

AT ISSUE/ABORTION

On the North Coast, lack of access to abortion can complicate choice



John Bruijn/The Astorian
Women on the North Coast have to travel to the Portland metro area or cities along the Interstate 5 corridor to access abortion services.

Barriers exist despite legal protections

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
 and **NICOLE BALES**
KMUN and The Astorian

Before her son turned a year old, Chelsea Johnsen had cervical surgery to remove cells that had the potential to become cancerous. Then she found out her copper intrauterine device, or IUD, had failed.

She was pregnant. There was a chance her cervix had not healed enough to carry a baby to full term. A pregnancy could be dangerous for her. They also couldn't find her IUD.

The timing wasn't right, Johnsen decided. She wanted to end the pregnancy. Her doctor at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria said she respected Johnsen's decision and offered her support, but the hospital did not provide abortion services.

"I will never forget that feeling," Johnsen said, "because it's like you have to be so vulnerable and tell someone something that has such a stigma around it and you're already a mother and just to tell someone, 'Hey, this is the choice that I've made and I'm comfortable with.' And then for them to respond with, 'I fully support you. However, we don't do anything for that.' It was like ... OK. Well, great."

Johnsen set up an appointment for an abortion with Planned Parenthood on her own. Then the results came back from an ultrasound to locate her IUD.

Johnsen was told the abortion she had

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The U.S. Supreme Court could overturn Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. The Astorian and KMUN found that even in states like Oregon, where abortion is legally protected at all stages of pregnancy, women in rural communities face a lack of access to abortion services.

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agonized over was now a medical necessity. The IUD was embedded somewhere in her body. It would be too risky to proceed with the pregnancy not knowing where the IUD was located.

In mid-December, Johnsen, who owns the Doe & Arrow boutique downtown, had an abortion procedure at Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland. Right after Christmas, she had surgery to remove the IUD that doctors found pushed up against her colon.

While her doctor in Astoria could make referrals on her behalf, most of the logistics — like the initial appointment with Planned Parenthood — were left to Johnsen.

Abortion rights are protected in Oregon at all stages of pregnancy. There are no waiting periods, no mandated parental involvement, no limitations on publicly-funded abortions.

As the U.S. Supreme Court appears ready to roll back Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide, Oregon is poised to become a destination for women seeking to end their pregnancies.

But despite the legal protections and the promise of expanded access to reproductive health care, the Guttmacher Institute found in 2017 that most Oregon counties — 78% — did not have any clinics that provided abortions.

Rural counties, like Clatsop County on the North Coast, are especially lacking in abortion services, creating barriers for women that complicate their health care choices.

'A very big political hot topic'

On the North Coast and across the Columbia River in Pacific County, Washington, abortions are not available at any local hospital. Not at Columbia Memorial, Providence Seaside or Ocean Beach in Ilwaco.

Health care providers instead refer women to Planned Parenthood or hospitals and clinics in the Portland metro area and cities along the Interstate 5 corridor hours away.

This could mean a trip out of town, time off work, maybe the need to arrange for child care. For pregnant teenagers, women who live in controlling or abusive situations or people who lack their own transportation, the logistical

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Hyak Maritime secures key state grant

A \$13.9M infusion for boat lift project

By **ABBEY McDONALD**
The Astorian

The Oregon Transportation Commission approved \$13.9 million in state funding for Hyak Maritime's mobile boat lift project at Tongue Point during a meeting Thursday after hearing objections from several shipyards on the Columbia River.

The funding comes from Connect Oregon, which had \$46 million available this year for transportation projects statewide.

The grant brings the public spending on Hyak's project to over \$21 million, including \$7 million from the state's share of the federal American Rescue Plan Act and \$350,000 from the Governor's Strategic Reserve.

Hyak has also secured a commitment from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the 2-mile Cathlamet Bay channel approach, a \$9 million project.

The Connect Oregon grant requires that applicants provide at least 30% of the project's funding. Hyak matched around \$7 million in funds, including half the cost of the site's land acquisition at \$2 million.

The contributions mean that public funding will cover most of the project, which is estimated to total \$35 million for the lift and

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Jewell superintendent hired to lead Newberg schools

Phillips is on paid administrative leave

By **ETHAN MYERS**
The Astorian

JEWELL — Steve Phillips, the superintendent of the Jewell School District who is on paid administrative leave pending an investigation, has been selected to fill the same role in Newberg.

At a meeting Tuesday, the school board at Newberg Public Schools announced Phillips as the school district's next superintendent. The board voted 5 to 2, authorizing the board chair to negotiate a contract with Phillips.

He will take on the role as soon as possible, pending contract negotiations, the school district said.

Phillips was announced as one of three finalists for the position in April. The

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Steve Phillips

Commissioners side with couple in permit dispute over home business

Board votes to reverse Planning Commission

By **ERICK BENGEL**
The Astorian

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners has reversed a Planning Commission decision to deny a conditional use permit to a business owner who for about six years has operated from his home off U.S. Highway 26.

Jose Antonio Velazquez-Silva runs a home improvement firm, Velazquez Painting & Construction LLC, at property he owns

with his wife, Susana Huanosta, on W. Campbell Loop, east of the junction.

The couple uses the property for office space and warehousing supplies. Their employees arrive to pick up and drop off materials, working elsewhere on job sites, Ian Sisson, the county's senior planner, said at the board's meeting Wednesday night.

The couple entered in an application for a conditional use permit in 2015, but, for reasons unknown, never got a hearing. The home occupation continued unpermitted.

Neighbors have complained about the business activity and commercial traffic on the road, which is maintained by a homeowners' association.

In September, the couple

applied again for a permit, which would normally be processed administratively, Sisson said, but the community development director — mindful of the violations and neighbor concerns — chose to bring the matter to the Planning Commission.

County staff recommended that the Planning Commission approve the permit and give the business a chance to come into compliance. Any further rule-breaking could then be handled through the code-compliance process.

In February, the Planning Commission rendered a split 2-2 decision denying the permit.

Planning commissioners who voted "no" said the business exceeded the number of employees

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A couple was cleared for a permit for a home improvement business off U.S. Highway 26.

