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OUR VIEW

Protect our farmland

For decades, there have been concerns that foreign investors are buying up farmland in the United States.

That this is a hot-button issue for American producers and a strategic policy concern for politicians is understandable. Wealthy foreign buyers make it harder for domestic producers to compete for available farmland. Well-heeled investors of all types always push out smaller potential buyers. The thought of some foreign actor taking control of the domestic food supply is frightening.

There's no doubt that foreign investors are interested in snapping up American farmland. We are more concerned with what foreign investors are doing with the farmland they buy than we are that they are buying it in the first place.

Reporting by the Capital Press of U.S. Department of Agriculture data shows that in the 40 years or so that records have been kept, foreign investors have bought more than 35 million acres of U.S. farmland worth \$62 billion. In all, that's an area larger than the state of New York.

According to USDA staff, outside investments are on the rise. Filings show foreign holdings of American farmland increased by 141% between 2004 and 2019.

In 1978, Congress passed the



Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

Germany has invested heavily in U.S. cropland for the production of hops.

Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act, which required foreign buyers to report their transactions.

Foreign buyers have purchased 1.2 million acres of Oregon farmland — roughly 7.5% of the state's farm acreage, according to the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture. The total is 1.5 million acres in Washington state, and just 122,598

acres in Idaho.

The takeover of American farm production by foreigners is far from imminent. Their purchases in the last 40 years are equal to 3.9% of the farmland now in production.

Critics are convinced that the reported numbers are low, and contend without proof that much more land is being bought than is being reported. They concede that

it would be impossible to quantify without combing through land records in 3,000 county courthouses across the country.

It is certain that the USDA's numbers are misleading. Some of the land in question has been sold by one foreign buyer to another, while others have divested altogether. Tracking those transactions through USDA data is difficult. Also, not all foreign investors who have reported a purchase have a controlling interest in the land.

We agree that foreign purchases should be monitored. It would be a dangerous problem if foreign interests gain control of U.S. agriculture.

To be clear, we would prefer that U.S. farmland stay in the hands, or at least the control, of U.S. entities. But, the more pressing concern is keeping farmland productive.

Foreign investors are joining domestic companies that are interested in building alternative energy facilities or other real estate developments on farmland.

Turning cropland into windfarms, shopping malls and subdivisions is a greater danger to agriculture, and in turn the country, than a French company buying vineyards here to make wine.

Once farmland is built over, it's gone for good. No farmer, foreign or domestic, will ever farm it again.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Convince people

I see we are back to calling people “murderers.” Perhaps the Portland writer (The Astorian, Aug. 28) should temper his vitriol.

The people who he calls “dupes” and “victims” are actually those who believe the government's political correctness. There are people legitimately questioning the government about their heavy-handedness and the effectiveness of their edicts.

The coronavirus is still running amok. It does not respect political correctness.

I know of no one who believes the COVID is a hoax. The questions about the government's handling of the pandemic are legitimate. Why did we destroy so many businesses and lives when there is no statistical evidence that their efforts — other than the vaccines — have had any effect on the infection rates?

That being said, there is nothing stopping anyone from getting the vaccination or masking or avoiding human contact. Convince people, show us proof. Don't threaten, punish or call them names.

Finally, there is a word for those who would enforce political laws enacted without a vote of the people or their representatives, how about “fascists?”

ROBERT LIDDYCOAT
Seaside

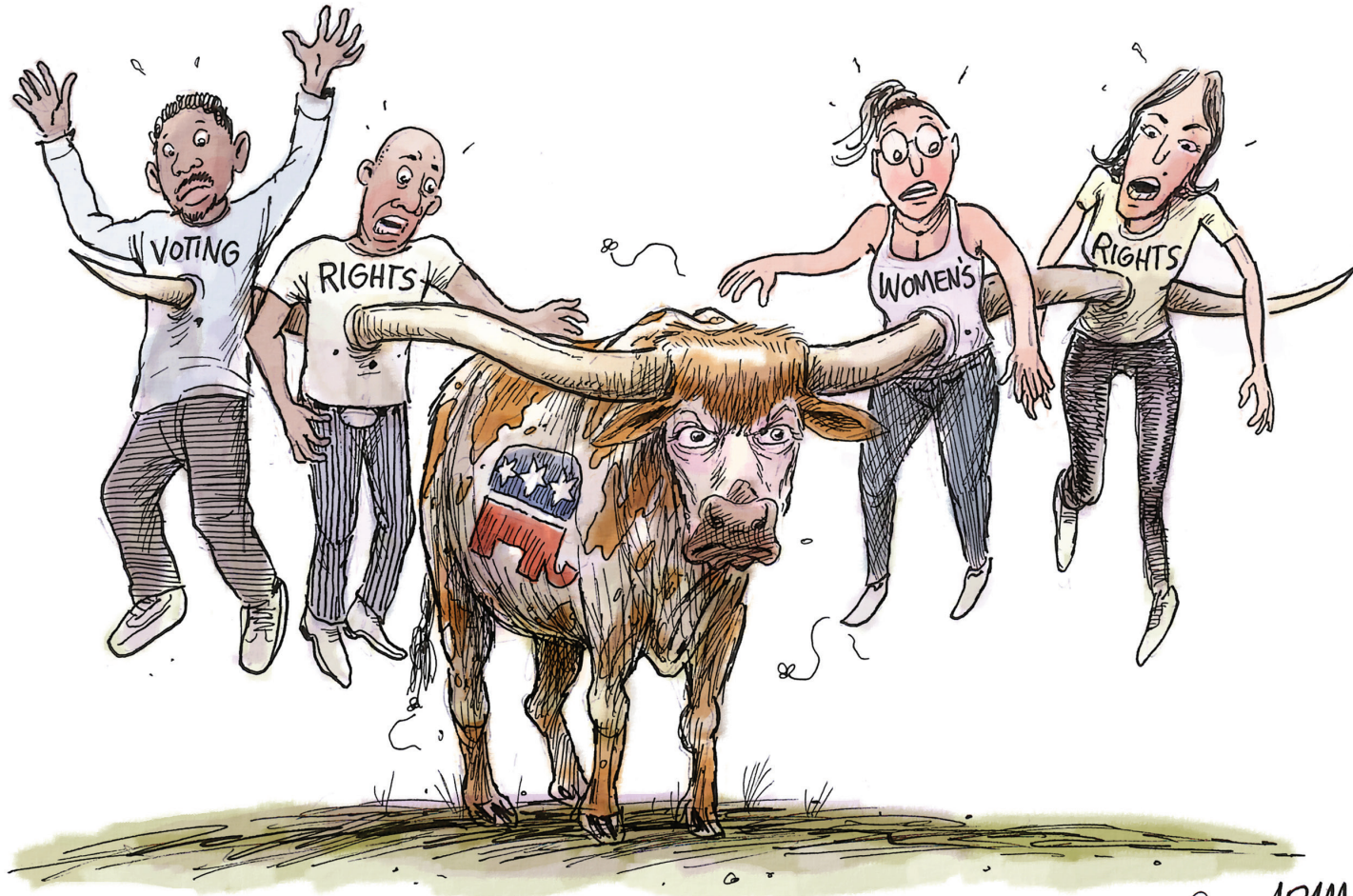
Sticks and stones

From the beginning of this nation's quest to become the beacon of hope for the world, approximately 30% of our friends and family could be classified as seditionists. Some were loyal to the king in the Revolutionary War. We have even had a brother-against-brother war over slavery. Stupid is, as stupid does.

How is our current predicament any different? Most American citizens have at least one friend, if not a family member, who is caught up in the conspiracy of the Republican fear machine. I have a very smart daughter who has not spoken to me in years, mostly due to our differences in political beliefs. Why? This one-of-a-kind nation was spawned to allow differences.

Millions of people from around the world have been killed, fighting for what way too many of Americans take for granted: The freedom to speak and think differently than your neighbor, without consequences. Walk any street today, and have the humanity to say “good morning” to someone, and they ask what you mean by that statement.

A lot of Americans need to visit a kindergarten teacher. That is when I learned a simple rhyme: Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. And, in sports, there's a saying of “no



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THE BUFFALO NEWS

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

blood, no foul.” But as a society, we want to tar and feather anyone who flies a different flag.

Our only true concern should be that Old Glory flies on top!

TROY HASKELL
Astoria

Short end of the stick

Well, it looks like President Joe Biden got caught holding the short end of the stick — a stick that was 20 years in the making.

We've managed to make a mess out of a country that was already a mess, and we did it for a mere \$2 trillion. What's \$2 trillion anyway? It works out to \$2 billion for each state for every year for 20 years,

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

which would have been squandered anyway on things like roads, bridges and low-cost housing.

Besides, Afghanistan was nothing like Vietnam; Vietnam was a jungle.

DALE FLOWERS
Warrenton

Dismaying

It was dismaying to read that a Clatsop County commissioner appealed to the governor to lift COVID vaccine mandates (The Astorian, Aug. 28) because “Oregonians will be required to choose between the vaccine and their personal freedom.”

Many do not understand that this is more than a local health issue or a public health emergency — we are at war with

an unseen deadly enemy, deadlier than any we have ever faced.

In war, personal freedoms are sacrificed to defeat the enemy. The federal government instituted conscription, which impinged on vastly greater degrees on personal freedoms than simply requiring a vaccine. Soldiers died in battle.

American combat deaths in the six wars with conscription totaled more than 648,000. U.S. COVID deaths have already exceeded 648,000.

To the unvaccinated, did your ancestors fail to heed their country's call and sacrifice their personal freedoms during these wars? Probably not, yet your refusal to be vaccinated is directly leading to the deaths of your fellow Americans. In the last two months, 95% of hospitalizations and deaths were among unvaccinated people. Many could have been prevented. Beds in Oregon hospitals would have been available to patients who subsequently died because beds, occupied mostly by the unvaccinated, were not available.

We are at war. Should the decision to be vaccinated be whether you think “it's a good choice for you or not,” as the commissioner said? There is much more at stake than personal freedom.

WILL CAPLINGER
Taipei, Taiwan