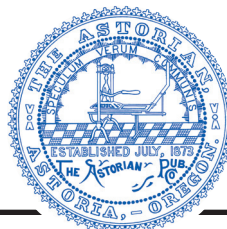


OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

State Senate Democrats draw line on masks

When I was a kid, there was a short-lived TV program called “Slattery’s People.” The plot centered around a state legislator. That probably explains why the audience soon faded, even though one co-star was Ed Asner, before he became the popular character Lou Grant.

I remember nothing about “Slattery’s People” except that each episode opened with these words: “Democracy is a very bad form of government. But I ask you never to forget: All the others are so much worse.”



DICK HUGHES

That admonition was a play on a quotation from Winston Churchill, which I didn’t realize

at the time. But the words left a life-long impression on me. They again hit me full in the face Thursday morning as I read the news about global developments, a stark contrast to American democracy despite its multitude of flaws.

Certainly, the messiness of democracy has been on display at the Oregon State Capitol during the Legislature’s 35-day session. A veteran Oregon legislator recently mused, “You’re always caught between your conscience, your caucus and your constituents.”

His insight was powerful. I’ll add a corollary: When those three influences do align, legislators often find themselves pitted against their colleagues.

Such was the case Thursday for state Sen. Dallas Heard, R-Roseburg.

On a party-line vote, Democratic senators booted him from the Senate floor — and the entire Capitol — for not wearing a face covering, as is required by legislative and state rules. Heard, who also is chairman of the Oregon Republican Party, rarely has been on the Senate floor this year because he opposes this mask mandate.

Thursday’s dramatic scene rolled out in mostly calm, respectful tones. Bear in mind, however, that the tone can shift quickly as legislators rush to pass, modify or kill bills before the March 7 deadline for them to adjourn the 2022 session.

As an example of that nimble or



Kaylee Domzalski/Oregon Public Broadcasting

State Sen. Dallas Heard, a Republican, was removed from the state Senate floor for refusing to wear a mask.

hasty pace — pick your preferred description — the newly formed Joint Committee on Farm Worker Overtime met for the first time Thursday and heard pro-and-con testimony on House Bill 4002.

To protect against the spread of COVID-19, all committee meetings are by videoconference and phone. At one point, Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Portland, who co-chairs the committee, paused to remind people testifying that they should be respectful of folks on the other side.

As for Heard, Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, had ordered him escorted off the Senate floor during December’s special session when Heard refused to wear a mask. This time, Heard refused to go, forcing the Senate vote.

Their interactions Thursday were firm but polite. Heard said no one should be forced to wear a mask and that his protest was about standing up for the young children of America.

“These rules are not moral. A mask is not moral,” he said. “These mandates don’t work if the ultimate goal is to protect our children.”

Courtney responded by asking him not to create a hole in the Senate family: “Senator Heard, you were kind enough, and gentleman enough, to text me this morning and say, ‘Good morning, brother.’”

Speakers on both sides said to follow the science. But they — like their fellow Americans — differed on what science says.

Sen. Dennis Linthicum, R-Klamath Falls, said masks don’t work, and sen-

ators don’t need masks because they aren’t carrying the coronavirus anyway.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, responded that individuals don’t know at any given moment whether they have the coronavirus, so masks are worn to guard against transmitting it to others.

Republicans pointed out that lawmakers frequently violate the mask mandate elsewhere in the Capitol, such as when going to the restroom or parking areas.

Legislators, though masked, often gather less than 6 feet apart while chatting informally.

Side note: Constituent newsletters from Sen. Akasha Lawrence Spence, D-Portland, have said immune-compromised people such as she cannot be vaccinated. She contracted COVID-19 before the 2022 session and self-isolated but has returned to the Capitol.

Some senators seemed unaware that earlier Thursday, Gov. Kate Brown and state agencies had announced that the indoor mask mandate and the state’s COVID-19 state of emergency would soon end.

During the debate, Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend, joked that Brown’s action was a belated response to his letter urging her to lift all mask mandates by noon Wednesday.

Knopp had written, “After nearly two years of constant masking, it would be a breath of fresh air for Oregonians to see their democratically elected representatives in the Legislature remove their masks and do their business.” Though Brown didn’t comply with his deadline, she and Knopp talked by phone later Wednesday.

Lifting the Senate mandate also will require a Senate rule change, which Knopp introduced Thursday. Undoubtedly, the supermajority Democrats will defeat it.

Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, officially made the motion that Heard had violated the rules and should be excluded from the Senate chamber and the Capitol until he complied.

“Sadly, please call the roll,” Courtney instructed the Senate staff when it came time to vote.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Foresight

The Astoria City Council will lose a couple of important leaders when Joan Herman and Roger Rocka step down.

When we moved to Astoria in 2019, I sought out ways I could serve the area. Even though I was a newbie, Joan and Roger met me for coffee and sold me on the area’s potential, including the role of KMUN radio.

Following these informal conversations, I affiliated myself with KMUN, first at the station front desk and later as a member of the board of directors. Thanks to the foresight of Joan and Roger for adding me to the cadre of dedicated local volunteers.

MICK MORTLOCK
Astoria

Trying

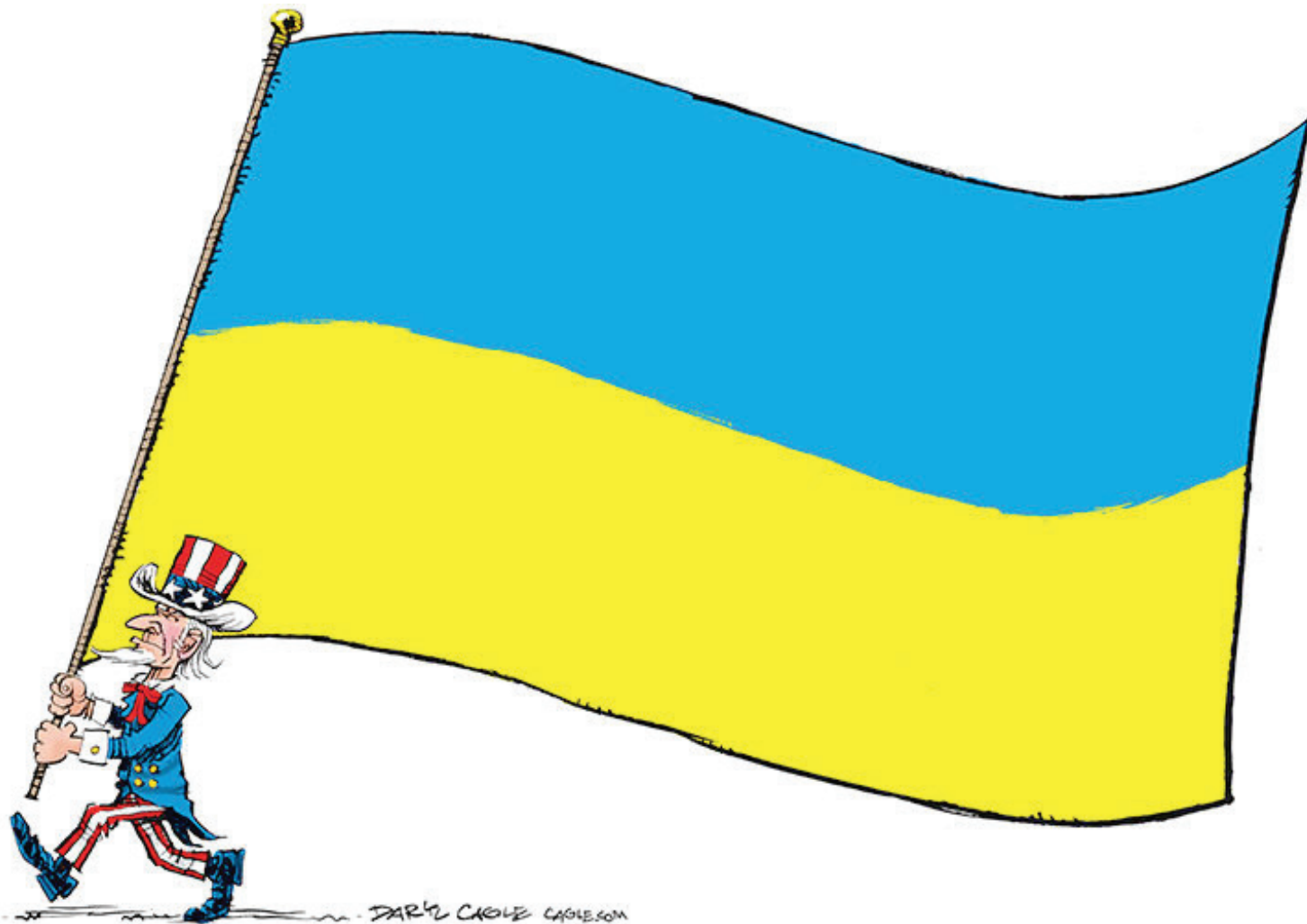
One of the best human beings many of us will have ever had the privilege to meet was called to heaven last month. His name is Skip Hauke. He was a mentor to me, and many others, on so many levels!

First and foremost was the love and respect he gave to others. When I was 9, I pocketed a pack of gum while getting groceries with my mom at Hauke’s Sentry Market. When my mother figured out where the extra gum came from, she marched me down the hill to confront Hauke and tell him of my actions. After scaring me with the threat of calling the police, he had me pick up garbage that was blowing around the parking lot, and do my best at mopping the floor.

In 1975, one of the better jobs a 15-year-old could get was being a box boy at the market. Skip finally gave me an opportunity to show my worth. He even allowed me to try to work while going through triple dailies training for high school football. The job didn’t work out for me, but as he handed me that final check, he told me that he was proud of me for trying.

Since that moment, trying has become the cornerstone of everything that I have ever been able to accomplish in my life. Skip now knows what an impact he has had on Earth. I’m sure my mom met him at the gate with a hug!

TROY HASKELL
Astoria



Betterment

Like so many others, I am saddened to hear of the passing of Skip Hauke. Skip was committed to the betterment of our community and was generous with his time, knowledge, humor and care.

Skip’s work with the education system in our community is close to my heart. Over the years, Skip volunteered in numerous ways, including reading to kids, providing needed school resources to each of our schools, and also helping to organize community support for schools.

Skip also played a significant role in passing two Astoria School District facility bond measures in 2000 and 2018. In 2000, Skip led a committee to help pass a \$21 million bond that helped build Lewis and Clark Elementary School and modernized school facilities. In 2018, Skip led another committee to help the district pass a \$70 million bond to transform the Astoria Middle School, Astor Elementary School and

Astoria High School.

I was fortunate to take Skip on a tour of the completed Astoria Middle School project in September — he was so proud of the facility, and our community, for the support provided to our kids.

On a personal level, I have called Skip a friend for more than 25 years. It has been a privilege to work alongside him, and learn from his trusted and influential leadership. Skip’s love for his home, ability to connect with people and willingness to step forward have helped make Astoria a rich, welcoming and active community.

CRAIG HOPPES
Superintendent, Astoria School District

Scruples

The Democratic Party has been stricken with an unheralded epidemic of scruples. Oh, the horrors! If scruples as a malady stumps you, think “wokeness.”

Feverishly concerned with doing things that are morally right and politically correct, the mainstream Democrats hamstring themselves with grandiose dreams like the Equal Rights Amendment, or “liberating” women or, most recently, the so-called right to vote. Tentative and doubtful, the mainstream Democrat dreams of embracing everyone and offending no one.

But don’t panic. Our former state senator, Betsy Johnson, has no such symptoms. She straddles the political spectrum. A consummate politician, she is a veritable “man for all seasons,” and will be a governor for all reasons.

She identifies as an independent, but runs as a pragmatist, and has none of the character flaws that define a member of the Democrat Party. As a newly minted independent, she is inclusiveness personified.

Wear a mask! Wash your hands! Vote Betsy! While you still can ...

GARY DURHEIM
Seaside