

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Kotek scores several big wins

**T**ina Kotek was on a roll as last month came to an end. In a matter of days, the state House speaker and Democratic gubernatorial hopeful scored quadruple victories.

- The Portland lawmaker forcefully pushed for a special legislative session to help renters who face eviction, and Gov. Kate Brown came through. The session started Monday, which, by the way, is just ahead of Kotek's official campaign kickoff via Zoom on Thursday.



**DICK HUGHES**

- Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, who would have been a formidable opponent in the Democratic primary, announced she wouldn't run for governor.

- Judges upheld the congressional and legislative redistricting plans pushed through the Legislature by Democrats, aided by Kotek's finagling.

- House Republican Leader Christine Drahan, who became Kotek's political nemesis, stepped down from that role. Drahan, of Canby, will seek the Republican nomination for governor. That leaves House Republicans with a new leader, Rep. Vikki Breese-Iverson, of Prineville, for the special session and next year's short legislative session.

The good news for Kotek kept rolling in. On Tuesday, eight labor and environmental organizations endorsed her for election. EMILY's List, a Washington, D.C., based group that advocates for progressive women candidates to run for political office, said Friday that Kotek was their candidate to succeed Brown.

At this point, Kotek arguably seems the front-runner for the Democratic nomination, in large part because of her deep support among fellow progressive Portlanders. However, 10 other Democrats, including State Treasurer Tobias Read, also have filed to run, and more plan to. The Republican nomination also has attracted 11 candidates, with more coming.

With so many candidates in each party's primary election, it will be challenging for anyone to win a plurality.

But Kotek faces a more immediate challenge, one of her own creation.



**State House Speaker Tina Kotek has picked up several important endorsements in her Democratic primary campaign for governor.**

I'm not talking about Kotek and Brown being photographed without face masks on Saturday during the LGBTQ Victory Fund's 30th Anniversary Gala in Washington, D.C., where they were featured guests.

The challenge is the legislative session. Kotek has a lot riding on it.

Republicans argue that a special session is unnecessary because the Emergency Board could take whatever action is needed, and do it faster.

The Legislature's worrier-in-chief, Senate President Peter Courtney, put the situation in perspective: "Special sessions are the most difficult of all sessions. Everything must be carefully planned. We have a lot of work to do. I hope we will be ready."

The Salem Democrat will be working with a new Republican leader in the Senate, Tim Knopp, of Bend. Knopp

is a longtime legislator, whereas Breese-Iverson became a state representative in August 2019.

In a fundraising appeal last week, Kotek highlighted her work on housing and told potential supporters: "Why I'm running for governor is simple: It's time to get past the politics of division and focus on making real, meaningful progress for families across our state."

"I'm not running for governor just because I want to do things. I'm running for governor because as a leader, I've realized we can only 'get things done' if we work together. ..."

The special session will test that ability.

And there's more: A different cloud also hangs over Kotek, Courtney and other legislative leaders.

Long after heralding the Legislature's supposed reforms in workplace

conduct, it has not hired a permanent equity officer to handle complaints, oversee investigations and conduct workplace training. Given these delays and other problems, one must wonder how committed the leadership is to genuine, full-fledged workplace reforms and compliance with a 2019 agreement signed with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries.

To get more candidates, the Legislature has extended the application deadline for legislative equity officer until Dec. 27. The salary range is \$104,808 to \$157,212 annually.

Two people have served in an acting capacity since the office opened in December 2019. The latest one, Nate Monson, started last April. He abruptly resigned in mid-June, issuing a scathing letter about problems he allegedly found. An 11-page tort claim notice from his lawyers this week contains more explosive allegations about certain legislators, legislative employees and the Legislative Equity Office.

If true, the allegations should lead to a thorough housecleaning. If false, the allegations appear defamatory. I won't detail the allegations here because I don't know whether they are credible.

The final paragraph of an April column, in which I listed Monson's work experience, apparently led to his departure. The head of the Iowa Coalition for Collective Change saw the column, contacted legislative staff and said Monson never worked there, despite what he claimed. That led legislative staff to dig further into his work experience. However, it wasn't until a month after his resignation that the leaders of the Legislature's bipartisan Joint Conduct Committee released this information in response to media requests.

All this creates concerns about how Monson ever got hired. It raises questions about the veracity of his allegations. Still, whistleblowers often come with baggage.

Monson's tort claim notice said he would be happy to enter confidential mediation within the next three weeks, "in hopes of resolving this matter with as little expense as possible to the taxpayers."

*Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### You can't forget

I must agree with Virginia Shepherd's remarks when learning that Michael Sture would not be paroled this time around: "I think that's an excellent decision" ("Trooper's killer denied parole," Nov. 27).

Perhaps in May 2026, after Sture has another review, and I'm still around, I will think long and hard of those feelings I had back in 1980, when my friend and fellow lawman was murdered. I will be 90 years old then.

People say I should forgive. Maybe I have, after all these years. But you can't forget. Virginia Shepherd will always be at the top of our list of friends and honored people. God bless.

MELVIN and BETSY JASMIN  
Warrenton

### Corrupting

Just a couple of quick questions for the amused person in the Dec 9, edition of The Astorian who wonders "If The Astorian folds, where would I air my opinions?" ("Where's the beef?").

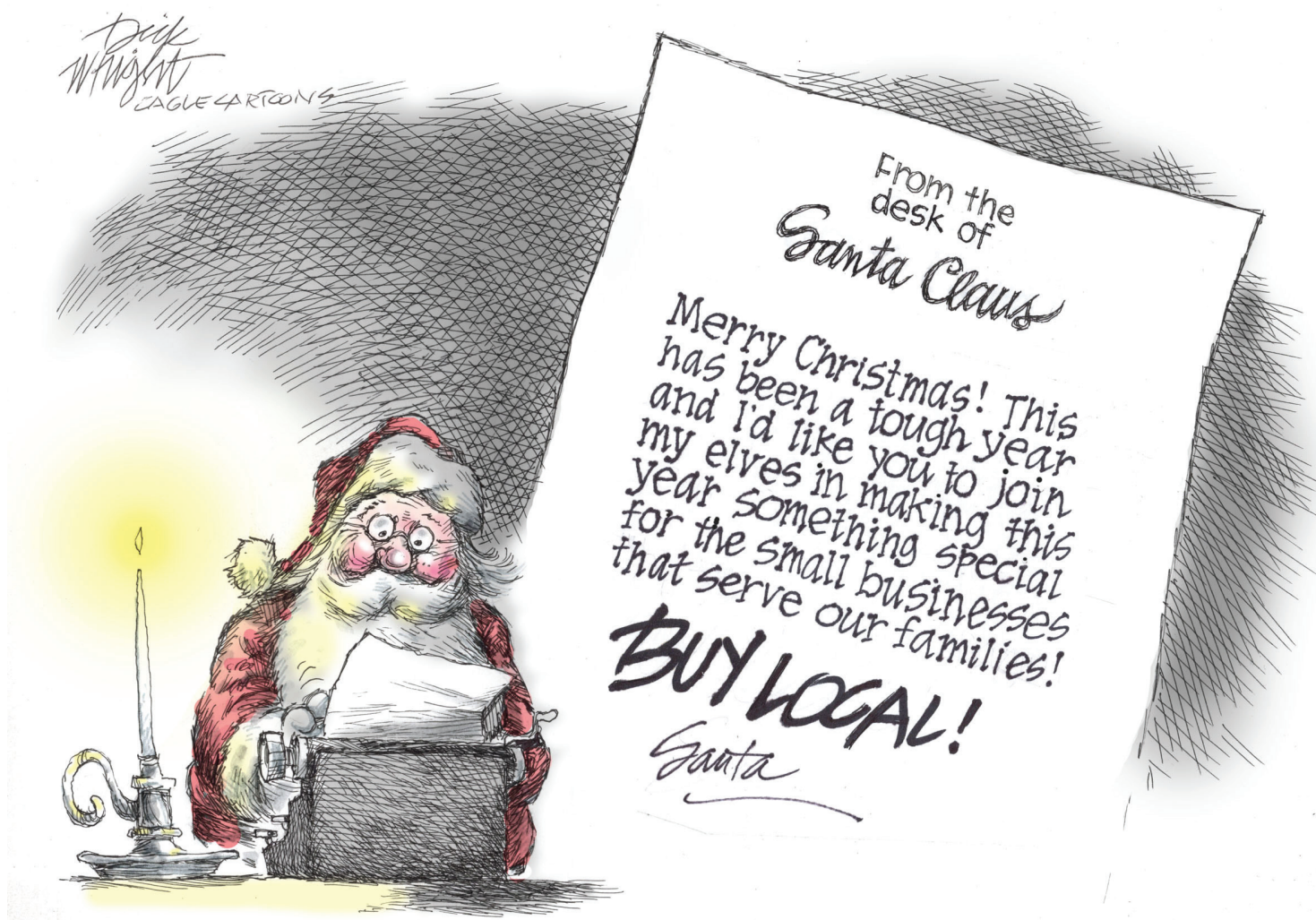
Do the other Astorian "influencers" he mentions have the power to censor his opinions? Will The Astorian fold without this tax credit ("A light on our democracy," Nov. 13)?

I see his point of accepting corporate welfare and handouts. It is corrupting. He notes he happily spent his particular handouts. Did they influence him? Maybe he does not care who controls his news or who "feeds" it to him.

However, I do, and it is not selfish of me to care about who controls our news. I am not biting the hand that "feeds" me. Because it does not. I am questioning the control of our local news.

I accept that the people who run the newspaper are honorable. I am sometimes contrary, and yet I print my opinions. Yet if the paper were in danger of folding, what would they do to survive? I personally would pay more for the paper to keep it independent, and keep the government out of it.

ROBERT LIDDYCOAT  
Seaside



## 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.

cal review and a variance. The historical review was required because we were building a new structure next to a home that had been designated a historical landmark.

The variance was required because the original structure on the property was in the city right of way (a small home built in the 1940s). If we wanted to use the existing foundation — (we did) a variance was required.

We worked with city staff to make sure that they had everything they needed for the historical review, and they provided very helpful information to me in writing a successful variance.

Good, ongoing communication was key, and the process worked the way it was designed to work. Thank you again to city staff and the Historic Landmarks Commission for helping us build our home.

JULIE WILSON  
Astoria

### Applaud

I want to applaud Councilwoman Joan Herman and the Astoria City Council for requiring that the structures encroaching on the right of way associated with the 11th Street stairs be removed.

I know some folks bristle at what is perceived to be hoop-jumping that the city requires when certain work is done on a property, but in many cases, those hoops preserve Astoria's beauty and functionality.

When we built our home in 2017, our structure required both a histori-