

OPINION

theAstorian

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Founded in 1873

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OUR VIEW

Small inconvenience, big improvement

It is heartbreaking to see photos of wildlife and sea species that have died from swallowing or becoming tangled in plastic bags.

It is more than annoying to be driving and have plastic bags littering the side of the road or empty ones blowing up into your windshield.

The new Oregon law banning single-use plastic bags is a small step toward alleviating both issues.

The concept is designed as a way to enhance the environment and reduce the amount of nonbiodegradable material going into our landfills. It goes hand in hand with a ban on restaurants automatically offering customers single-use plastic straws.

We fully expect there to be some grumbling over the apparent lack of convenience. Of course, many of us carry our groceries home in plastic bags and then use them around the house for various projects.

This state action is a small step, but a significant one. It should be considered as part of an approach that embraces the philosophy of, “think globally, act locally.”

Oregon was once considered the leading environmentally conscious state. It was a pioneer on



Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian
A plastic bag discarded near the Clatsop County Heritage Museum in Astoria.

recycling and its 1971 Bottle Bill was the model embraced by much of the nation. In this endeavor, it is actually catching up. California, Hawaii and New York have taken the lead. It is high on the agenda in Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi and Wisconsin, too.

There is evidence that actions can change behavior.

Restrictions were introduced in Great Britain in 2015 when grocery stores began charging for

bags at checkouts. There were accompanying public outreach campaigns to discourage their use.

The move prompted a country-wide lifestyle change — back to the 1950s’ approach. Now British shoppers have resumed carrying their own canvas bags into stores and filling them up at the checkout counter. We should do the same. The only inconvenience is remembering to bring your bags.

The British government official in charge of environmental policy

later said the significant reduction in the use of plastic bags that this prompted was “a powerful demonstration that we are collectively ‘calling time’ on being a throw-away society.”

Far from being an unreasonable intrusion in personal convenience, we believe that it is an important role of government to lead the way. We have one planet and such steps to enhance the environment are reasonable.

Back in 2006, the Los Angeles Times earned significant applause for highlighting the appalling quantity of plastic pollution floating around in the world’s oceans. That was 14 years ago. It is reasonable to assume the threat is significantly worse today.

As we mention the issue, it is pleasing to give a tip of the hat to those forward-thinking people in Manzanita for leading the way — back in 2017 — well before this statewide action was taken. Other communities and businesses in Tillamook County have also taken strides to play their part and Seaside took action last year.

We believe “think globally, act locally” needs to become more than a catchphrase. Oregon lawmakers should continue to take the lead, but we can all play our part, too.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Confusing

The recent guest column, “What the timber lawsuit really means” (The Astorian, Dec. 28), by David Yamamoto, was very confusing.

Yamamoto chairs the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties, which is charged with advising the Oregon Board of Forestry on the management of these lands. They were established in the 1940s after the forests in the counties had been devastated by fires or overcutting. They transferred ownership to the state in return for a portion of the timber revenue generated after the land had been restored by the state.

Yamamoto thought this land would be managed according to the greatest permanent value (GPV) in the Oregon Forest Acquisition Act to maximize revenue from logging. This definition was changed in 1998, when the Board of Forestry added social and environmental values in recognition of the advances in science.

Forestlands managed solely to generate revenue would cause major damage to the environment, including clean water and air, species habitat, the tourist and recreational industry and ultimately, jobs. Findings since 2017 have also proven that when these added values are neglected, these forests are a major contributor to green house gases and, therefore, climate change.

While bemoaning the negative impact of the 1998 revised GPV, Yamamoto states that “Tillamook County is blessed with dynamic timber, dairy and fishing opportunities.” I do not think that Tillamook County would be experiencing these blessings had the GPV not been changed by the Board of Forestry in 1998.

CAROLYN EADY
Astoria

Change the subject

I knew when President Donald Trump was impeached, and looking at a Senate trial, that he would react the way he always has ... he would change the subject by doing something reprehensible.

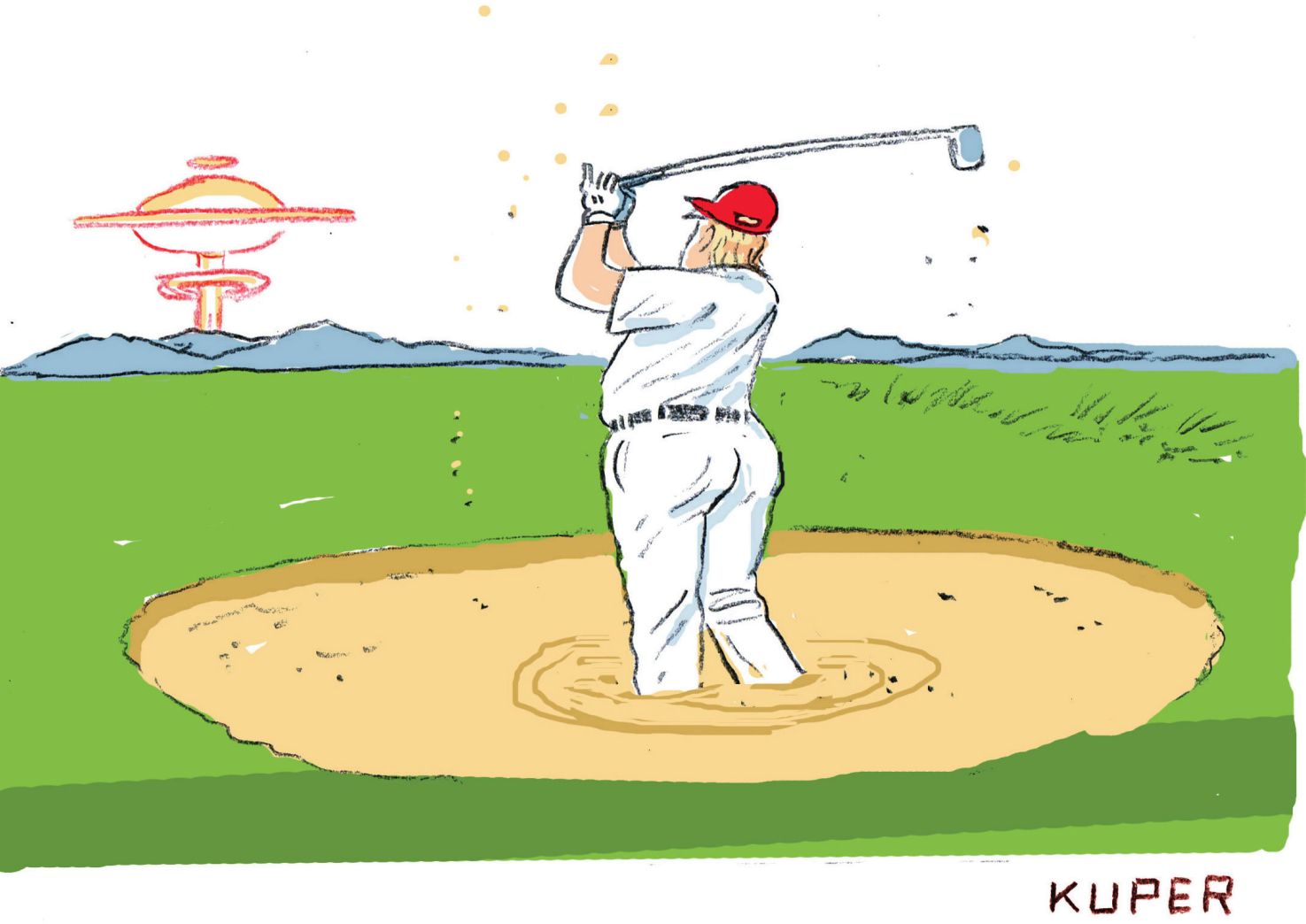
And he did. He put the world in harm’s way. As a renegade, he did not tell Congress. He did not contact the United Nations. He made a rash, immature move that made him feel more important.

That’s the kind of man he is. We deserve better. God help this world of endless war.

MARY TANGUAY WEBB
Astoria

Object

I really must object to a recent letter trashing the driver who hit a pedestrian, Todd Kim (“Darkness,” The Asto-



rian, Jan. 4).

Although I was not at the site, and do not know the driver, on the night of the event eyewitnesses told me it happened so quickly that no one could have avoided it.

Can anyone who has ever been a pedestrian say they have not, at least once, made a bad decision? Can anyone who has ever been a driver say that a pedestrian, or one of our fellow animals, has not darted out without warning?

ROSE LEWIN
Astoria

Do our part

My fellow Astorians: While my children are now grown, I am still very appreciative of the Astoria Middle School track and fields, as I know many other dog owners are as well. This is one of the reasons I make a point to not just pick up after my dogs, but also those of the multiple irresponsible dog owners who use these fields.

Not once have I walked my dogs there without having to clean up after other dogs. Please note: This does not make me a martyr, all it makes me is a grown-up. For I know there are far worse things in life to have to tolerate, and that one has no business getting a dog if one cannot be responsible for it.

I also value all children. In order for emotional and cognitive growth to occur,

one has to have at least some sense of what one is capable of. This is entirely dependent upon having at least some sense of value.

When our city’s children have to negotiate landmines in order to use their school’s track or ball fields, we have sent them a strong message. We have told them that they are not worth even a few seconds of our time, for that is all it takes to pick up after one’s dog, and walk to a garbage can (of which there are plenty).

It truly does take a village, and if one is smart, one won’t forget this. Because one day these children will be doing our taxes, checking us out at the grocery store, drawing our blood or, pardon my bluntness, cleaning up after us when we are no longer able to, and I’m sure we’d all like them to do so with the kind of graciousness and competence that comes with healthy self-esteem.

So let’s all do our part.

WYNNE PRESTON
Astoria

Dismantling democracy

Are we, or are we not, a nation of laws? Are we going to let our president act outside the bounds of the Constitution? The evidence against him is undisputed, except by him.

President Donald Trump withheld congressionally authorized military aid

to our ally, the fledgling democracy of Ukraine, needed in their defense in their war against Russia. He withheld the aid in lieu of demanding the Ukrainian president provide him dirt on a political opponent, interfering in our upcoming 2020 election.

Then, he ordered members of the executive branch not to comply with any congressional subpoenas for testimony and documents about these actions, oversight duly mandated to Congress by Article I of the Constitution. Three constitutional legal scholars testified at the impeachment hearings that if they are not impeachable acts, then nothing is.

The cult of Trump must come to an end, or our democracy will be no more. Trump is taking us to the Russian model of tyranny of his hero, Vladimir Putin. Disinformation, lies, delegitimization of the courts, and of the press, and division of the populace are undercutting our democracy every day.

In spite of the current narrative of conservatives and their media, Democrats are not your enemy. Democrats are your family members, your neighbors, your co-workers and your fellow Americans.

Russia is your adversary, and every day you support Trump, you support a lawless president, and you support Putin, who are dismantling our democracy right in front of our eyes.

ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart