



»INSIDE

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## Johnson pressed on gun control

Independent candidate appeared at TEDxPortland

By DIRK VANDERHART  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Recent mass shootings — including an elementary school massacre in Texas last week — have put the gun control debate at the forefront of many Americans' minds. That's perhaps not something Oregon gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson was expecting when she agreed weeks ago to appear on a Portland stage Saturday morning.

The former Democratic senator — an unabashed defender of gun rights who often voted differently than other members of her party on the issue — appeared as a surprise guest at an event put on by TEDxPortland. Video posted on Twitter by KGW reporter Evan Watson shows Johnson's sit-down with an interviewer was derailed when members of the audience demanded Johnson, who is running for governor as an unaffiliated candidate, address gun control.



Betsy Johnson

"That's not going to be solved in four minutes on this stage," host David Rae said, before relenting to shouts from the audience. "Help me manage this room, Betsy. You brought up leadership. What is your thinking with this?"

Johnson took the reins from there. "We all have opinions. I have mine, you all have yours," she began, saying she'd long represented a rural northwest Oregon district and is a gun owner and collector. Johnson then suggested that the gun debate had taken attention away from a more important issue: Oregon's "shitty" mental health system.

The observation drew applause, but did not dissuade some in the crowd. Johnson got boos when she said "the style of the gun doesn't dictate the lethality" — a comment which Democratic candidate for governor Tina Kotek tweeted "What?!" in response.

Johnson said that American society needs to be "continuously more vigilant" about detecting signals someone might carry out a mass shooting.

At least one person reported being escorted out of the event for yelling questions at Johnson.

Rae, the host, attempted to calm tensions. He said mass shootings were an American problem that, as someone who grew up in Canada, he does not understand. He also applauded Johnson's bravery and candor. "We're not going to solve it in this room," he said. "We decided to do this two weeks ago."

See Johnson, Page A6



Daniel Passapera/The Day

Crew members line up along the USS Oregon during the submarine's commissioning ceremony Saturday in Groton, Connecticut. The newest Virginia-class fast attack submarine, which can dive to depths greater than 800 feet, was originally christened in 2019. But the COVID-19 pandemic created some schedule changes for the crew.

## A new — and very different — USS Oregon joins Navy

The newest Virginia-class fast attack submarine

By GARY WARNER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

A new USS Oregon officially joined the U.S. Navy on Saturday morning during commission ceremonies at Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut.

The Navy put the ceremonial commissioning of ships on hold for two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic and only recently resumed the tradition.

The nuclear-powered fast attack submarine will be the first Navy ship to carry the state's name since 1893, when the battleship USS Oregon was launched.

The Virginia-class submarine was built at an estimated price tag of just under \$3 billion by Groton-based General Dynamics Electric Boat Co. After its launch and sea trials, the commissioning marks the official beginning of its Navy service.

Each Virginia-class submarine has had an official sponsor, a woman with a connection to the vessel's namesake state. Their role is to bring good luck to the submarine and crew, with duties including breaking a bottle of champagne over the hull of the submarine and giving the first order after a commissioning.

While still in the White House, first lady Laura Bush sponsored the USS Texas and first lady Michelle Obama carried the role for the USS Illinois.

In April, first lady Jill Biden was the



John Narewski/U.S. Navy

The USS Oregon pulls into Submarine Base New London for the first time.

sponsor of the USS Delaware, also a Virginia-class submarine.

During a commissioning commemoration, she called out, "Officers and crew of the USS Delaware, man our ship and bring her to life." The crew responded, "Aye aye, ma'am," and swiftly boarded in dress uniform.

The sponsor of the commissioning of the USS Oregon is Dana Richardson, of Corvallis, the wife of former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson.

### Built to kill

The USS Oregon commissioning was the first traditional ceremony since 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States. Two Virginia-class

submarines — the USS Delaware and USS Vermont — were commissioned to join the Navy and public commemorations occurred later.

The USS Oregon will soon take to sea to hunt — and if necessary, kill — Russian and Chinese "boomers," the nickname for all ballistic missile submarines that can launch nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Russians main missile submarine, the Borei-class, carries 16 RSM-56 Bulava nuclear ballistic missiles.

The USS Oregon has four torpedo tubes to fire Mk-48 torpedoes that move at 50 mph. Unlike older torpedoes that exploded when the tip struck a

See USS Oregon, Page A6

## Educator to volunteer in Gambia

Korff on assignment with the Peace Corps

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

When Halie Korff learned about Peace Corps, she was set on joining. She saw the volunteer work as a way to give back for the help and support she received growing up.

Having gone through the foster care system and living with different family members growing up, she came to rely on neighbors,



especially her teachers and coaches.

"When I moved to Astoria it was like my life kind of changed in the sense that my teachers cared," said Korff, who graduated from Astoria High School and Western Oregon University. "I just felt like I was getting so much."

"They all fought tooth and nail for me."

Korff said she felt like she could not repay the high school, her coaches, Upward Bound professor and prin-

icipal Lynn Jackson, who she said became her guardian angel after he found out about her troubles at home.

"I just want to mean something to people the way that these people mean to me," she said.

Korff is among the first Peace Corps volunteers to return to overseas service since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, when the agency suspended global operations and evacuated nearly 7,000 volunteers.

She plans to leave in early June for Gambia in West Africa, where she will spend the next two years.

After a three-month training, Korff and the other volunteers will collaborate with their host communities on locally priori-

tized projects in one of the Peace Corps' six sectors — agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health or youth in development. All projects will engage in pandemic response and recovery work.

Korff's goal was to leave for a trip directly after graduating college, but the pandemic delayed her plans. Using her degree in early childhood education, she has spent her time working as a substitute teacher. She also coached track and field at Astoria High School, where she was a thrower before moving on to the team at Western Oregon University.

She waited for opportunities to volunteer in Nepal



Halie Korff was a thrower in track at Astoria High School and Western Oregon University.

— her first choice — but when she got an email for an opening in Gambia she decided to go.

"I don't usually have my heart set on things. I usually

just take (life) for what it is," Korff said. "This is quite literally the only thing that I've ever wanted. So, I'm really, really excited to be able to go."

