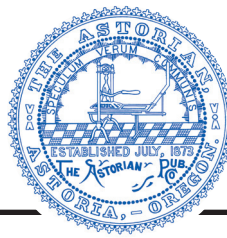


OPINION



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OUR VIEW

Time to right a deep injustice

It is time to right a deep and lingering injustice by formalizing federal legal status for Native American families whose ancestors lived around the mouth of the Columbia River for thousands of years.

President Joe Biden made history in December by choosing U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland, a New Mexico Democrat, to become the first Native American to serve as interior secretary. A member of Pueblo of Laguna, Haaland has risen to national prominence fighting for environmental justice, like standing with defenders against the Dakota Access pipeline in 2016 at the Standing Rock Sioux's reservation.

Like everyone else, tribal members are bound by laws and make up their own minds on issues. But there's no question Haaland will bring an intrinsic understanding of the inequities and self-dealing that cheated the Chinook, Clatsop and allied peoples out of fair treatment at the time of white colonization.

As a sort of catch-all agency originally created to manage vast Western lands the U.S. didn't — and some would argue still doesn't — know what to do with, the U.S. Department of the Interior has a gargantuan role in tribal life. It houses the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Education and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration. Historically, all three were rife with racism, graft and mismanagement.

For reasons too messy to describe, in the mid-19th century the Chinook Indian Nation was left out of the process of recognizing tribes, settling land claims and providing compensatory rights and benefits. After decades of struggles, the tribe achieved federal acknowledgment at the very end of the Clinton administration, only to see it revoked by George W. Bush's Bureau of Indian Affairs. Justice remained on ice



The Chinook Indian Nation and guests held their winter gathering last year at the Cathlapotle Plankhouse on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Amiran White

IT'S TIME TO PUT THESE AND ALL WESTERN LANDS ON A BETTER FOOTING TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

through the Obama years, but hopes have been revived thanks to a change in how tribal status decisions are made.

There are tremendous complexities and politics surrounding Chinook tribal status. The move has been opposed in the past by the neighboring Quinalt Indian Nation and by groups like non-tribal crabbers who worry about whether an official Chinook tribe might obtain a designated share of increasing scarce fishery resources. A separate group, the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes, argues for their own path to federal status in Clatsop and Tillamook counties.

Former congressman Brian Baird did a good job of smooth-

ing out some of these differences in proposed legislation that hit a roadblock before he left the office now occupied by U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler. Careful negotiations could perhaps again assuage the issues raised by potential rivals and adversaries, particularly if Herrera Beutler and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici become actively involved.

Most importantly, Haaland can and should cut through all the decades of frustrating quagmire. "A voice like mine has never been a Cabinet secretary or at the head of the Department of Interior," Haaland tweeted regarding her nomination. "... I'll be fierce for all of us, our planet, and all of our protected land."

A fierce sense of justice is long overdue when it comes to our region's sorry history of neglecting and subverting Native American rights.

It's also well worth noting that the Department of the Interior includes the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — two federal agencies with an important footprint in Clatsop and Pacific counties. As a smart westerner, Haaland knows how crucial these agencies are for the people and environment of the West. Lewis and Clark National Historical Park can benefit from more resources and attention to its mission of public involvement, while wildlife refuges have been chronically underfunded and understaffed.

It's time to put these and all Western lands on a better footing to face the challenges of climate change.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remember

I.C.E. Integrity. Compassion. Ethics.
Have them, use them, remember them.
LORI BETH KULP
Warrenton

Where is the vaccine?

While the riots in the nation's Capitol have dominated the news cycle over the past few days, something of far greater concern to citizens of Clatsop County has gone less noticed.

Where is the COVID-19 vaccine, and why have we not yet been vaccinated? Technically, the delivery of the vaccine to the residents of the county is only slightly more complicated than the delivery of frozen food to the local grocery stores.

Sure, it has to be kept colder and, yes, maintaining an accurate record of the barcodes of who got the vaccine, and when, is crucial, but these are everyday occurrences in not only our grocery stores, but also in our hospitals.

There is no rocket science here. There is no shortage of vials of vaccine, and there is no shortage of trucks to deliver them. We have an armory large enough to accommodate hundreds, and parking lots where tents can easily be set up.

Yet there is an even more important issue here. When the Cascadia Subduction Zone wreaks its havoc, we will be counting on these same types of government-funded logistical services to get us through that terrible disaster. If they cannot deliver vaccines, how can we count on them to deliver a far more substantial and complicated set of goods and services?

Personally, I have very grave doubts that the people we are depending upon will come through. They will say "trust

us." Tell that to the families of the Capitol policeman who died this month.

BARRY PLOTKIN
Astoria

Grateful

We are so grateful to receive a grant award from the Oregon Cares Fund. The money from the Oregon Cares Fund will help us pay employee wages and continue teaching students how to become a professional barber within a timeless and sacred craft.

As The New York Times article about the Oregon Cares Fund shows, the fund is necessary, fair and legal because the impact of COVID-19, and the financial relief offered by the federal government, was not distributed equally.

I am grateful to leaders in Oregon for their commitment to the Black community, and recognition that race-specific funds are necessary to achieve equity while distributing COVID-19 financial relief.

I applaud efforts to bolster equity, and I applaud leaders from the Black community in Oregon, who recognized the need for the fund; the Latino community, who has come out in force supporting the Oregon Cares Fund; and legislators, who understood the need and helped make it happen.

CHRISTINA LANE
Portland

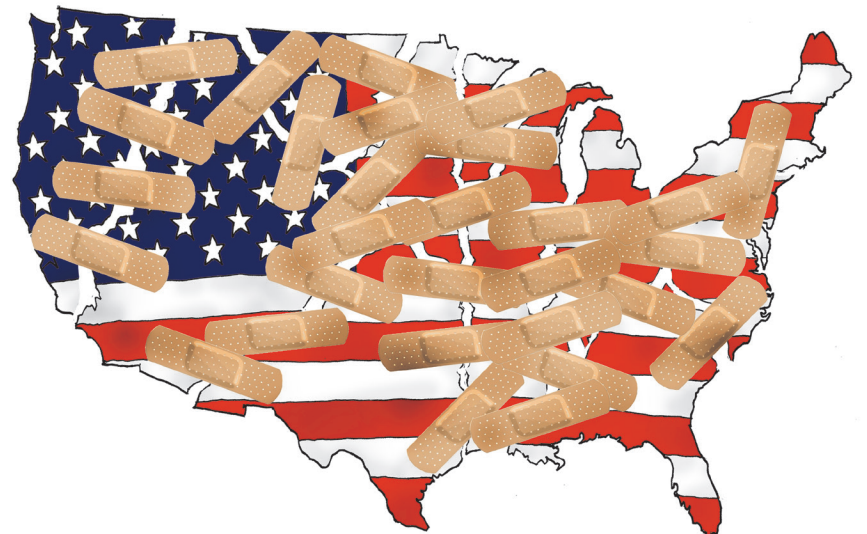
Compelled

Open letter to Gov. Kate Brown: I feel compelled to communicate to you about the present situation in Oregon, and a major decision you have recently made.

Yes, we all know you and I have our differences, but I am struggling to under-

BillDay FloridaPolitics.com

AMERICA



stand why you have decided to open schools and not businesses. I have seen businesses bend over backward to install safety barriers, and other measures, and comply with social distancing.

Businesses need to be open and employees need to go back to work. Most people are being, and will continue to be, very cautious as long as this epidemic lasts. Let's give businesses the same opportunity you are giving schools.

I challenge you to now end the ban before people and private businesses go bankrupt.

LIZ VanLEEUEWEN
Linn County state representative,
1981-1999

Grounded in law

I appreciate the editorial board's support for my efforts to save the National

Archives ("Our View: A shameful defeat for public access," Dec. 19). The archives contain the DNA of our region. We will fight to preserve access to these priceless records.

I must correct the board's suggestion, however, that I have "squandered some of (my) impact by suing (the Trump administration) too often in these past four years."

In fact, it's the opposite. My team stopped 37 legal actions against the Trump administration. We won 95% of the cases. That's not squandering our impact — that's making a positive impact on behalf of Washingtonians.

Moreover, federal judges know that when my team files a lawsuit against the federal government, it's grounded in the law.

BOB FERGUSON
Washington State Attorney General
Olympia, Washington