



editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGES
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

State Republicans running out of gas

Joe Rae Perkins' victory in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate in May announces that the Oregon Republican Party is running out of gas.

It is understandable that no big name would line up to compete with Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley in November. But the larger question is whether the state GOP even has a big name with big ideas.

Perkins is an indicator species. She is a disciple of the QAnon conspiracy cult, which looks for coded messages in what President Donald Trump says. Having run for office on previous occasions, Perkins had more name familiarity.

Oregon party leaders did not bother to recruit a candidate and the national party didn't care. Of course, the same thing occurred decades ago when Republican Sen. Mark Hatfield was at the apex of his career. The Democrats who challenged Hatfield were a hapless lot.

Kerry Tymchuk is another indicator species. Tymchuk grew up in Tillamook, worked for the Republican Sen. Gordon Smith and co-authored a book with former Sen. Bob Dole, of Kansas. Tymchuk left the party upon Trump's becoming the Republican nominee for president in 2016. He is now among the former Republicans to support the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

It would be easy to say that Perkins'



Claire Withycombe/Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon Republicans have splintered on political strategy.

nomination is one more example of Oregon's becoming a lopsided one-party state. But that ignores another aspect of the recent election.

Tymchuk said, "The saddest thing that happened was Mark Hass losing the Democratic primary for secretary of state." Hass had shown the courage of a Democrat willing to support reforming the Public Employees Retirement System, which is leeching money from school classrooms across Oregon. Labor put its chips on Hass' opponent, state Sen. Shemia Fagan.

"Republicans send a message that if you go against Trump, you lose," Tymchuk said. "Labor sends a message that if you go against PERS, you get punished."

The late Republican Secretary of State Dennis Richardson put it most bluntly when he told me: "The public employees unions run the statehouse." When I asked state Sen. Betsy Johnson, a Scappoose Democrat, what she thought of Richardson's description, she agreed with it.

One of the most fertile periods of the

Oregon Legislature occurred when neither party dominated in overwhelming numbers.

Significantly, Republicans were the inspiration of some of Oregon's most progressive acts. As a state representative in 1953, Hatfield authored the Civil Rights Bill. The prime movers of statewide land use planning were two Republican farmers from Eastern Oregon and the Willamette Valley. The Bottle Bill was championed by the Republican governor, Tom McCall. Republicans were the initial promoters of vote by mail.

In the first half of the 20th century, Richard Neuberger was the indicator of a new species — the liberal Oregon Democrat. At a time when Oregon was known as "the Vermont of the West," because it was reliably Republican, Neuberger was badly outnumbered in the Oregon Legislature.

But in floor debate and through a torrent of newspaper and magazine articles, Neuberger defined a conservationist and social welfare agenda. He also spawned a set of successors such as Les AuCoin, Earl Blumenauer and Vera Katz.

When Neuberger went to the U.S. Senate in 1954, the Republican president was Dwight D. Eisenhower, a chief executive whom history has treated exceedingly well. Out of fear, too many Republicans have mortgaged their brains and integrity to Trump.

In Oregon, that is an insult to the heritage of the state's Republican Party.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

GUEST COLUMN

Fight racism wherever we find it

Over the past week and a half, hundreds of Astorians gathered on our streets in demonstrations to condemn the racism that persists in too many corners of our society, both hidden, and in the open, as well as troubling instances of excessive use of force and outright brutality by some law enforcement personnel in some American police departments.

Local protesters have passionately, loudly and nonviolently expressed their support for the fight to end racism. I am proud of what this passion, and its nonviolent expression, says about our community members and the respect they have for justice and for Astoria. I commend the organizers, including Alejandra Lopez and other Warrenton High School students, who planned the most recent demonstrations for inspiring our community to come together peacefully for a just cause.

We are all stunned by the video of George Floyd's callous killing by a Minneapolis police officer, as well as the horrific slaying of Ahmaud Arbery by vigilantes in Georgia, and too many other unjustified deaths that we only know about because they were filmed.

Hundreds of thousands of law enforcement professionals who honorably and professionally serve their communities and collectively carry out millions of person-to-person contacts monthly in America, sometimes at great personal risk, are also appalled by those who dishonor the badge with their actions.

As Americans, we hold sacred our First Amendment rights to speak, to peacefully assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances. The city and the Astoria Police Department will guard those rights as a solemn duty.

I have observed with pride, and am thankful for, the respectful professionalism of Astoria police officers at these demonstrations, and for the 3 1/2 years I have served on our City Council.

Our police department has earned the community's respect for its high standards and engaged, community-centered policing. I am completely confident its women and men would not tolerate the type of criminal behavior witnessed in some police departments recently. That confidence is a reflection of the quality of the individuals who raise their hands to serve, their local recruitment and training and departmental leadership under Chief Geoff Spalding and Deputy Chief Eric Halverson.

A number of questions or issues have been raised over the past week, which I will address briefly.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Counterprotesters have sought to disrupt local Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

'EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK HAVE DEMONSTRATED A STRONG SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, CARING AND PURSUIT OF JUSTICE THAT SHOULD MAKE ALL ASTORIANS PROUD.'

Though these protests have been almost entirely nonviolent, there was a brief physical altercation Saturday. That incident was quickly and professionally deescalated by Astoria police and is being investigated. When complete, the investigation will be forwarded to the Clatsop County District Attorney's Office, which will decide whether to press charges.

A small group of counterprotesters has engaged — in my personal observation — in intimidating and harassing behavior at several protests. Legal protections for free speech allow a range of behaviors most of us would agree are offensive and counterproductive. I urge our community to continue focusing on nonviolent protest and ignoring those attempting to incite reactions.

There have been many questions about open carrying of firearms by counterprotesters. Oregon law does allow open carry, including at public demonstrations. Nonetheless, I believe that at a peaceful demonstration, firearms in any hands other than those of the police serve no constructive purpose.

There have also been many questions about social media comments perceived as threatening or harassing. The bar is very high, as it should be, when it comes to regulating speech. Law enforcement has been notified about posts of concern and will take action if appropriate.

"All Lives Matter" has been heard as a response to the calls of "Black Lives Matter" made during local protests. Of course, all lives do matter. "Black Lives Matter"

doesn't mean "Only Black Lives Matter" or "Black Lives Matter More than Yours." The statement reflects that black lives still don't seem to matter as much as other lives to many people, and that must change.

Nationally, police — like teachers — have been increasingly burdened with more and more responsibilities that might more effectively be resolved by other professions or agencies which are chronically underfunded, leading to the "Defund the Police" movement.

I urge increased federal funding of the things we know reduce future poverty and crime, such as early childhood education, drug treatment and prevention, child care, mental and physical health care, domestic abuse counseling and job training. It will take years of investment in these areas before realizing the savings in reduced need for police response. They are investments we should be making.

Events of the past week have demonstrated a strong spirit of community involvement, caring and pursuit of justice that should make all Astorians proud. Let us all continue to communicate with both passion and civility and do what we can to fight racism wherever we find it, including in our own hearts.

Bruce Jones is the mayor of Astoria.