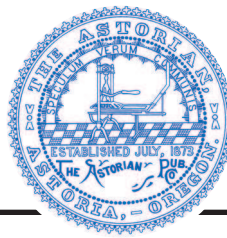


OPINION



the 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

If you witness trouble, stay on the beach

Drill offers chance to give key advice to public

During Emergency Medical Services Week, it is fitting to salute all those who are trained and ready to respond to any crisis with skilled professionalism.

We are especially fortunate that we are protected by the fine personnel, paid and volunteer, at our coastal fire departments. Medix Ambulance crews work closely with them to ensure a level of care. And professional staff at our three local hospitals are ready to treat emergency-call patients 24/7.

These folks handle calls year-round and their service should be saluted.

A key element of those efforts involves ocean rescue.

Our beautiful Pacific Ocean coast can be a treacherous place. Despite repeated warnings to visitors about the danger lurking amid all that beauty, every year there are people who underestimate the waves and the undertow and get into trouble.

That's when rescue team mem-



A Coast Guard vessel sits offshore as emergency responders practice a rescue drill in Seaview. Colin Murphey/The Astorian

bers go to work.

One important nuance emerged from a recent drill involving the Coast Guard and the volunteer surf rescue team across the river in Washington.

Leaders of the event, which involved more than one-half dozen agencies, took time to emphasize the need to get the word out to the

public about an important manner in which they can help.

If you observe what appears to be a person in distress in the ocean and call 911, you must stay at the location and watch for responders' rigs.

That's because early arriving rescuers from fire departments, law enforcement agencies and the

Coast Guard need to know what they are looking for — and where.

Both Doug Knutzen, longtime leader of surf rescuers based in Seaview, Washington, and Lt. Jessica Shafer, Coast Guard commander at Cape Disappointment, made that the single most important takeaway from the drill.

Knowing how many people are in the water — and being able to locate them — are uppermost in the minds of responders as they unpack their rescue gear and launch into the water.

No one wants to call off a rescue until all missing people are accounted for.

In an ideal world, locals and visitors alike would heed the repeated warnings about the dangers of the ocean and never need to be rescued. Alas, that is not the reality of living next to the ocean.

Members of the public who see someone in trouble and call 911 for help have another part to play, too. Don't leave the scene. Stay on the beach, identify yourself to responders, and repeat what you told the 911 dispatcher.



WHERE TO WRITE

- **State Rep. Tiffiny Mitchell** (D): State Capitol, 900 Court St. NE, H-285, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1432. Email: rep.tiffnymitchell@oregonlegislature.gov. Web: oregonlegislature.gov/mitchell
- **State Rep. Brad Witt** (D): State Capitol, 900 Court St. NE, H-374, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1431. Email: Rep.BradWitt@oregonlegislature.gov. Web: oregonlegislature.gov/witt
- **State Sen. Betsy Johnson** (D): State Capitol, 900 Court St. NE, S-209, Salem, OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1716. Email: sen.betsyjohnson@oregonlegislature.gov. Web: oregonlegislature.gov/johnson. District Office: P.O. Box R, Scappoose, OR 97056. Phone: 503-543-4046. Astoria office phone: 503-338-1280
- **U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici** (D): 2231 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515. Phone: 202-225-0855. District office: 12725 SW Millikan Way, Suite 220, Beaverton, OR 97005. Phone: 503-469-6010. Web: bonamici.house.gov

GUEST COLUMN

Time to start investing in our future

Earlier this month, thousands of teachers across Oregon walked out of classrooms and rallied both in their communities and on the state Capitol steps with one laudable request: that we take bold action and finally fund our education system. That same day, I spent my afternoon calling educators from the North Coast to talk about what a \$1 billion dollar per year increase in education funding would mean for our school districts.

Unsurprisingly, educators in our communities shared the same concerns as thousands of students and teachers across the state and urged me as their legislator to vote "yes" on legislation that could deliver on that promise.

For too long, Oregon's public schools have been chronically underfunded, and students have paid the price. Early in 2018, the Legislature sought to tackle this long-standing problem through the formation of the Joint Committee on Student Success. The product of their yearlong tour — is the Student Success Act.

The bill, which has been signed into

law, directly dedicates investments in early learning, K-12 public schools and critical wraparound services for students. Schools will be accountable for meeting performance targets in areas such as graduation rates, reading levels, and attendance. Specifically, the investments must go towards expanding learning time, reducing class sizes, expanding student access and participation, or improving student health and safety.

One critical need I have heard consistently from parents, teachers and students is increased mental health support. When kids are struggling at home, they bring that strain with them to school. From September through June, kids spend most of their time in schools where a confluence of home stressors come together under the added pressure of a resource-strapped school and overworked teachers. Kids who are affected by these external stressors aren't ready to learn, and even a single disruption to a student who is struggling to manage their mental health can derail an entire classroom.

Increasing revenue to invest in education will empower our schools and educators to implement approaches that will improve student mental health across the North Coast so that they can be ready to

learn and succeed. For the most vulnerable students in our communities, school is often the only support and stability in their lives. If we invest now, not only will we see immediate improvements in student performance, but we will see ripple effects for years to come as healthy students become successful adults. When we address student mental health in the environment where they spend most of their time, we can set them up to grow in both learning the skills needed to get good-paying jobs, and how to manage their mental health into adulthood. Taking approaches like these and others will reduce the burden on social services and our health system as our kids become adults.

What this means for our local communities is millions in new investments. For instance, the Astoria School District will receive \$1.4 million more in the 2019-2020 school year. The district will focus on reducing class sizes, hiring mental health counselors, and adding at least three additional days to their academic calendar. Seaside School District will use its \$1.2 million investment to hire a staff dedicated to trauma-informed care and would incorporate STEM and arts classes in all K-12 schools.

Every school district is different, and

the support of this bill gives school districts the autonomy to decide where to best spend those funds. We need solutions that work for the North Coast, and this will give our schools the ability to best serve the unique needs of our kids.

All of this would be paid for through a modified commercial activities tax on businesses earning more than \$1 million per year. This proposal has a low rate for companies, just over half of one percent. In addition, the legislation contains exemptions on motor fuel, medical and insurance provider assessments and groceries. It also gives every Oregonian income tax relief. This new tax structure will add long-term stability to school funding and ensure we are able to continue supporting students in every corner of Oregon.

The Student Success Act represents a carefully crafted, well-designed proposal that will help us reverse the trend of overall classroom and graduation rates. I am so proud to have supported this proposal and thrilled that it has been signed into law. It is time for Oregon to finally start investing in our future.

Rep. Tiffiny Mitchell, D-Astoria, represents House District 32 in the state Legislature.



TIFFINY MITCHELL