The late secretary of state, who died last week of brain cancer, showed a resolve in his life of elected public service not often seen in politics.

Richardson was a man willing to stand on personal principles while serving the greater good of his state. And he showed that those objectives aren't mutually exclusive, even in a state that didn't often align with his own values.

He has been remembered as a budget hawk, demanding that government be held to account for spending taxpayer dollars. It was that credibility, based in his political philosophy, that sealed his win as a Republican secretary of state, Oregon's second-highest ranking public office. And he lived up to the promise, leading audits that shined a bright light on problems and mal-



Dennis Richardson greets supporters in 2016.

AP Photo/Timothy J. Gonzalez

functions in government programs. That work will carry on after his death.

He was particularly effective, even while undergoing cancer treatments, because the job wasn't a stepping stone to a higher office. His unsuccessful bid for governor in 2014 nearly ended his political career, and he showed no intention of trying again.

As a state representative, Richardson was an advocate for his southern Oregon district's values. He spoke in strong terms against abortion and same-sex marriage, counting them as affronts to God and his faith.

But as a secretary of state, Richardson used his position to benefit the state as a whole, not just his conservative constituents.

He even changed course on his approach to voter registration, supporting as secretary of state the growing number of registered voters where he once advocated in the House for stricter rules.

But in matters of personal faith and values, he was clear-eyed while remaining contemplative.

In an interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting's "All Things Considered" in September 2017, he was asked directly whether he believed homosexuality was immoral. He said he did, and the act of voters didn't change the perspective of God. But he also said the matter was legally settled and that he was willing to accept both the humanity and personal choices of others.

Voters didn't change his beliefs, either, though he knew the responsibility of being elected to statewide office meant representing a much wider and more diverse electorate.

We need more of these kinds of people in government leadership, willing to state their beliefs clearly while understanding that their job is not to enforce them on others.

In Dennis Richardson we had a true and decent public servant, and that takes all kinds of courage.

## LETTERS

### Local power needed

The Daily Astorian's Feb. 13 story, "State Legislature considers community energy bill," and Feb. 19 letter, "Renewable energy," document two inadequate approaches to meeting the North Coast's electrical needs. Oregon has predicted that a Cascadia Subduction Zone event will eliminate electrical service to us for three to six months, and generator fuel for one month.

We need a local renewable power source, as proposed and designed by a locally based public utility district in formation, Cascadia PUD. Our present power supplier has already declined to help us. One set of solar panels atop the county building is just their typical sop to local politicians so they can continue to sell us overpriced Wyoming renewable energy, which does nothing to mitigate Cascadia outages.

Oregon already allows us to form a local PUD, like all surrounding areas have intelligently formed. PUDs have preferential rights to purchase Bonneville hydropower at lower rates than investor-owned utilities like our present electrical supplier. This could save us millions on our electrical bills. PUDs are already developing locally based renewable energy supplies which will not go down in a Cascadia event; we can, too.

Our present supplier will use scare tactics and glib outside legal teams to try to prevent being bought out by the proposed Cascadia PUD. These will be the last gasps from a dying unresponsive bunch of 1 percent investors who have been plundering us for years.

JOHN DUNZER  
Seaside

### Reform campaign finance

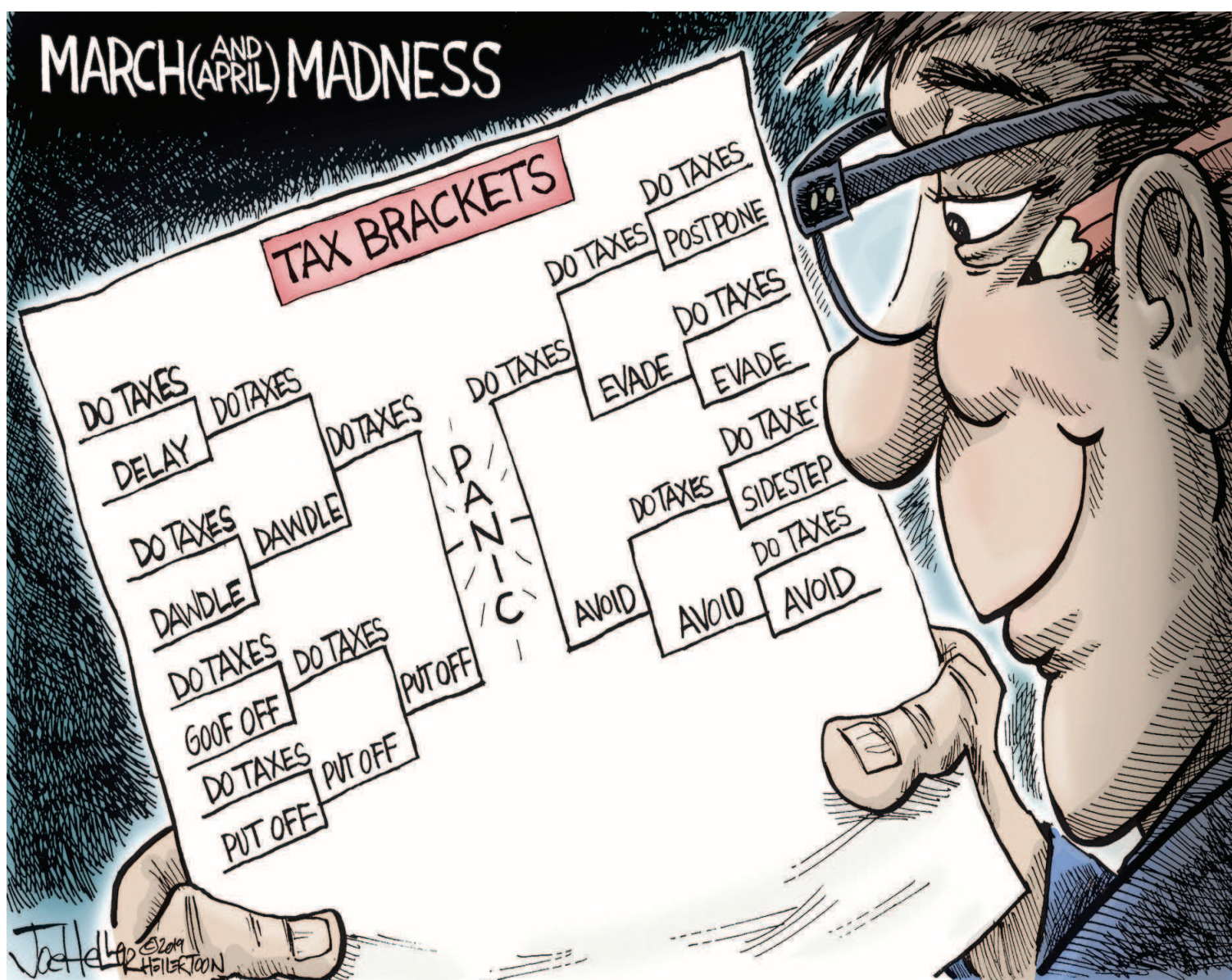
I just finished reading an article from The Oregonian, "Polluted by Money" (Feb. 22). The safest printable word I can use is disgusting.

Our representatives, who have no time for constituents, can meet with a lobbyist in 90 minutes' time — stopping bills that protect the population in exchange for big-money donations, and squashing concerns from government agencies responsible for insuring our welfare. Prostitution is not just rampant in Portland, it's in the state Capitol. Buying votes, seats, and influence — in Oregon it's perfectly legal.

I do believe in the capitalist system, but I also believe in democracy, which should act as a watchdog on the system and create a level playing field, while also protecting the public (their constituents) from government abuse. You ever hear that "promote the general welfare" thing?

How much money do I need to send to Salem so I can breathe clean air, drink clean water, eat food without poison? Is there a bundling price like cable and internet?

This is not a party issue, this is an



"everybody" issue. It seems if there was one thing in government that would be bipartisan, it's this one. I think the time is right for campaign finance reform: let's remove all nonindividual donations from out of state to Oregon's government.

Wouldn't it be funny if lobbyists had to actually present their case, instead of a checkbook? Our representatives are there to represent the people who put them in office, and it doesn't appear to be you and I.

JASON HULTI  
Astoria

### Ban plastic bags

Recently I shopped at my local grocery store, as usual. From the time I entered until checkout, I was smiling. My fellow shoppers were smiling also, nodding and greeting each other. There was not one aisle that I went down that was not clean, orderly, and with helpful clerks. It was such a positive experience.

This store's management has stated that it would participate in the plastic bag ban that is gaining grassroots support locally, statewide and hopefully, some day, nationally.

As shoppers, and as inhabitants of one of the most beautiful and ecologically fragile areas of our country, I do hope we all can see the need for and support our

greatly reduced use of plastics. It begins at the grassroots level.

CARMEN HAMMERSMITH  
Warrenton

### Impressed by Port

To the people of Clatsop County: I recently attended the ad-hoc Port of Astoria budget meeting, and was very impressed to see the diversity of areas of expertise, the quality of the four people who were asked to help the Port and its commissioners, the Port budget formulation process, and the needed addressing of the Port's problems.

I understand Commissioner Frank Spence proposed the idea, and he should be commended for making it happen.

I watch this effort closely because the citizens of Warrenton have an active interest in what happens within the Port of Astoria, and their continuation of services.

RICK NEWTON  
Commissioner, city of Warrenton

### High Point best location for Gearhart fire station

Life on planet Earth is risky. Having lived in earthquake zones my entire life, I've experienced a few smaller events and always carry in the back of my mind

the possibility of a bigger one. That's why I'm glad that the citizens of Gearhart have the opportunity to come together and choose resiliency with the construction of a new fire station that can withstand an earthquake, and will be out of the tsunami inundation zone.

I strongly support building at the High Point location; I do not support rebuilding at the present location or building at the Gearhart Park. The High Point location offers the best resiliency for our community. High Point is already the recommended assembly area for a large portion of Gearhart. People would be gathering in the very place that would have supplies and help available after a natural disaster.

Unlike the other options, the High Point location does not need a DOGAMI exception, because the elevation is sufficient for the mostly likely earthquake scenarios. High Point is located where we often have the greatest concentration of visitors, which is also an important consideration.

The safety of our families and community are worth the necessary investment. Go to [cityofgearhart.com](http://cityofgearhart.com) and fill out the questionnaire by April 29. Your voice is needed to help our city make the best choice possible for a resilient future, no matter what Mother Nature has in store.

BEBE MICHEL  
Gearhart