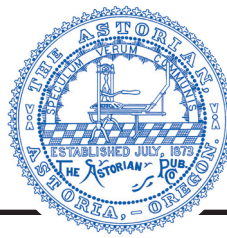


# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## OUR VIEW

# Too occupied with divisions

In his first inaugural address, President Abraham Lincoln made an appeal for unity on the eve of the Civil War.

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

The American people are becoming ever more divided by national politics and cultural disputes. Recent polls conducted by the Pew Research Center show the partisan differences.

The politics of the past 20 years have become increasingly divisive, intolerant and personal. Even on the local level, disagreements about coronavirus safety protocols have sparked angry voices at some school board meetings — perhaps most notably in Raymond and Knappa, but also cropping up elsewhere.

Where did it all begin? Was it the election in 2020 of President Joe Biden and the specious allegations of fraud, or was it the 2016 election of President Donald Trump and allegations of Russian collusion? Does it go back to Bush v. Gore, circa 2000?



The Lincoln Memorial stands for the American principle that unity and friendship should triumph over angry strife.

Over the last 18 months we’ve seen a host of incidents that have fueled the divide — a summer of riots in major cities accentuated by vandalism, looting and attempts to burn public buildings and immolate police officers; a divisive electoral campaign; and an angry mob of our fellow citizens busting into the U.S. Capitol.

And, of course, there’s the tur-

moil of the pandemic and the response to it by state and federal officials. What many regard as common-sense precautions, others view as unacceptable government overreach into private lives — especially when it comes to mandated masking and vaccinations for schoolchildren.

There is no shortage of provocateurs, left and right, using these

incidents to whip us into a frenzy. But the real fault lies with us. Some have allowed understandable frustrations to bubble over into unacceptable attacks on election and school officials who are merely following state laws and mandates. In the case of local schools, it would be financially ruinous to put state funding at risk in the cause of empty protests that will achieve nothing.

We have become all too occupied with the divisions, arranging ourselves neatly in one camp or another. We too often listen only to those things that bolster our world view. We allowed agitators and activists to use our fear and anger as a means to their own ends.

We stopped talking with and listening to each other. We have slapped vile labels on our neighbors and turned them into irredeemable enemies. And, when times are desperate, instinct dictates we deal harshly with an enemy.

We can disagree, but we must respect each other’s point of view. We should live our lives, not our politics. Rather than our differences, we must focus on our common values and ideals. Relying on one another here on the North Coast, we must not allow political and policy disagreements get in the way of neighborly cooperation.

Our friendships are strained, but we must not be enemies.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Deliberate barriers

The Freedom to Vote Act and John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act will end partisan gerrymandering and ensure more fair, transparent and non-partisan maps. We need federal reform to ensure we have fair maps nationwide.

The Freedom to Vote Act is under attack by extremist state lawmakers across the country who want to put up deliberate barriers to make it harder to vote — especially for people of color.

Congress must act now to implement national standards for federal elections. The Freedom to Vote Act would protect our right to vote, end partisan gerrymandering, counter undemocratic and dangerous election sabotage efforts and help to eliminate the undue influence of dark money in our elections.

Did you know the modern-day filibuster took root during the Jim Crow era, when racist Southern senators used it to delay passage of important civil rights legislation? If we reform Senate rules, and fix the filibuster, we have a real chance at protecting the freedom to vote and getting big money out of politics.

We need legislation that will include immigration reform, gun safety, raise the minimum wage, take action on climate change, provide police accountability and eliminate racial injustice.

We are lucky to live in Oregon, with mail-in ballots, and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, who have shown they will work for us! Please, don’t take your right to vote for granted.

LaREE JOHNSON  
Astoria

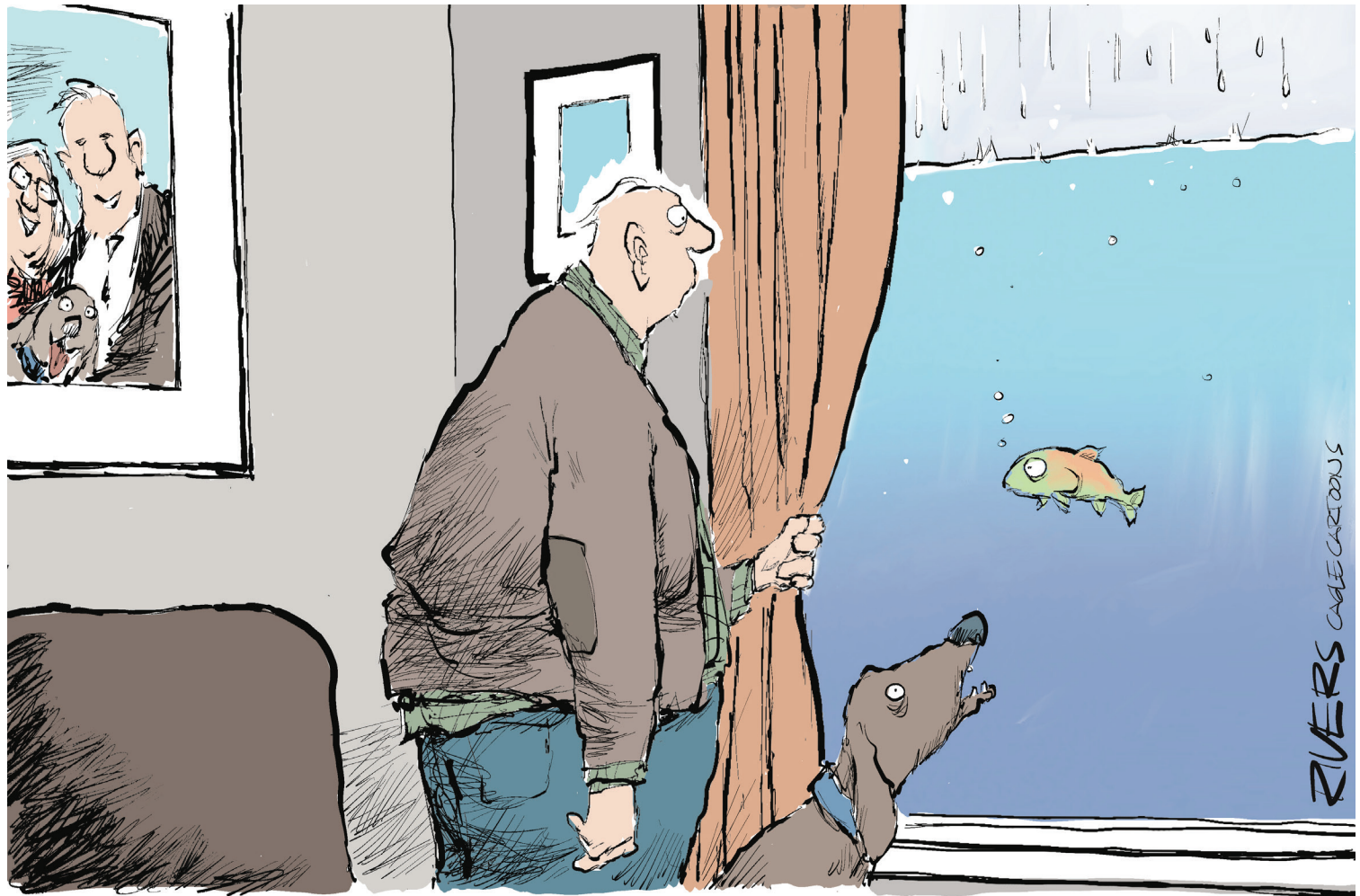
### Potty mouth

The Astorian actually published a letter deriding President Joe Biden for “farting” inappropriately (“Wow,” Nov. 23)? That might just be a new low.

I’m no fan of Biden, though he appears to accept a reality that a majority of people in this country also buy into.

Unlike the predecessor, Biden takes the high road, being decent by avoiding entering the zone of kindergarten potty talk and white supremacist cat-calling, and believes that flogging insurrection and violence against colleagues — which has obviously become this county’s de facto political game — is a dangerous one.

Freedom of speech may still be a constitutional right for some. Let’s hope the white nationalists and their eager allies



MEANWHILE, IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST...

in the press avoid destroying what’s left of it.

SUE SKINNER  
Astoria

### Creating a strong foundation

If The Astorian printed letters with bullet points, this would be a full-page letter with dozens of them, listing the benefits of the Biden administration’s economic policies and legislation.

Oregonians can applaud a growing economy, improved pay and job opportunities, and the Biden stimulus bill that has lifted the incomes of 3 million American children and their families out of poverty.

There will be billions of dollars over the next 10 years to strengthen the reliability and resilience of America’s power grid, expand internet broadband to rural areas, improve and maintain U.S. roads, bridges and passenger rail systems and invest in coastal restoration and forest management as part of climate change action, and more.

President Joe Biden is a steady influence on our politics, and he and Congress are passing legislation to make lives better for all Americans.

## 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

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.

We also applaud the steadfast focus of our members of Congress: Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden. These three Democrats have consistently voted for increasing opportunity, reducing inequality and creating a strong economic foundation for national unity.

They also recognize a healthy, sustainable economy depends on a strong democracy that allows and encourages everyone to vote.

Indivisible North Coast Oregon

urges you to thank Wyden, Merkley and Bonamici for voting for a thriving future for Oregonians.

Thank them for supporting the Freedom to Vote Act, a comprehensive package of voting, redistricting and campaign finance reforms, and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Their contact information is at incoregon.org

Laurie Caplan  
Leadership Team, Indivisible  
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