

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

# COVID changed The Astorian — for good

After 15 months, the black-and-yellow CORONAVIRUS banner under The Astorian's front page masthead is gone.

Finally, Oregonians are free of masks, closures and restrictions that hobbled us during the coronavirus pandemic.

In April 2020, I wrote a column that outlined our priorities for The Astorian as we dealt with workplace restrictions.



**KARI BORGEN**

Only our managers, a few reporters and production staff worked in the office, just a handful of people out of a staff of 35. Our office doors were locked, most staff worked from home and those inside wore masks, washed hands frequently, socially distanced and disinfected workspaces. At the time, I remember thinking that we would certainly be back in the office by fall — never imagining it would be 68 weeks.

The shifts in our organization over these COVID-19-restricted months are not going to disappear as quickly as the banner on the front page. Despite any misgivings I had when we sent everyone home to work remotely, most of our staff has been juggling caregiving, online schooling and working from home for well over a year. And they have managed that juggling act quite well.

So well, in fact, that there's no reason to make them return to the office five-days a week. I miss the camaraderie of a full office, but in reality the work is getting done with less interruptions, and our employees are happier. Our teams will be able to work both in the office and from home to help alleviate the worry of day care or time spent commuting.

Customers with appointments or who buzz at the door will still be able to speak with someone in our office, but for the next few months our doors will remain locked during business hours. Since many employees will work both from home and in the office, our reception area won't be staffed all of the time. Those who are in the building are glad to answer the door and assist when they hear the doorbell.

During the past 15 months, EO Media Group, The Astorian's owner,



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Many employees at The Astorian have worked from home during the coronavirus pandemic.

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has accelerated centralizing design, service and accounting functions that used to be performed at each location in the company. Astoria is the location of the graphic design center for company advertising, as well as the customer service call center for the company sub-

scription services.

Through the power of broadband, those employees, working from home, have answered calls and designed advertising for customers all over Oregon and southwest Washington state. Online options allow customers to manage their subscription and advertising orders and payments from anywhere there's cell or internet service. If you'd like help creating an online account, call our customer service center at 800-781-3214.

From March 2020 through this May, digital subscriptions grew by 83%, as readers took advantage of The Astorian's digital options, including the e-edition, daily website news, apps and newsletters. Overall, circulation grew by 8.4% during the virus restrictions, as print and online readers found local news important for credible updates to quickly changing information.

Living through the past 15 months has changed the way we all interact and do business. In the column written in April 2020, I could see already that The Astorian's business would be different after the pandemic. "As we chart our course for what lies beyond the pandemic, we will emerge a different organization, in many ways with a stronger sense of purpose and newly-found skills and efficiencies."

Post-COVID, look for The Astorian to continue to innovate to serve our mission to our readers as the local news leader, "committed to reporting and distributing local news and information because a well-informed public keeps our communities strong."

Have an idea for us? Let me know at [kborgen@dailyastorian.com](mailto:kborgen@dailyastorian.com)

*Kari Borgen is publisher of The Astorian.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The only way forward

What American citizens are experiencing is a legendary tale — a tale hundreds of years in the making. This tale has had multiple books and films made of it, with some variations, but all had the same premise. As a child I believed this fable to be more make-believe than the truth.

Last week the curtain was opened a little further, revealing more truth. Those who have enough income may hire a money manager. In true American fashion, these accountants do their best to save or invest their employers' money.

These managers have lobbied our tax system to have loopholes they can jump through so their bosses pay less tax. Meanwhile, most of Americans make under a six-figure income, and are fined for paying late.

This proves Robin Hood was a real person to me. I have never been a person to accept the phrase, "That's the way it is." That attitude is for sheep, not free men and women.

If we all paid our share of taxes with no loopholes, our country would have a surplus budget right away. Please become a thorn in the butt of our elected officials. Tell them to make our tax system our tax system, not just the 1% of our population.

Isn't that why we put them in office? To do what we want them to do. I'm really tired of the "all for me" attitude.

TROY J. HASKELL  
Astoria

### Protect our vote

When asked, in 1787, what the Constitutional Convention created, Benjamin Franklin responded, "A republic, if you can keep it." Thomas Jefferson said a democracy will last as long as enough people care to defend it.

They already knew a government of, by and for the people would need the peoples' protection to survive. Democracy is better than a dictatorship. Right? Right.

Our Republic is 245 years down the road. However, as the Liberty Bell cracked, our democracy is developing cracks. In the 2000 presidential election, the Supreme Court overruled states rights in halting Florida's recount. Whether you

BillDay  
FloridaPolitics.com



agree or not doesn't matter. The point is, we'll never know.

On Jan. 6, some citizens stormed our nation's capital. Was there a memo making armed insurrection democratic? To affect change, Americans vote.

Regarding the 2020 presidential election, no election in our history was more closely watched and audited, and it remained unchanged. Yet some states are still trying to overturn it, and enact laws making voting harder.

Fact: Voting is foundational to our system of government. Democracy thrives on citizen participation. Dictatorships depend on suppressing participation.

Limiting which, and how many, citizens get to vote is a supernova red light. A dangerous slope that history shows often leads to dictatorships.

Whose vote shouldn't count? Yours? Mine? In the kindergarten sandbox we learned: don't crowd; to follow the rules;

good sportsmanship; and the right to vote needs peoples' protection.

The U.S. Senate must pass the For the People and John Lewis Voting Rights acts. To message senators, call 202-224-3121.

CARL DOMINEY  
Astoria

### Never be woke

I am a Warrenton resident who occasionally visits the Warrenton Community Library. I will address any female volunteer working or even visiting that facility as young lady, or miss, as that is what I have done all my life.

I am very hard-pressed to accept that I am not supposed to comment to someone else in that facility that I asked the volunteer woman a question that she did not have a quick answer to as being verbally abusive, because it is gender specific if I

use the word "her" instead of "them." Give me a break.

You can be a political activist all you want. I challenge you to sue me in court for using a gender-specific word such as "her," when that has been how I was educated in the 1950s. I am sick and tired of people telling me that I must change my vocabulary because some of my words are grossly offensive to some people.

I will never be "woke," and I object in the most strenuous way that anyone is offended by some words I have used all my life, and now they demand that I change my words to fit their desire.

If you do not like words I use, you can verbally challenge me to my face if you hear them, and I will challenge you right back that I am offended that you are offended. Wait till you hear the nouns I use to respond to you with.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE  
Warrenton