

# OPINION



# the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

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**KARI BORGEN**  
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## OUR VIEW

# Researchers make our world better

We hesitate to invoke a dusty metaphor that politicians love — that the coronavirus pandemic is a “war.”

If it's a war, the main enemy has been the selective information promoted by some and the lack of accurate and thorough reporting by a few news outlets.

But it's not really a war. It's more a case study of the value of research and why there can never be too much effort invested in understanding the world around us.

In the case of the coronavirus, researchers are attempting to gain a better understanding of the illness it causes and how best to arrest its spread. The holy grail they seek is a vaccine that will immunize the population against the virus.

In the meantime, new treatments are being tested to help doctors and others on the front lines keep the death toll as low as possible by helping senior citizens and those with preexisting conditions survive the virus and others more readily recuperate from it.

Just as the need for research in medicine is urgent and ongoing, so too is the need for research in agriculture and fisheries.

While some folks seem to believe they know enough about catching fish, growing crops or raising livestock, new issues and challenges constantly arise. On top of that is a world population that



U.S. Department of Agriculture  
**A USDA Agricultural Research Service microbiologist investigates one of the many mysteries surrounding agriculture. Food producers and all who rely on them must support peer-reviewed science.**

has grown past 7 billion. That's billions of meals a day that farmers and fishermen need to provide.

One example of the thousands of challenges facing agriculture is the need for research on weeds. These seemingly mundane plants rob farmers and ranchers by reducing their crop yields and even killing their livestock.

Through research, farmers now have many tools they can use against weeds. Not only can they use chemicals, but crop rotations, cover crops, natural enemies and other techniques to provide a high-tech yet softer solution to con-

trolling weeds in both conventional and organic agriculture.

It's through research that those innovative techniques were discovered — and more will be added to the toolbox in the years to come.

A better scientific grasp of what's happening out in the ocean is essential to ensuring a future for 21st century fisheries.

Occasionally, we encounter conversations that can best be described as anti-technology. Some folks say they don't trust scientists and want to avoid the many advances that researchers have provided.

But when the chips are down, as is the case with the coronavirus, people do not turn to politicians, talk-show hosts or others. They turn to the men and women in laboratories at universities, government agencies and private companies for the answers.

One victim of the coronavirus pandemic has been the economy. More than 36 million Americans have been thrown out of work and millions of businesses have been shuttered. The federal government has already borrowed or printed trillions of dollars to keep the ship afloat.

By comparison, it seems to us that research is a bargain. Researchers can help us understand small problems before they get large. That is true whether we are talking about a virus, a weed or feeding the world.

At Oregon State University, Washington State University, the University of Washington and other academic institutions around the nation, researchers rely on the support of the public, commodity commissions and others to do their important work.

Whether it's in medicine, fisheries, agriculture or some other field, researchers are on the front lines of the war against ignorance about the world around us. It is in all our best interests to support that work any way we can.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Disrespect

Wouldn't it be nice if all the proud Americans who feel the need to storm the state capitals, or the Seaside beach, to protest the lockdown, some with AR-15s strapped to their chests, would be protesting something that actually had to do with combating the coronavirus.

Protest for the doctors and nurses who are every day facing the biggest challenges of their careers while being so ill-equipped. Protest for all the small businesses who are having trouble getting enough financial aid to stay afloat. Protest for all the unemployed people who are having so much difficulty navigating unemployment. Protest for all the renters who are in such a bind.

This isn't about you. This is about all of us. Please grow up. We are all struggling, but a large majority care enough, despite the hardships, to support continuing the lockdowns.

How proud does that make you feel? We are all in this together. So please keep your guns, your Confederate flags, your Nazi symbols and all the wonderful Trump merchandise in your garage, where it belongs.

Protests disrespect the very people who are heroically facing this crisis head-on. Do they really need to be facing childlike adults throwing a temper tantrum?

JIM SPURR  
Cannon Beach

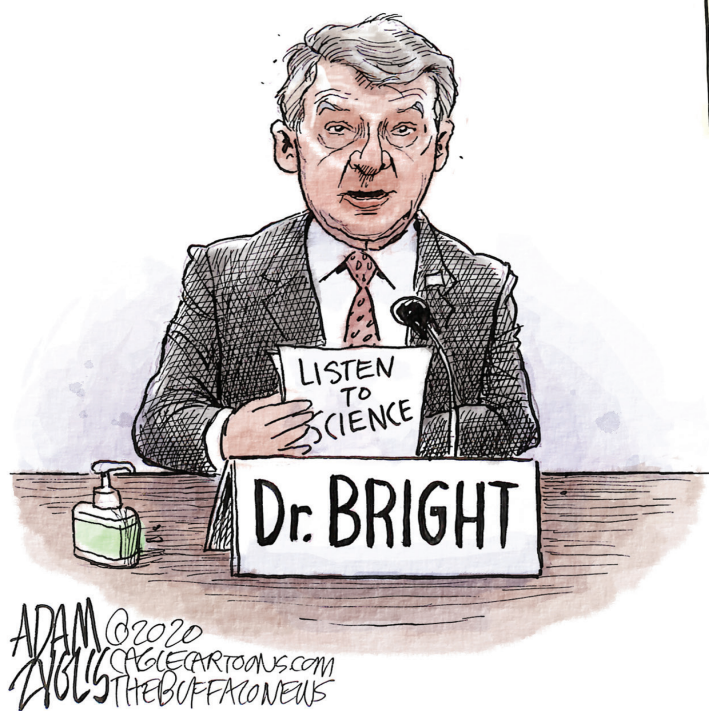
### Sanitized

Clatsop County Public Health Director Michael McNickle says, citing no evidence or a single fact to support it, that the outbreak of the coronavirus at Bornstein Seafoods is “probably not Bornstein's issue, but some of these folks are actually coming in and getting it from the community activities that they probably shouldn't have been doing when they're supposed to be sheltering in place.” (“County pressed on disclosure after coronavirus outbreak at Bornstein Seafoods,” The Astorian, May 7).

That sounds like classic, ugly prejudice, especially in the light of outbreaks at meat-packing plants all across the Midwest. So he referred them to the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Everybody knows that agency hasn't had a tooth in its mouth since the Reagan and Bush presidencies. Now we'll get to watch them gum their way through this one.

In the food industry, people work shoulder to shoulder in terrible conditions, in normal times. But there's no excuse for Bornstein not altering their process and conditions to take care of their people during this pandemic. McNickle should have demanded that of them. Instead, he

GOV'T IGNORED MY  
COVID Warnings...



ADAM  
WOLFS  
@2020  
CARTOONS.COM  
THE BUFFALO NEWS

made an after-the-fact walk-through, and told The Astorian the county defers to businesses.

Why? The citizens pay his salary, not businesses. His fiduciary and moral responsibility is to us, not them. And the primarily immigrant people who do this work are an integral and highly valued part of our citizenry, whether they have pieces of paper that say so in their pockets, or not.

Way more than your hands need to be sanitized, sir.

JOSEPH WEBB  
Astoria

### Disaster capitalists

In our new world of multiplying disasters, both man-made and natural — hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, flooding, rising oceans and infectious epidemics — the oligarchs of the world have become expert in disaster capitalism, exploiting the chaos that results when a catastrophe strikes.

They buy up suddenly-cheap assets from desperate people or local governments in crisis, and they siphon off money appropriated for relief in a hundred different ways, including no-bid contracts to supply what turn out to be shoddy or defective emergency supplies. Promises

are made and broken, and in the chaos they line their pockets and do it without any effective oversight or accountability.

In disaster relief bills there needs to be not only quantitative and qualitative standards established by law, but real penalties. Currently, white collar corruption (theft) is seldom punished by more than a miserably inadequate fine. A bank can steal \$10 billion and happily pay a \$2 billion fine without admitting any wrongdoing. This happens all the time. Nobody goes to jail. As adept players of Monopoly, these economic criminals all have a “Get Out of Jail Free” card.

The pandemic presents our disaster capitalists with one more opportunity to fleece the public and line their pockets. Congress must pass emergency measures to deal with the pandemic, but make clear in the legislation that corruption will be punished, not with slap-on-the-wrist fines or scolding in front of a committee hearing, but solid jail time in federal prison.

JOSEPH STEVENSON  
Astoria

### Worldly powerful

I just never realized that Democrats were so worldly powerful. President Donald Trump, Rush Limbaugh, Fox News and

so many others, including many preachers, tell us this pandemic is really a hoax brought about by Democrats.

Wow, it is almost beyond comprehension at that perceived political power. I see and read about nations around the world that have shut down their own economic engines, working to stem this expanding virus. All those choices by so many governments and citizens willing to follow best scientific protocols — or just the hoax of Democrats?

SARA MEYER  
Astoria

### Get off our backs

I have been asking this question: How many people who have been using hydroxychloroquine have gotten the COVID-19 virus?

I know that it is being used for lupus, malaria and arthritis-suffering patients. Not long ago, the countries of Turkey and France had success with it when given at first signs of illness.

Why can't the doctors here use it better? Don't let the heart doctors trick us. Tell the Food and Drug Administration to get off our backs, and let the doctors use it.

DALE ANDERSON  
Nehalem

