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OUR VIEW

Food producers do the heavy lifting

Feeding America is a tough job, but farmers, ranchers, orchardists, fishermen, dairy operators and food processors rise to the occasion every day. Together, they produce plenty of affordable food for the nation’s 328 million people, plus plenty left over to help feed the rest of the world.

But when COVID-19 showed up last winter, our exceedingly complex food system got even more challenging. Deemed an essential industry, all sectors of the nutrition industry had to make sure plenty of food was produced — while dealing with a pandemic that threatened the health of their employees.

The results of their efforts can be seen in the nation’s 38,307 grocery stores, where any shortages have been few and temporary and customers can still find every type of fresh, frozen and shelf-stable food. A typical grocery store carries 40,000 to 50,000 items.

It’s not been easy and the learning curve has been steep for everyone trying to deal with a virus



Workers at Duckwall Fruit in Hood River pack pears.

that is easily spread where people are in close quarters — such as in Columbia River and Willapa Bay seafood processing plants.

In the orchards, cherry harvest has continued and other tree fruits and berries are ripening while farmers take precautions to limit the possibility of spreading the virus. Masks, hand-washing and other precautions help stop the spread of the virus.

Harvest of other crops is continuing as well, with farmers and ranchers doing their best to keep workers healthy and safe.

The Northwest’s 150 food processors have developed best practices for coping with COVID-19, often with the help of state agencies. Working together, they have been able to minimize the spread of the virus.

They have spread out work sta-

tions and installed partitions, staggered break times, tested for the virus and checked temperatures to prevent possible contamination as workers sort and pack fruits, butcher cattle, hogs and chickens, process fish and pack vegetables.

A major challenge for everyone in the industry has been educating employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when they are off work. Trying to prevent the spread of a disease that doesn’t even show symptoms in many is impossible. Worse yet is the fact it is fatal for a few who contract it.

The bottom line is that food producers have been doing the heavy lifting during this pandemic. No one involved in fishing, or growing, harvesting or processing crops can work from home. No one in fisheries or agriculture can have a Zoom meeting and call it a day.

The miracle of modern food production requires plain old hard work — and lots of people. Nationwide, more than 22 million people work in food-related jobs.

Three times a day, we are thankful they are all on the job.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Healthy forests

Oregon’s healthy, mature forests are an important resource for its economy, and also for clean air and water, as well as a vital tool in combating the climate crisis.

In a recent op-ed, David Bernhardt, the U.S. Interior secretary, cited the international effort, Trillion Trees Initiative, in connection with President Donald Trump’s plan for increased logging on Oregon’s federal public lands. Bernhardt ignores mentioning that the Trillion Trees Initiative is not intended to justify increased logging.

Instead, TTI’s goal is to stop the deforestation and degradation of forests caused by logging and development. The initiative was started to restore devastated forest ecosystems that can “bring back the productivity of the land and its capacity to sustain rural livelihoods and abundant wildlife.”

Bernhardt also did not mention the important role of mature forests to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere via photosynthesis, or to sequester carbon in the tree, branches, needles, roots and soil.

Older forests store far more carbon than young trees. It takes approximately 15 years after planting before a young tree can start capturing carbon dioxide. These young forests are also much more vulnerable than older trees to forest fires, not less, as cited in the Trump plan.

The Trump administration should not use the Trillion Trees Initiative to justify logging more of Oregon’s older forests. Our logging practices should ensure the health of forests for generations to come, and their role in reducing carbon emissions. Our economy and health depend on it.

CAROLYN EADY
Astoria

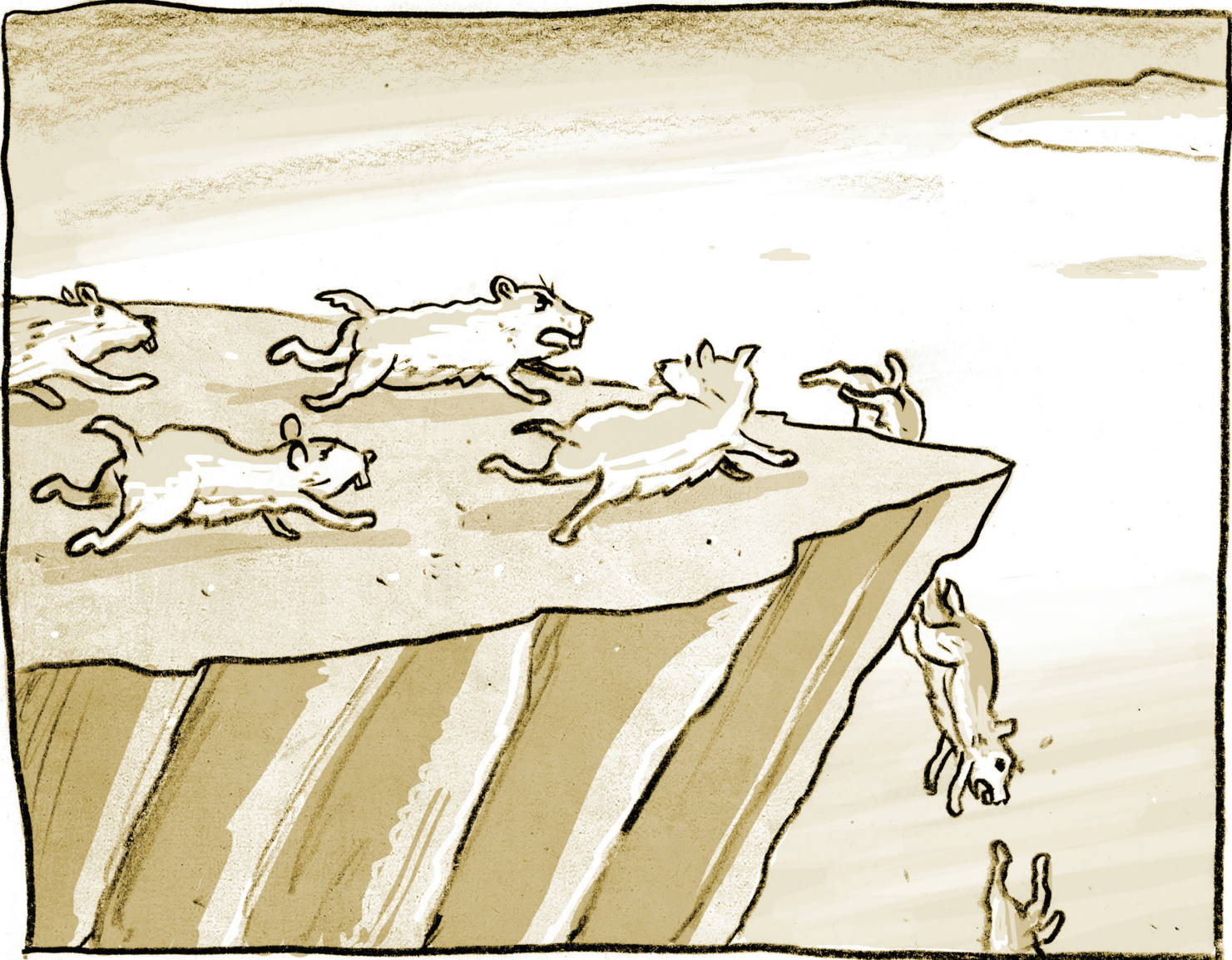
Bear the brunt

I recently wrote a letter to the editor in which I bemoaned the ineffectiveness of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, relative to the staff of the Astoria Police Department and the Columbia Memorial Hospital emergency room, in dealing with someone who was having a psychotic break.

I offered the rationale for the ineffectiveness of CBH as due not to a lack of will or professionalism, but rather to their insufficient funding by the county. What I did not mention in that earlier letter was that the mentally-disturbed person was also homeless.

Here again, in the case of dealing with the homeless, it is law enforcement and hospital emergency room personnel who bear the brunt of providing services, and that is true countywide, just as it is with mental illness.

I have suggested previously in letters to this newspaper that the county needs to establish an office to coordinate services to the homeless, rather than leave it to the ill-funded, patchwork and duplicative yet well-intentioned efforts of volunteers, churches and a variety of nonprofit organizations, mainly Clatsop Community



KUPER

“ Gravity’s not going tell me how to live my life!”

Action.

I know for a fact that Astoria Police Chief Geoff Spalding, chairman of the Astoria homelessness task force, supports this idea of a coordinated approach at the county level, but there appears to be no will on the part of the county to do anything. This is the same Clatsop County commission that coordinated a \$100,000 housing study that literally wasn’t worth the paper it was printed on.

BARRY PLOTKIN
Astoria

An American problem

Congressional term limits have been an ongoing conversation among Americans since our Constitution was conceived. There have been term limit bills proposed to federal legislators, but none resulted in a constitutional amendment to halt the rising number of career politicians.

This isn’t a partisan issue, but an American problem, and it is up to we, the people, to act. Some polls show over 80% of Americans favor term limits. So why are incumbents who’ve been in office for 30-plus years still in office? Possible reasons are:

- Many Americans believe that Congress will never vote for term limits. However, in 1995, the House passed a constitutional amendment limiting terms. It didn’t

pass, because any amendment requires a two-thirds supermajority.

- Some incumbents and special interest groups say that an election is a natural term limit. Unfortunately, when it comes to campaign financing, the incumbent has an edge from special interest groups. The challenger must finance their own campaign through donations or grassroots fundraising.
- We need experienced legislators in Washington. While this has been a long-held standard by many Americans, it is also true that new ideas breathe life into a stale organization.

I am for congressional term limits, because I see our Congress forgetting who they really work for: Us, the American people.

With the coming election in November, remember that this is not just a presidential election. How long have your legislators been in office? Are you happy with their representation?

Email legislators in Washington, D.C. If we don’t speak up, who will?

GAYLE DAVIS
Redmond

No end in sight

I sincerely thank Seaside Mayor Jay Barber and the Seaside City Council for their thoughtfulness and kindness in open-

ing up the beach and city for us small businesses, giving us a chance to start recovering from the shutdown.

However, the fear of death by viral infection is still so strong that it continues to snowball the destruction already started. Please think of the connections like links in a chain starting with fear, distancing and staying at home leading to business shutdowns, unemployment, frustration, anger, despair and violence, with no end in sight but further harm.

Please resort to your faith in life beyond death, conquer your fear and take restorative action for the sake of the future of our entire civilization. Thank you kindly.

NGUYEN TRUNG
Seaside

Side-swiped

To the person who side-swiped my vehicle on Marine Drive on the afternoon of July 22 in front of Franz Bakery:

I’m sure that you must have had a very serious emergency that required you to speed off without stopping to see whether you had done any damage to your vehicle, let alone to my vehicle, or to me.

Don’t worry, though, I’m fine, although the car will need some work.

GAIL HENRIKSON
Astoria