

OPINION

theAstorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

SHANNON ARLINT
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Running for governor with Portland in a nosedive

Many of the Christmas letters my wife and I received this holiday season contained an extra measure of drama or pain, largely born of COVID. I expect that was true for many who heard from friends they'd not seen for several months or a couple of years.

A recent holiday letter from Portland friends was about COVID distress. It also contained a personal narrative about the deterioration of Portland – the city's riots and rampant homelessness.



STEVE FORRESTER

Weeks prior to Christmas, we learned that a longtime business associate was moving his family out of Portland to a more rural

location. Hearing gunshots were a factor in that decision.

At a Halloween dinner at an Astoria home, we met a couple who had left Portland for Astoria several months prior. They had become fatigued by the soundtrack of gunshots on a nightly basis. They love our town.

For many of us who have lived in Portland and known it for a very long time, it is as though the City of Roses has chosen to become the City of Riots. And so quickly.

As Oregon prepares to elect a new governor, what effect will Portland's sudden decline have on that race?

We received a glimpse of that in Willamette Week's interview with the independent candidate for governor, Betsy Johnson, published on Jan. 5. She described Portland as "an accelerating death spiral disaster."

Johnson said that fear of crime was not confined to Portland. She also mentioned the small Eastern Oregon town of Elgin. When The Observer in La Grande checked that with Elgin's mayor, she said the streets of her town were quite safe and that she enjoyed walking them at night.

It is a delicate trick to run against a city while also soliciting that city's voters to join a campaign that feeds on disgust for their city. It's a good bet that at least one candidate has engaged



Political clashes on the streets of Portland have damaged the city's reputation.

Alex Milan Tracy/AP Photo

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TO REFORM PORTLAND OR ANY OTHER PLACE.
THEY ARE OUT TO DESTROY PORTLAND.

a polling firm to determine how Portlanders feel about their city.

Prior to leaving his columnist position at the New York Times, the prospective candidate for governor Nicholas Kristof wrote a column about Portland's deterioration. He closed it with a touch of optimism, admonishing not to bet against Portland.

Beside using Portland's deterioration as a foil, what can a prospective Oregon governor do when the city's mayor lacks what it takes in this time of crisis. Watching Ted Wheeler – from state treasurer to Portland mayor – reminds me of a passage from President Lyndon Johnson's biography. After Johnson extolled to House

Speaker Sam Rayburn his thrall for the Ivy League degrees and brilliance of President John F. Kennedy's Cabinet, Rayburn said that he'd prefer that at least one of these great intellects had run for county sheriff. For all of Wheeler's academic accomplishment, he's clearly lacking the emotional intelligence to grasp his appointment with history.

At some point, leadership of the city and the state must recognize in a cold-blooded way that the rioters are not out to reform Portland or any other place. They are out to destroy Portland.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A national shame

A national shame hiding in plain sight: The fight against human trafficking demands our attention

In well-appointed homes, on farms, in factories and in restaurants in the U.S., thousands of people, even children, work long days cleaning homes, picking crops, making products and washing dishes, bussing tables and serving customers.

They toil for little or no pay for heartless employers unconcerned for their safety or health and, in some cases, ready to use threats or worse to keep them obedient. These are the faces of labor trafficking in the U.S., tens of thousands of people condemned to modern-day slavery in our cities and towns.

Ridding the nation of this scourge is difficult. Investigations need overlapping financial, economic and criminal actions to unravel the many bad actors involved.

The U.S. Department of Labor has a central role in eliminating slavery here and abroad. We work tirelessly to prevent, protect and prosecute those responsible. The department's wage and hour division recently engaged in a public dialogue on the topic of human trafficking, and we encourage everyone to read these engaging ideas.

In December, the White House released the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. The plan reemphasized the three pillars to address human trafficking — prevention, protection, prosecution — and added partnerships as the nexus to enable crosscutting approaches and institutional effectiveness. The plan aims to address the root causes of human trafficking by taking action against the systemic injustices that communities, including underserved populations, experience.

PAUL CHANG
U.S. Department of Labor,
Western Regional Anti-Human Trafficking
Coordinator

A good way

I've seen this type of scam way too often to fall for it again. Problem: Joe Biden being elected president with a significant popular vote margin — bad thing.

How to deal with the problem:

Step 1: Fixate on Biden 2020 campaign promise to end COVID-19.



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.

Step 2: Ignore cratering COVID-19 rates in June 2021.

Step 3: Make a lot of noise about how masking and vaccines infringe "freedom."

Step 4: Blame Biden for skyrocketing COVID-19 rates.

Step 5: Repeat ad infinitum.

In this partisan age, I've learned not to expect civility in politics. I would have expected that the preservation of the lives of others would be an ideal we could all embrace. I guess I was wrong.

The Bible says, "Love one another." Wearing a mask and getting your shots seems a good way to demonstrate that you take that commandment seriously.

JAMES HEFFERNAN
Tillamook

Worth supporting

On Saturday, I attended an Indivisible North Coast Oregon meeting on Zoom where Melissa Busch spoke to us about her campaign for Oregon state senator for Senate District 16.

It is hard to imagine anyone more qualified than this home health nurse who visits patients in their homes and sees the real problems that actual people in this state are facing on a daily basis.

She sees people who have to make difficult choices every day on what they are going to spend with a very limited income. They often have to make a choice between food, medical care or prescription medications.

Melissa has seen firsthand what the problems are in our state, and has real plans to advocate for solutions. This is someone worth supporting with your time, money and backing.

JEAN HOOGE
Astoria