

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Limit the harm deportation inflicts

A little over a year ago, when much of the economy remained shut due to the COVID pandemic, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a memo outlining the jobs essential to the nation's critical infrastructure.

When researchers examined those categories, they discovered that undocumented workers are much more likely to perform essential work than U.S.-born workers. In Oregon, about 3 out of every 4 undocumented workers are essential workers.



JANET BAUER

Even so, undocumented workers live under the constant threat of deportation — the threat of being removed

from this country, the threat of having their families broken up.

While Oregon lawmakers can't change the immigration laws, they can limit the harm deportation inflicts on Oregon families and the state's economy. They can do so by enacting universal legal representation.

Right now, some 9,000 Oregonians are fighting deportation. An immigration case affects not only them, but their 8,000 family members, including 5,000 children — most of whom are U.S. citizens or legal residents — and countless members of their communities. More than half of deportation cases end in removal of the person.

A deportation proceeding takes a big financial toll on families. Lost wages, fees and other costs go on for years. Win or lose their case, family finances suffer. Researchers have found that, long after the conclusion of the case, household income lags by a third to more than half its prior level.

Given that families with undocumented members tend to be lower income, a deportation proceeding sinks families into deep economic hardship. Families report losing their home to foreclosure or eviction. Many admit to going hungry.

Children, in particular, pay a heavy price. One in 10 Oregon children live with a relative who is undocumented. These children live under constant fear of having someone close to them being



A farmworker tends to row crops outside of Ontario.

Malheur Enterprise

taken away. When a parent is deported, children experience anxiety, depression and anger. Their schooling suffers; their life goals are upended.

On top of the emotional trauma, children must also make do with less. Our organization estimated, conservatively, that a child in Oregon who has a parent deported loses about \$56,000 in financial support during their childhood years.

The harm from deportation spreads beyond individuals and families — it impacts the state's economy. As has been the case throughout our nation's history, today's immigrants boost the economy as workers, business owners, consumers and taxpayers. Their removal weakens the economy.

No industry is more at risk than Oregon's agriculture industry. Our analysis showed that undocumented workers make up nearly half of all farm labor in Oregon, as the agriculture industry finds it difficult to attract U.S.-born workers. Because rural counties depend more on agriculture than urban counties,

rural counties have a large stake in the fate of undocumented residents facing deportation.

Undocumented workers bolster the economy in other ways. They buy food, pay rent, have their cars fixed and purchase other goods and services. These dollars circulate in local economies, helping sustain the businesses and jobs of other Oregonians.

We estimated that if the current backlog of deportation cases in Oregon is decided according to long-term trends — with a bit more than half of cases ending in removal — then Oregon will have about \$130 million fewer dollars circulating in the economy per year through fewer purchases of goods and services.

While Oregon can't fully eliminate the harm from deportation, it can reduce it. Legal representation plays a big role in whether someone's case ends in deportation. Many Oregonians who are deported never had the help of a lawyer.

Despite the federal government always being represented by an experi-

enced attorney, immigrants facing deportation are not entitled to a lawyer. Few can afford one. Facing the court alone, they often are unable to mount a strong defense, even if they have good legal grounds for remaining. It's an inherently unfair process.

In response to these challenges, the Oregon Legislature can make a big difference. Enacting universal representation would provide all Oregonians in immigration court the benefit of a lawyer. This would go a long way in ensuring that Oregonians are not wrongly removed from their families, jobs and communities.

Universal representation advances justice, while protecting Oregon families and the state's economy. In this legislative session, lawmakers should enact universal representation.

Janet Bauer is the director of policy research at the Oregon Center for Public Policy. This guest column was originally published by the Oregon Capital Chronicle.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Standing for peace

When Megan Casebourn and I decided to start standing for peace for an hour at the post office each Friday, in February 2002, it was in response to President George W. Bush's call for war against Afghanistan, then Iraq.

In those days, 30, sometimes 50 or more, would show up every week, many with signs and banners and American flags, mostly to show those driving and walking by that some in the community ask for peaceful resolution to conflict, and to suggest that the U.S. government might be complicit in starting these wars of choice.

We, the voters, willingly or unwillingly, pay taxes to keep the whole military-war-corporate machine speeding along, though most voters, and many veterans, oppose these wars. Public witness is essential, because if we don't use our right to peaceful dissent, we will surely lose it.

After President Barack Obama got elected, people stopped showing up, since he was the "peace president," who won a Nobel Prize shortly after his election, and promised to get the U.S. military out of foreign wars. But he was just kidding.

For 20 years, the Peace Gathering has served as ritual, and carries with it responsibility. Being present gives people a rare opportunity for peaceful dissent and a chance to try out discussing contentious things with passersby of different worldviews.

Now, the people of the U.S. are once again being prepped for war. Please join us on a Friday between 5 and 6 p.m. at the corner of Eighth and Commercial streets to witness for peace.

SUE SKINNER  
Astoria

### The most good

The idea that putting fencing or netting on the Astoria Bridge would have any effect on suicides makes no sense.

Most suicides are makes no sense, yet we don't make new gun laws or even enforce many we have.

There are many high places available for jumpers in our county.

Every jumper has problems they feel can't be resolved. This is where the help is needed.



KOTERBA  
JEFFREYKOTERBA.com

## 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.

Oregon comes in last for availability of mental health care.

Let's put that money where it will do the most good.

DORIS LARREMORE  
Astoria

### Let her know

On Jan. 14, the county commissioners all over Senate District 16, including Clatsop County, selected Rachel Armitage to serve the

rest of Betsy Johnson's term after her resignation.

Sen. Armitage is a lifelong Oregonian, has experience as a legislative assistant in Salem, and has been an active member of the Democratic Party for years. She's strong on jobs, housing and education. She's in the process of pursuing her master's degree at Reed College, where she is also employed.

I encourage everyone to welcome our new senator and let her know what is important to you and your family. Her heart is in rural and coastal Oregon, and she has the knowledge and the determination we need in the state Senate right now.

Constituents can email her office: Sen.RachelArmitage@oregonlegislature.gov, or call her office at 503-986-1716.

KEN POTTER  
Cannon Beach