

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Primary races for Congress get interesting

**Y**ou can run for Congress without living in the Oregon district you want to represent.

You can run for practically any office despite having rarely voted.

You can run for office without mentioning the above in your voters' guide statements. Or that your past conduct caused you to be bounced from office ... or suspended from the bench ... or



**DICK HUGHES**

It's up to voters to research candidates in the May 17 election. There was an era when the Oregon voters' pamphlet was a primary source of solid information. These days it reads – if your eyes are good enough to read the

small type – like an extension of the candidates' ads.

Political scientist James Moore suggests endorsements are the most useful part of candidate statements. Voters might know little about some candidate but have strong feelings about individuals or organizations endorsing them.

As for running for Congress while living outside the district boundaries, such a candidacy is legal under the U.S. Constitution. In contrast, Oregon law requires legislative candidates to reside where they run. As result, some legislators and candidates had to relocate due to redistricting.

In April, Moore and I discussed the lukewarm race for governor, which finally is heating up. There is nothing tepid about several congressional races this year, thanks to redistricting, U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio's upcoming retirement in the 4th District and Oregon gaining its sixth seat.

Oregon last gained a district 40 years ago. In that 1982 general election, Republican Denny Smith won the new 5th District, with 51.2% of the vote to Democrat Ruth McFarland's 48.8%. The 5th District included much of the old 2nd District, which had stretched from Salem to the Idaho



**Carrick Flynn, a Democrat running in the primary for the 6th Congressional District, has benefited from outside money.**

KGW

border. Two years previously, upstart Smith had snatched the 2nd District from Democratic U.S. Rep. Al Ullman, the powerful chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

The 5th District has three distinctions. First, it was considered somewhat of a swing district. Second, redistricting shifted its boundaries east, dropping the coastline but adding Bend to the larger Willamette Valley portion. Third, every representative elected in the 5th District has gotten divorced while in office.

In this year's Democratic primary, centrist U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader faces an intense challenge from progressive Jamie McLeod-Skinner. She ran for the 2nd District two years ago. Schrader has the incumbent's advantage of money. Five Republicans are on the

ballot, with Lori Chavez-DeRemer and Jimmy Crumacker raising the most money.

Speaking of money ...

The strangest race is in the new 6th District. The 16 major-party candidates include high rollers, state legislators, local elected officials and former officeholders. Democrat Carrick Flynn stands out for his unique campaign.

An obscure candidate when he filed in February, Flynn has benefited from more outside spending on his behalf than any other congressional candidate in the U.S.

Those supposedly independent outside ads look harrowingly similar to candidate ads. More than \$7 million came from a super PAC affiliated with a cryptocurrency billionaire. And the House Majority PAC, affiliated with

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other top Democrats, took the rare step of interceding in the Democratic primary by running roughly \$1 million in ads touting Flynn. That drew a rebuke from other Democratic candidates and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Political scientist Moore noted that the Congressional Hispanic Caucus' PAC has now made its own \$1 million ad buy on behalf of state Rep. Andrea Salinas, which puts it at odds with the House Democratic Caucus. "Seems like an interesting twist from a party seeking to keep seats across the country," Moore said.

On the Republican side, the best known among the seven candidates might be state Rep. Ron Noble.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Knowledge and experience

**L**ianne Thompson should return as the Clatsop County commissioner for District 5. She has the knowledge and experience to contribute to the future of the county. Please vote for Lianne.

**MIKE MORGAN**  
Cannon Beach

### One community

**R**ecently, Lisa and I had a fire at our home in Gearhart. We have struggled with the loss of a secure home, and feelings of displacement. The bright side has been getting to know our wonderful neighbors. It does not matter if you have a red or a blue sign. We are one community, and we are all fortunate to live in Gearhart.

Our fire station is in need of replacement. If you doubt this, visit the fire station and make your assessment. Please inform yourself of tax implications. Gearhart pays some of the lowest property taxes on the North Coast. Ask your Astoria and Seaside neighbors about their taxes. You will discover you pay less, and you will continue to pay less after this bond is approved.

In today's world, it is easy to be a pessimist. But pessimists don't accomplish anything. I have lived in this community for over 20 years, and operate a successful local business. Success and growth take investment. Each year we defer this critical project its costs increase. If we do not pass this bond, we will be voting on a significantly more expensive bond in the future.

Our volunteer fire department is an incredible asset. We can't build a school or a city hall and staff it with volunteers. But we can build a fire station and depend on volunteers to come to our rescue. As a community, let's pass this bond, build the fire station and once again enjoy each other's company.

**DAVE KOLLER**  
Gearhart

### Extremely impressed

**I**am writing to endorse Nate Pinkstaff to be your county commissioner for District 3 in this election.

In addition to living in this district for almost 30 years, I was also the only countywide elected official, other than the sheriff, for 25 of those years, starting in

1994.

I was honored to serve as your district attorney, although many times the Clatsop County commission made that job extremely difficult.

I was introduced to Pinkstaff by people who work with him in the community, and I've been extremely impressed with the breadth of his knowledge and his open mind.

Electing the same old, same old, has done little. The county commission hasn't even addressed homelessness and rampant drug use. Join me in voting for Pinkstaff. He is running against incumbent Pam Wev.

**JOSHUA MARQUIS**  
Astoria

### A safer future

**G**earhart is changing. The North Coast is changing. What used to be a quiet coastal corridor has seen such growth, it still takes my breath away.

Our population has grown, traffic on the U.S. Highway 101 corridor has grown and tourism has grown. These changes bring increasing demands to our first responders. We must build a facility to respond effectively to these times.

The Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department has been working out of a decaying cinder-block structure built 64 years ago. The current station has served them well — well beyond what should have been its expiration date.

Now is the time to build for both the present and all of our futures. Our Gearhart volunteer firefighters need a new station.

We must stop procrastinating. Costs continue escalating. In 2006, a bond measure for a new station and City Hall failed. Its cost? \$3.75 million. Labor and

supply costs continue rising every year. What will the cost be if Measure 4-213 fails?

In the last 60-plus years we have become aware of greater earthquake and tsunami threats. Higher ground and a new station will help mitigate and manage these realities. The proposed Highlands Lane location is at 65 feet in elevation. This is above even a worst-case scenario.

Our current station, at 27 feet, might just be underwater with even a medium event. For a safer future, we must build a new fire station. Let's quit kicking the can down the road. Vote "yes" for a safer tomorrow.

**DAVID RUSSELL**  
Gearhart

### Long overdue

**I** have been a full-time resident of Gearhart since 2015. One drive through this hidden coastal gem told me this was where I wanted to live. When it comes to "improving" Gearhart, there is not much to improve, in my opinion. Walk into the Gearhart fire station — it becomes obvious improvement is long overdue.

A position with Life Flight Network as a flight nurse brought me to Gearhart. I have worked alongside these first responders and fire personnel. They do a magnificent job. They save lives. They are our local heroes. They need and deserve support from the community they selflessly serve.

Upon first hearing the \$14.5 million bond cost I, too, was shell-shocked. I initially bought into the plethora of negative misinformation out there. I stopped by the fire station one day, and took a tour. I then realized I needed to educate myself with facts beyond the social media wars.

Some complain we are not being told the whole story. The whole story is out there, and I urge anyone to seek out the facts.

Being fiscally conservative, I feel it's important how we spend tax dollars. They're not asking for a new golf course. They are asking for a place to train and learn, and to serve their community.

I urge you to be open-minded and get the facts from reliable sources. Attend a Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department open house and get to know the situation firsthand. I urge you to vote "yes" on Measure 4-213.

**TRUDY DUISEN**  
Gearhart

### Confidence or no confidence?

**O**ver the past years, Gearhart's city leadership has dragged our city through a tumultuous and prolonged debate by presenting and insisting that our city taxpayers must pay a fire station bond of \$14.5 million determined by estimated costs only with no location stipulated for the new station.

To the embarrassment of Gearhart, our residents have voiced numerous and well-documented objections that have gone unanswered. Sadly, objections and arguments stipulated in the recent voters' pamphlet were left unchallenged by the city.

Unlike past fire station town hall meetings, our city's most vocal proponents have instead chosen small controllable group meetings over open town hall meetings to defend critically unanswered questions in an open forum.

Our new fire chief, who should be actively involved in the bond debate, has essentially been replaced by our city administrator, who has acted over the years as the primary fire station spokesperson, lead cost estimator, lead feasibility manager and apparently, our lead real estate and land exchange negotiator.

Our opposition group has repeatedly shown absolute support for our fire volunteers and offered a supporting compromise for a new city-centered fire station. Sadly, our City Council refused to listen.

This fire vote will be a clear expression either affirming or denying confidence in our city leaders' overall judgment in demanding a \$14.5 million bond and their unwillingness to compromise.

Please vote "no."

**JACK ZIMMERMAN**  
Gearhart

## 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.