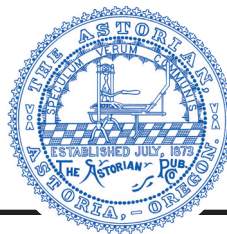


OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Which Johnson would govern?

Betsy Johnson entered my office at The Astorian in 2000 as a candidate for the state House of Representatives. Decades prior, our family histories intersected when my father and Johnson's mother were colleagues on the state Board of Higher Education. They had a simpatico relationship. So I was inclined to like this legislative candidate. And I did.



STEVE FORRESTER

Not being a pollster, I will leave it to others to speculate on the viability of Johnson's strategy for winning the three-way race she has with Democrat Tina Kotek and Republican Christine Drazan. What interests me much more is what

kind of governor she would be.

Oregon has not had a governor with business ownership in their background since Victor Atiyeh, our last Republican governor, who led the state from 1979 to 1987. Atiyeh grasped the concept of being the state's CEO.

Our state government has grown considerably since the 1980s, but some of the same challenges beg for oversight. With government's growth, the state's dependence on computer systems and software platforms has grown markedly. And Oregon has lacked a governor who grasped that particular challenge and dealt with it.

Oregon's state government's computer system disasters are no secret. Refreshing my memory about those malfunctions, I consulted a man with some 30 years of watching the statehouse — Dick Hughes, our newspaper's Salem columnist. "They're awful," Hughes said.

On the one hand, computer systems have become the nervous systems of most businesses and governments. On the other hand, no candidate for state



Dave Killen/The Oregonian

Betsy Johnson, a former state senator, is running for governor as an independent.

I WAS SORRY TO HEAR JOHNSON'S RESPONSE TO THE SCHOOL SHOOTING IN UVALDE, TEXAS, BUT IT WAS THE BETSY I LISTENED TO SOME 20 YEARS AGO.

office will run on a platform of improving them. This is not sexy stuff.

Based on what Hughes tells me and what I know of Johnson, she would have the moxie to ask the tough questions of systems and software providers who are contracted to serve the divisions of state government — which are equivalent to large companies — in terms of their payroll, budget and the size of the customer base they serve.

Guns, however, are a sexy issue — a highly visible flashpoint. When John-

son told me, more than a decade ago, about the machine gun that she purchased at an auction, I was startled. In U.S. Marine Corps infantry training, I had fired the M60 machine gun. Why, I wondered, would anyone not in uniform want that killing machine?

When Johnson and I had this conversation, a national community of public health physicians was gathering numbers on the scale of gun woundings, deaths and suicides. They argued that America should recognize this as

a public health issue. A calamity. An epidemic.

An example of this public health perspective was "The Medical Costs of Gunshot Injuries in the United States," published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Its conclusions were: "Gunshot injury costs represent a substantial burden to the medical care system. Nearly half this cost is borne by the US taxpayers," (Aug. 4, 1999).

David Hemenway, of the Harvard School of Public Health, was a leading explorer of the intersection of firearm woundings and deaths and public health. "Private Guns, Public Health" was his 2004 book. The virtue of Hemenway's work and other public health physicians is that it moved the gun issue away from politics and emotion into the world of medicine, healing and prevention. In an attempt to have a fruitful dialogue with Johnson, I gave her one of Hemenway's papers. At that point, this very articulate woman said nothing in response.

I was sorry to hear Johnson's response to the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, but it was the Betsy I listened to some 20 years ago.

I know that her independent campaign for governor demands that she cultivate a hard-line stance for the single-issue voter — to cut into the Republican electorate. That's fine for short-term thinking. But it is not leadership for what has become a mortal concern.

Put simply, Johnson is on the wrong side of history. And if Oregon has another Umpqua Community College shooting (2015), Clackamas Town Center incident (2012) or Thurston High School shooting (Kip Kinkel, 1998), most Oregonians will want much more than a clichéd response from their governor.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Exclusion

My family has lived in Cove Beach for over 12 years. It's been truly heart-breaking to see our community become so divided. What was once a restorative place that my family dreamed of spending every weekend at is now a place we only occasionally go to these last few years, preferring places that bring us joy.

In many ways, Cove Beach has become a microcosm of what is wrong with the world. Division, unkindness, misuse of power.

We must ask ourselves, do we live in a gated community? No. Did the visionary governor, Oswald West, want just a few people to have the exclusive use of Cove Beach? No. Did he want to keep Oregon's beaches accessible to all, not just the privileged few? Yes.

Let's consider how short-term rental policies impact access for all Oregonians. Prioritizing a small number of full-time residents' nuisance complaints, versus keeping the Oregon Coast accessible to all of the state's inhabitants is, by its very nature, exclusion.

Issues like noise, garbage, fires on beaches, parking, water use, conservation, are all things that we, as a community, can fix together, but let's not use those as a reason to exclude "others" and limit access.

My continued hope is that we can all come together as a community, open our hearts and see the responsibility of the privilege we have as property owners in this amazing place, and work together — keeping in mind both our smaller neighborhood communities and access for our greater community of Oregonians.

AMBER GEIGER
Portland

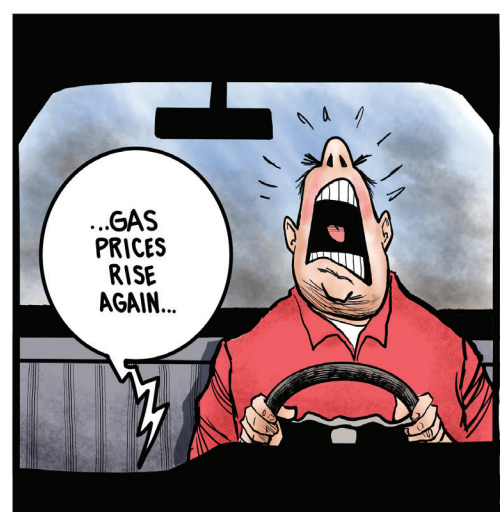
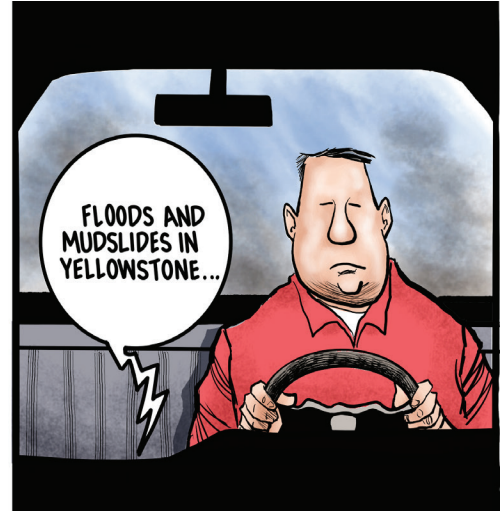
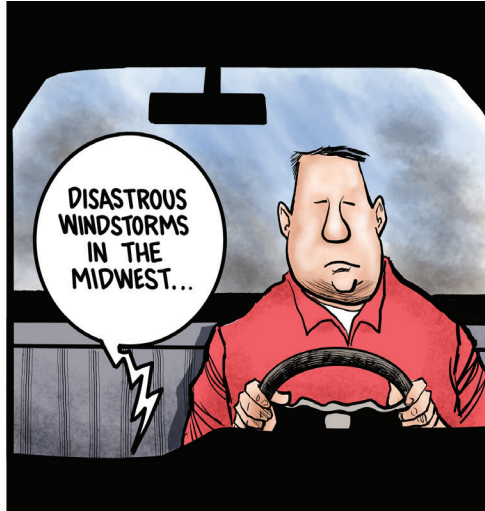
My hope

Iwould hope that Congress can do something about mass shootings.

There is a myth circulating that Thomas Jefferson stated that the Second Amendment was written to keep government tyranny in check. The quote, falsely attributed to Jefferson, is being used to justify the myth that we have the right to bear arms to keep our government in check.

Garrett Epps wrote: "If good government actually came from a violent armed population, then Afghanistan and Somalia would be the two best-governed places on Earth."

Our founders would not have passed a constitutional amendment to liquidate a government that they worked and fought to create. Our founders, who fought in the Revolutionary War, had few illusions about the virtues of violence.



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.

In 1787, the writers of our Constitution were aware of Shays' Rebellion. This was a tax revolt against their state government. George Washington was so upset by this rebellion that he came out of retirement to help frame a new national charter to prevent this from happening again.

President Washington, himself, led a national army into western Pennsylvania to put down what has been called the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington, in a message to Congress, showed no sympathy for Second Amendment remedies.

The myth that the Second Amendment was passed to allow for the violent overthrow of our government is total nonsense.

My hope is that other people will realize this, as well.

BILL EAGLE
St. Helens

So what?

A catch-up reading of The Astorian back issues disclosed the June 2 front-page bash of gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson — a reprint of Hillary Borrud's article in The Oregonian.

Betsy is a Class 3 owner of a fully automatic machine gun. The firearm is safely secured. More to the point, Betsy is lev-

el-headed, responsible, emotionally secure and law-abiding, and worked hard for many years representing our district as our senator in Salem. I would trust her with an operational Abrams tank!

The issue is not guns. It is deranged people accessing AR platform-type semi-automatic rifles. Betsy, a former search-and-rescue helicopter pilot, did not deserve the clearly political right hook reprinted in The Astorian. We have sufficient, common sense firearms laws in Oregon. Period. Betsy is lawfully exercising her right in accordance with the law and, like most reasonable Oregonians, appreciates Second Amendment rights and protections under our U.S. Constitution.

Do we clamor for punishing people who own large automotive vehicles by outlawing them because a few nutbars have driven them into crowds of people? Do we politicize SUVs and four-wheel drive vehicles, along with smearing political candidates because he or she owns one?

Incivility is running amok in our nation, and we need to be grateful that level-headed people with common sense, like Betsy, are standing up to lead us. She owns a machine gun. So what? They're fun to shoot in the hands of responsible people!

MAURIE HENDRICKSON
Astoria