

PUBLISHER’S NOTEBOOK

Why we make political endorsements

The field is set for the local 2020 elections. Tuesday was the filing deadline for candidates running in Oregon’s May 19 primary election. You can expect original, comprehensive reporting from The Astorian about campaigns for Clatsop County elected office and ballot measures. Our elections content consists of four parts: 1. News stories 2. Letters to the Editor 3. Editorial board endorsements and 4. Political advertising. Each type of content stands on its own, independent of influence.



KARI BORGEN

Our primary role in election coverage will be focused on interviews with local candidates and background on local measures — information at a depth you can’t get anywhere else. Election news stories are produced by reporters the same way they report on issues or events every day, by gathering facts through documents and interviews for an impartial report.

The Astorian will also publish statewide election stories from our Oregon Capital Bureau and national updates from syndicated news sources. Letters to the editor are published on the Opinion page as a venue for readers to provide their opinion on election topics. Letters should be original, exclusive to The Astorian, fewer than 250 words and must include the writer’s name, address and phone number so that we can confirm authorship. The best letters inform without insult. Our goal is to print every letter submitted. We may ask you to edit your letter — or we will edit your letter — for grammar, spelling,



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Burke Matthews, left, and Josh Shipley hold up signs in front of Astoria High School on Election Day in 2018.

accuracy or publication standards. Political advertising is paid for by the candidate or campaign, with the message, presentation and timing determined by the customer. Publication standards apply here, too. No false statements accepted, and the ad must include the contact information of the campaign purchasing the ad. The Astorian’s editorial board will write candidate and ballot measure endorsements. The board consists of five current and former editors and publishers: me, editor Derrick DePledge, former editor and publisher Steve Forrester, former managing editor Patrick Webb and Chinook Observer editor and publisher

Matt Winters. DePledge and I will interview local candidates much as we would interview a job prospect — do we think that they are the best candidate for the job? Experience, priorities, work history and project leadership are all important. The editorial board has widely disparate personal views, but will agree as a board on endorsements we think will represent the county’s best interests. Some newspapers, most recently the Arizona Republic and Dallas Morning News, have chosen to discontinue editorial board endorsements. According to the Arizona Republic, “(Readers) tell us our endorsements alienate them and blur

the way they read our news stories. They don’t see the sharp line we draw between our news and opinion content.” If you’ve read this far into this column, I trust that you read and comprehend stories — you don’t get your election news from just soundbites and memes. I believe that Astorian readers are smart enough to understand the difference between an Opinion page editorial and news stories.

The Astorian has historically endorsed candidates for election, not because we are kingmakers or think we have better judgment than our readers. Newspapers have access to candidates and research that readers may not have. It’s our job to understand local issues and how public offices can affect change. You may not agree with our choices, but they should give you food for thought. As my Dad used to tell me, “I don’t always agree with your editorials, but I can understand your reasoning.” That’s my gold standard for an endorsement — that we have provided you enough information to understand our point of view, even if you don’t agree with it. The Arizona Republic goes on to say, “You need information to understand your community, to seize its opportunities and help solve its problems. In a democracy, newspapers are your eyes and ears on government, courts, police departments, public schools, anywhere the people’s business is conducted. The information we bring you is essential to holding your government accountable.” Particularly in this upcoming election year, we couldn’t agree more. Kari Borgen is publisher of The Astorian.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep Kathleen

Ask voters in Clatsop County District 4 to vote “yes” to reelect and keep county Commissioner Kathleen Sullivan. As a commissioner, Kathleen Sullivan supported the designation of a stretch of the Nehalem River as part of the state scenic waterway system. This designation means that the river will be maintained as a free-flowing waterway, and its water quality and quantity and habitat for fish and wildlife will be protected. These designations are rare in Oregon, and it shows Sullivan’s leadership in taking care of our water resources that are essential to our health and local economy. Protect Clatsop County’s natural resources that mean jobs for our working families. Keep Kathleen. LAURA ALLEN Seaside

Unbalanced

It’s fascinating, in a strange way, that President Donald Trump proposes to fight the coronavirus contagion with payroll tax cuts which only affect working people with incomes up to \$137,700, which is, just guessing here, most of us in Clatsop County. Cutting payroll taxes that fund Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for all U.S. citizens attacks already underfunded popular programs targeted for destruction by conservatives for decades. These proposed cuts of truly minor taxes, compared to income, property or sales taxes, are planned cuts to appease Republican political bases. Why do plumbers and roofers, like most of us, pay into the payroll tax program on our total annual income, while all those with incomes over \$137,700 — often trust, inheritance or other unearned income — stop paying at that point, yet collect the same benefits as plumbers and roofers? This system is unbalanced and President Trump is making it worse. R.D. SMITH Gearhart

Thoughtful listener

Ideally, I would like my county commissioner to be someone who is easily approached, listens thoughtfully to my ideas and considers all points of view. This person would care very much about the well-being of my community, including its citizens and its environmental and economic health. In Clatsop County, emergency preparedness should also be a priority. We have such a person in Kathleen Sullivan, who is running for reelection. I would urge you to give her your vote. SHARON KLOEPFER Gearhart



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters 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 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. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or 1555 North Roosevelt in Seaside, or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

Congratulations

One in 1,000 companies in the U.S. reaches 100 years. I congratulate Mike Josephson on this achievement (“A living link to the past,” The Astorian, March 7). My family owned a fuel oil delivery company and gas station that reached 50 years. By the late 1970s, only a few, large competitors had survived the oil crisis. My father recommended another career. During that time, the auto industry had faced international competition, and the lumber industry had fallen on hard times. Jobs in Michigan and Oregon were tough to come by. Four generations of a family business cannot avoid challenges like these, and won’t survive them without flexibility

and good relationships with customers and suppliers. When I read that Mike Josephson wanted to dress differently, attend university and pursue a tech career, I wondered whether the business would have survived if he had wanted to follow in the family footsteps from day one. Way to go, Mike. The county is better for having your company here. EDMOND VERDURMEN Gearhart

Moratorium

By the time this letter hits The Astorian, it’s hoped the floating petrie dish called the Grand Princess will have been disinvented to dock here in Astoria to inau-

gurate the cruise season. Despite having dumped her ill and weary passengers, I have no confidence the ship will be totally disinfected, or her crew sufficiently past the danger of infecting others by the time she gets here in a couple of weeks. This town has made a deal with the devil in its embrace of hosting cruise ships. We depend on it too much now, and the danger each ship brings — not just the Grand Princess — should impel us to look for new business somewhere else. We cannot depend on the Port of Astoria to act wisely, as for financial reasons, they welcome as many ships as can fit at our docks. Nor can we trust the U.S. Coast Guard to protect us, as its commander in chief thinks everything’s just peachy. There should be a moratorium on cruise ships docking here, effective immediately, and that should come from our county health director, mayor or governor. Drunks going overboard and piracy used to be the main dangers of cruising, but those days are gone. We can’t wait for the industry to implode, which it’s in the process of doing right now. There’s no question cruise lines are getting desperate for business, as I see they’re all now offering free open bars. In the meantime, let’s protect ourselves. JOHN F. CROWLEY Astoria