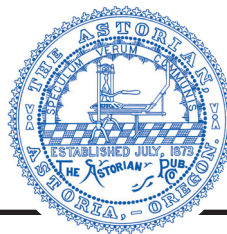


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Would ousting governor improve Oregon?

As Oregonians decide whether to sign petitions to recall Gov. Kate Brown from office, it is worth thinking back to whom she displaced in the governor's mansion.

That would be Gov. John Kitzhaber and first lady Cylvia Hayes.

Kitzhaber was hounded from office in 2015 after both were accused of conflicts of interest, particularly by blurring the lines between Hayes' public role and her private business endeavors. Subsequent investigations uncovered more smoke than fire. Kitzhaber agreed last year to pay a \$20,000 fine to the state ethics commission, and this spring Hayes settled for a \$50,000 fine.

It is difficult to argue that the state was well-served by the public rush to judgment against Kitzhaber.

His resignation catapulted then-Secretary of State Brown into the governorship. A continuing irony is that it was Republicans who stood up for Democrat Kitzhaber and helped finance his legal defense. Republicans recognized he was being railroaded from office. They also preferred his collaborative approach and moderately progressive views to Brown's all-out liberalism.

Brown served the rest of Kitzhaber's term and was elected last fall to what would be a final four-year term for her. Now, separate recall efforts have been launched by the Oregon Republican Party and by Michael Cross of Flush Down Kate Brown and the Oregon First! PAC. To force a recall election that could remove her from office, either group has



AP Photo/Don Ryan

Gov. John Kitzhaber, left, is joined by his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes, as he is sworn in for an unprecedented fourth term in 2015. He resigned amid suspicion that Hayes used her relationship to earn lucrative consulting contracts.

until mid-October to collect just over 280,000 valid signatures from voters.

The first lesson from the Kitzhaber fiasco is whether Oregonians would be better off with a known quantity as governor or someone new.

A successful recall would elevate State Treasurer Tobias Read to the governorship. The current secretary of state, Republican Bev Clarno from Central Oregon, was appointed to the position after Dennis Richardson's death and, as an appointee, is barred by the state constitution from filling a gubernatorial vacancy.

Read, a Beaverton Democrat, is bright, politically ambitious and well-regarded nationally for Oregon's programs to promote retirement savings. To much of Oregon, however, he remains relatively unknown.

Voters should be paying close attention and evaluating his leadership because there's a good chance he will run for governor — whether it's to succeed Brown in 2022 or, if she is recalled this year, as the short-term incumbent in a special election next year to finish her term.

In contrast, a related question is whether Brown, like Kitzhaber, eventually will mellow and moderate while in office. Of course, that took Kitzhaber until his unprecedented third term as governor. Unfortunately for Oregonians, Brown has shown no such inclination. Asked recently whether she planned to veto Republicans' legislation in retribution for their state Senate walkout in June, Brown told Politico, "I will just say ... revenge is a dish best served cold and slowly."

Brown was the Democrats' key

negotiator in the deal with Senate Republicans that ended their first walkout. She takes things personally, instead of recognizing that her and others' lack of clarity and specificity in that deal led to the second walkout.

Still, Brown is not the dominant cause of our state government's overreach and undisciplined spending. She is the enabler. She possesses the bully pulpit, she can institute her will through agency appointments and directives, but the greater fault lies with the Legislature that makes the laws — and ultimately with voters who have allowed one political party to dominate.

Instead of making gains in 2018, Republicans went the other way, allowing Democrats to achieve supermajorities in both chambers of the Legislature. One-party rule is not good for the state, regardless of which party it is.

Next year, three statewide offices are up for election — secretary of state, treasurer and attorney general — along with a majority of legislative seats. With the exception of certain urban legislative districts that are inexorably Democratic, each of those races provides an opportunity for Republicans to bring balance to our state government. A case can be made that the GOP should focus on those efforts — recruiting and financing excellent, independent-minded candidates who can appeal to voters in swing districts.

The recall campaigns against Brown may be great for venting political frustration, but the question for voters is: Would ousting a governor improve Oregon?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Racism'

We older folks remember the early 1950s when U.S. Sen. Joe McCarthy vociferously investigated communists in the country. History remembers his effort as "McCarthyism," a word describing unfair charges against somebody.

The "ism" of modern-day America is racism.

"Racism" was once defined as a belief by one race that another race is inferior. But today the word's used differently. "Racism" is now used to describe a white person who criticizes a nonwhite person.

The most recent example is President Donald Trump's tweets about U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings, an African American congressman who represents inner-city Baltimore. After Cummings' dramatic criticism of Trump's immigration policies, Trump responded like he usually does when attacked. He pointed out how Cummings' district of Baltimore is still rat infested and has the worst crime and murder rate in the country after 25 years of Cummings' leadership that pumped billions of federal dollars into the city.

Democrat presidential wannabes and the media immediately called President Trump a racist. Criticizing an African American isn't politically correct, as we all came to realize when Barack Obama was president. But Trump isn't a politically correct president. He speaks his mind. He says out loud what at least half the country's thinking.

Thankfully, some media folks criticized the misuse of the word "racism" against Trump in the Baltimore exchange. The word "racism" risks becoming, like the word "McCarthyism" has become — synonymous with unfair charges against somebody. And it'll be a sad day for American race relations if the word "racism" is ever diminished in that way.

DON HASKELL
Astoria

Poor judgment

Well it hasn't even been a year yet, and Ruben Vera Perez did exactly what I predicted. He drove drunk ("Astoria man detained by ICE a second time," The Astorian, July 30).

Despite all the support his well-wishers could muster, he decided to break the law again. As Winston Churchill once exclaimed, "When will the lesson be learned?" I hope this event will change the minds of those who still think our justice system is somehow victimizing innocent people.

People who come into contact with law enforcement usually do so as a result of behavior fueled by poor judgment. Poor judgment can be the result of a number of things, and needs to be carefully evaluated, rather than dismissed by well-intended, but misguided, Samaritans.

Those in our community who attempted to portray Mr. Perez as victim of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did a disservice to our law enforcement community, and all law-abiding citizens. Perhaps this will help people see that the old adage "where there's smoke, there's fire" can be of some value. Only those who truly seek justice, rather than subvert it, will understand its message.

No matter how you slice it, ignoring wrongful behavior encourages wrongdoing. Luckily, this time, we didn't need a teddy bear vigil for someone due to his drunk driving.

BRENTON KAHLE
Astoria

Housing data sought

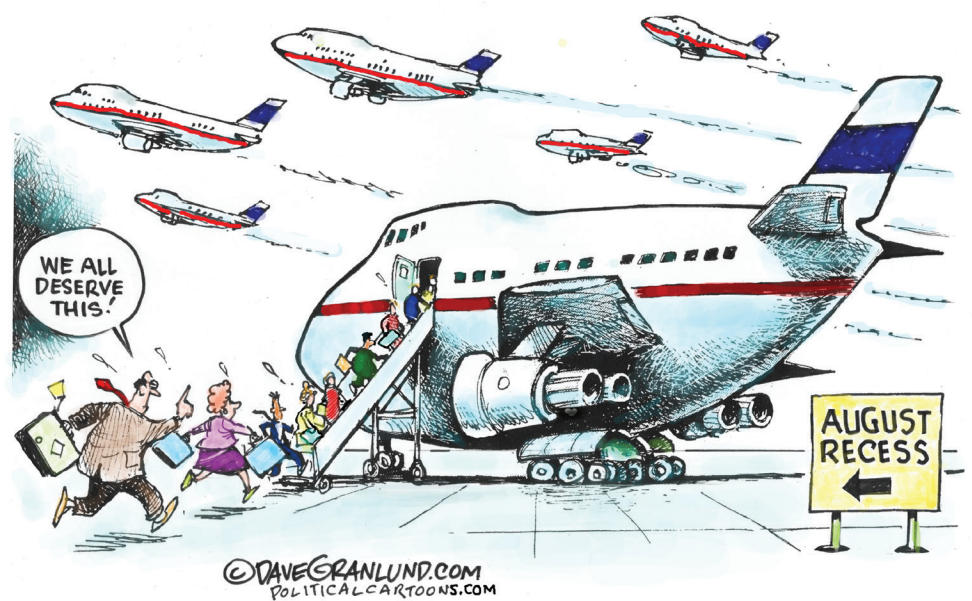
I was interested to see the housing information on the opinion page ("And now the good news on affordable housing," The Astorian, July 30). There is one major piece of information I have never seen presented in The Astorian concerning this subject, about which I have questions.

A data search using the criteria: Clatsop County zip codes; select individual tax forms for families of three or more; and select families with gross income of less than \$30,000 for the tax forms that qualify.

I am trying to determine how many people in Clatsop County may be struggling to pay for housing based on their income, 30 percent of which enables a \$750 a month rent for a two-bedroom unit.

I am seeking the same information for tax forms filed by single/married citizens 62 and older with a gross income of less than \$20,000, 30 percent of which enables

The only time members of Congress act in unison...



a \$500 a month rent for a one-bedroom unit.

I would like to know how much the monthly rent would be on the examples shown in the article for the units identified as affordable — rents above \$500 for a one-bedroom, or \$750 for a two-bedroom, are below market price, but still problematic.

TESS CHEDSEY
Warrenton

Better leaders

The LNG case study article ("Case study looks at lessons from LNG fight," The Astorian, July 27) cites that "it was a victory for local grassroots groups over wealthy corporate interests," but the real victory here was the elimination of a role for fossil fuel.

Substitution of natural gas for oil and coal was a rational measured attack on climate change that could minimize economic disruption. Yes, these LNG plants were terrible. Today's technology provides us with natural gas fired electric plants that have zero emissions. It is interesting that the tables have recently turned with the recent opposition to "cap and trade" in Oregon by different grassroots organizations. These grassy groups favor a more measured approach to the elimination of fossil fuels and still the CO2 flows into our

environment.

These case studies of energy illustrate that these battles feature combatants who are simply mentally unequipped to work together to develop a plan which will allow our civilization to have a future. Name-calling has replaced the ability to reason. There is no ability for citizens to sit together and become informed and make rational plans. This used to be the role of government. Our present leaders talk about citizen involvement, but the involvement of informed citizens is really just a joke to them.

Until we get better leaders in our cities, county and states, we are doomed to fail. And the election of better leaders is the citizen's job. You can see this failure every day, even without a meaningless case study.

JOHN DUNZER
Seaside

Admiration

I just wanted to write a brief letter expressing my admiration of Letter Frankovic's reporting for The Astorian.

I enjoy reading her reporting for its up-to-date information and the clear, unbiased way she presents the issues. She is a real true reporter in the best sense.

TERRIE POWERS
Astoria