

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

Is the rural-urban divide myth or reality?

For your political reading pleasure, the early edition of the state voters' pamphlet for the May 17 election – the Military/Overseas Voters' Guide – is online from the Secretary of State's Office.

At the tail end are three local ballot measures. Ones in Klamath and Douglas counties would continue the unlikely quest to merge eastern and southern

Oregon into Idaho. The voters' guide endorsements from Move Oregon's Border ask, "Who do you trust with your child's future: Idaho government or Oregon government?"



DICK HUGHES

The third measure, in coastal Charleston, would tax short-term

lodging to promote tourism, support public safety and spruce up the community. An argument in favor states, "All of the funds stay within the county and nothing is sent to Salem, benefiting the area directly."

Ah, the fraught relationship between rural Oregon and the state capital, although more often it's characterized as the rest of Oregon vs. Portland.

Is the rural-urban divide a myth or daily reality? Talking with reporters before this year's legislative session, state Sen. James Manning Jr., D-Eugene, called it a myth because he represents both urban and rural areas. He said it's his responsibility to understand all constituents' concerns.

Does that happen with all, even



Some conservatives want to move parts of Oregon into Idaho.

most, legislators? In this election year, it seems worth quizzing legislative and gubernatorial candidates about the urban-rural relationship. How many urban candidates have visited all 60 Oregon House districts? How many rural politicians have gotten to know every legislative district in the Portland metro area?

Certainly, many issues are statewide, such as child care. Or housing, which is in such short supply everywhere that Salem ranks even worse than Portland in comparative housing affordability. Hospitality workers in tourist areas, whether along the coast or in winter sports areas, cannot afford to live there.

Yet vast differences exist between big cities, with revenue to pay for government services, and sparsely popu-

lated areas. For example, much of rural Oregon must depend on state police for law enforcement protection, as Sen. Fred Girod, R-Lyons, reminds his colleagues.

Drug cartels gained a foothold in southern Oregon for illicit marijuana grows, he said, because Oregon's population nearly doubled since Tom McCall was governor while the number of troopers dropped by more than one-third.

Other rural examples: Klamath County has the highest unemployment rate in Oregon, not having fully recovered from the Great Recession. Internet access is so poor in Jackson and Josephine counties that 22% of respondents to a recent survey said they had considered moving.

Meanwhile, rural residents have legitimate reasons for believing they have less say in state government. They increasingly are outnumbered. "This is why Oregon passes laws that kill southern Oregon industries and values," said Mike McCarter, of Citizens for Greater Idaho, in his voters' guide argument.

It's important to note, however, that the 2022 Legislature took several actions aimed at helping rural Oregon. That included devoting \$100 million for rural projects vetted by a team consisting of Reps. David Gomberg, D-Otis; Mark Owens, R-Crane; and Greg Smith, R-Heppner; and Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend.

Pollster John Horvick, of DHM Research, recently pointed out that only 42% of voters live in the Portland metro area. Of the remainder, 27% live in the other Willamette Valley counties, and 31% in the rest of the state.

However, a majority of Democrats (53%) reside in the Portland area, whereas a plurality of Republicans (41%) live outside Portland and the Willamette Valley.

Bear in mind that Democrats, Republicans, Independent, unaffiliated and minor-party voters can be found everywhere, including Democrats in drought-stricken Klamath County. Democrats included this statement in their voters' guide argument against creating a county Border Relocation Board: "... It won't rain any more here just by calling ourselves part of Idaho. ..."

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Horrified

I was horrified and incredulous to find reports that Russian soldiers had killed and tortured children in Bucha, Ukraine, shot people while their arms were tied behind them and so many more atrocities.

We are a small community, but that does not permit us to turn away. We are citizens of the world. These war crimes have to be accounted for.

Please write your governor, your senators and your president in protest.

MARY TANGUAY WEBB
Astoria

Understandable

Astoria City Council's decision to end its negotiations with a developer for Heritage Square was understandable, given the vocal public opposition to the project.

Given most Astorians' love for the history and unique beauty of our great city, perhaps this project was simply the right idea for the wrong place. Unfortunately, the misinformation that accompanied the strident opposition contributed to the caustic discussion.

It was unfortunate that the narrative about Heritage Square was derailed to include the problems posed by Astoria's homeless population to our residents, tourists and vibrant small businesses. Addressing homelessness demands a far different response than providing affordable housing to our workers who make less than \$20 an hour.

We need workforce housing throughout Clatsop County, and the county is working hard to partner with our cities to expand our housing supply in both urban and rural areas.

I am the county's representative on the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority, which includes Columbia and Tillamook counties. NOHA owns 186 housing units in Clatsop County, ranging from four complexes with 32 to 46 units to five smaller buildings with two to eight units.

We are about to break ground on a 42-unit apartment complex in Warrenton. We are also studying the feasibility of renovating the 46-unit senior housing at the historic Owens-Adair building in Astoria.

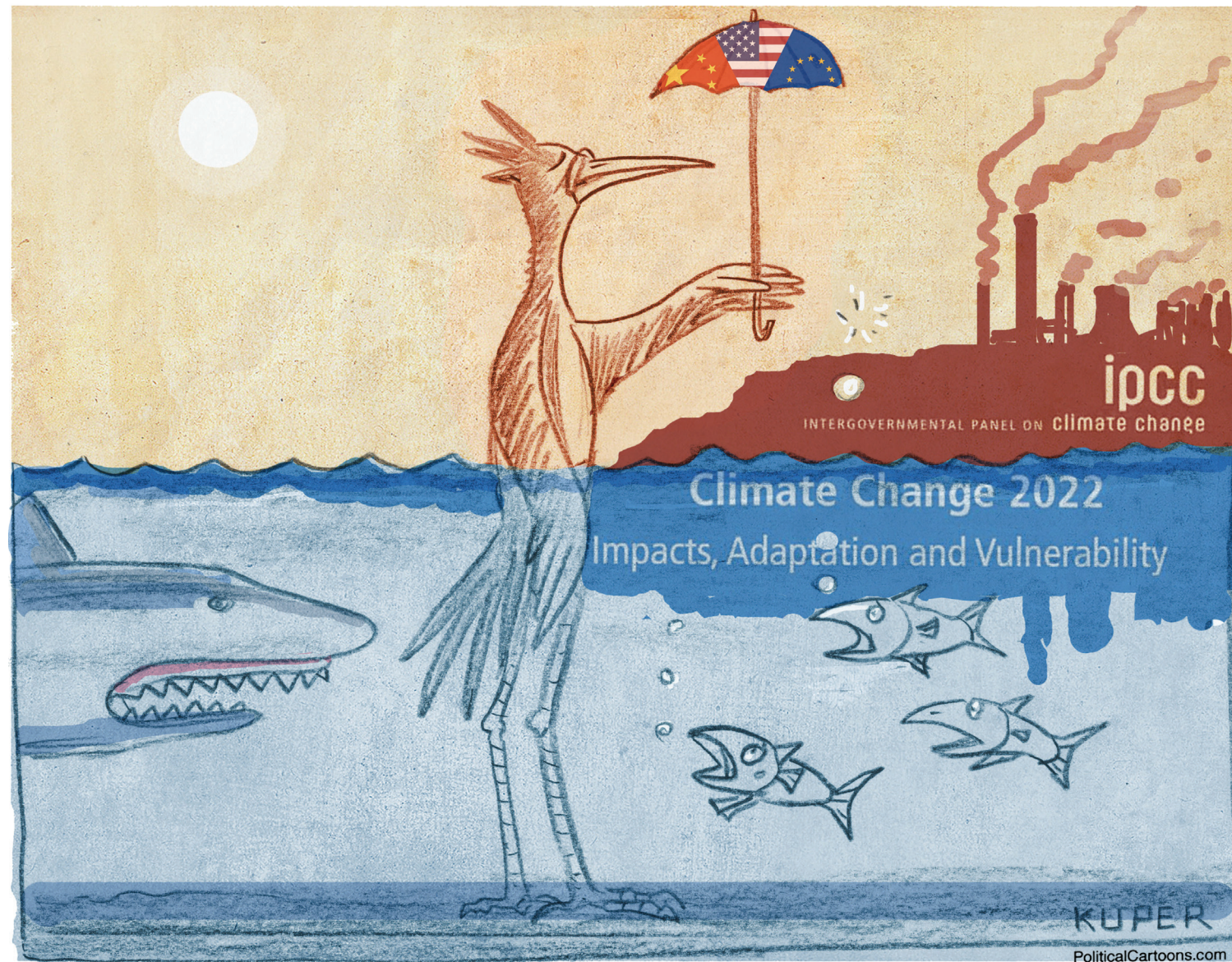
NOHA also provides vouchers for low-income tenants to use for private housing. There are 300 vouchers in use in the county; unfortunately, there are 788 households on the waiting list.

PAMELA WEV
Clatsop County commissioner
Astoria

Desperate need

The U.S. must continue to rally the international world to assist the Ukrainian people as they face a humanitarian crisis that has resulted from Russia's brutal invasion. Ukrainian civilians are in desperate need of shelter, food, clothing and basic medical care.

We can help them through the International Monetary Fund. They can allocate a reserve fund called Special Drawing Rights



that is designed to help nations in times of crisis like the one Ukrainians are facing now.

Due to the effectiveness of SDRs in helping those who need it the most, it's no surprise that Ukrainian officials have asked for a new round of these resources.

Certain voices in Washington have stood in the way of Ukraine receiving this much-needed assistance by misconstruing the truth about SDRs, and absurdly arguing that they could somehow get into Russian hands. The reality is that if we send SDRs to another country, we get to designate the recipient.

Ukraine is a country of incredible capacity, education and industry, whose people are heroically resisting authoritarian invasion. U.S. leaders who feel strongly about defending Ukraine should vote to send SDRs to support Ukrainians now.

CHASE JOHNSON
Astoria

Orchestrated

Regarding the Clatsop County commission vote April 13 on short-term rentals:

Cove Beach is a small residential community just south of Arch Cape, located in Oswald West State Park and the Cape Falcon Marine Reserve. It is beautiful here, but the harmony of this beautiful community has been tarnished.

Over the past several years, a small group of homeowners have worked relentlessly to stop other homeowners from renting their

homes as short-term rentals. This small group has orchestrated water board moratoriums based on inaccurate data, attempting to prevent new homes from being built.

Their efforts have caused commissioners, staff, volunteers and homeowners to spend thousands of hours — and our tax dollars — to shape Cove Beach to their liking. It appears their goal is that Cove Beach and Falcon Cove effectively become an exclusive gated community.

We own a small cottage home in Cove Beach, and we use it for family, friends and rentals. Prior to this, our family had been renting a home in Cannon Beach and Arch Cape for a week or two every summer since the 1940s.

We are proud to offer our Cove Beach cottage home to visitors to share this experience. Our guests follow good-neighbor policies and observe the rules the county has established for quiet time and night sky.

Like us, our guests and their children are grateful for the opportunity to have visited the Oregon Coast in this beautiful place.

We hope the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners will do the right thing for our community.

JOHN and MARIA MEYER
Cove Beach

Healthy tourism

Short-term rentals are an important contribution to the economic livelihood of Clatsop County. The accommodations and

food services and retail trade industries account for significant commercial activity in the county.

Aside from the economic benefits enjoyed by the retail shopkeepers in Cannon Beach, Seaside and Astoria, county residents benefit from the tax revenue contributed by our tourism industry. This tax revenue will need to be replaced by increases on tax burden of the full-time residents in the absence of revenue generated from tourism.

Demand is increasing for vacation rental accommodations by tourists from around the world. Tourists seeking the experience of staying in a private residence as a vacation rental tend to have the means to spend more on vacation travel, staying longer and spending more on local goods and services.

Retail shops, groceries, restaurants and galleries benefit from making Clatsop County and Oregon a sought-after destination for these tourists.

The restrictions on short-term rentals being entertained by the county run counter to the demand of the market and our state-wide demand of welcoming tourism. They broadcast a message to the large segment of the tourism market that the county wants to prohibit their ability to visit. This prohibition on accommodation options is, quite simply, a prohibition on tourism.

Please let the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners know that you value and support our tourism industry.

RON COX
LESLIE ANN BUTLER
Falcon Cove