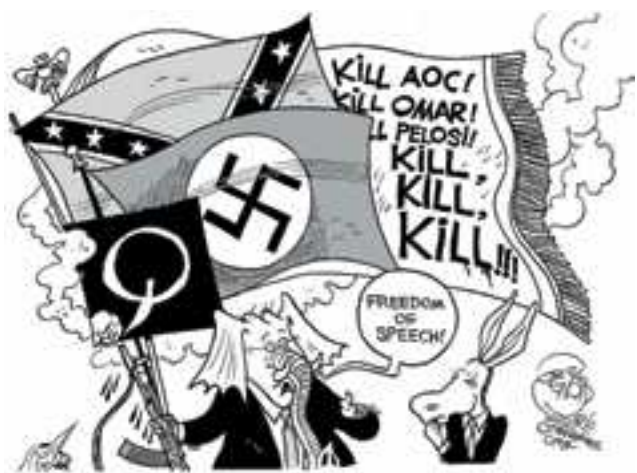


# The INSIDE

The Week in Review page 4



METRO page 8



OPINION page 14



Arts & ENTERTAINMENT page 15

CLASSIFIED/BIDS pages 18

# LOCAL NEWS



The Portland Street Response team doing outreach in the Lents neighborhood of southeast Portland.

## Street Team Dispatched

### First calls taken for non-police crisis unit

The pilot Portland Street Response team, an innovative non-police dispatch to assist people experiencing homelessness or a behavioral/mental health crisis, has hit the streets for the first time. It happened last week as soon as the team started taking calls dispatched from 911.

The team includes a program manager, a firefighter/paramedic, a mental health crisis clinician, and two community health workers. Each member trained for the past month to prepare for calls. The team has been walking the Lents neighborhood since the beginning of the year, the pilot location, to introduce themselves to business owners and community members.

Lents was designated as the

pilot location because it is not supported with as many existing resources and services. Additionally, the volume of mental and behavioral health calls in Lents is outpacing the growth of similar calls in other parts of the city.

“We all agree we need new and better responses to people suffering mental health crises. Portland Street Response embodies and implements that agreement,” said Mayor Ted Wheeler. “People in crisis and people who call 911 will be better served by this new option. Every call the Street Response team answers allows Police to respond to other high priority calls. The launch of Portland Street Response is a win for Portland,” he said.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hard-

esty, Portland’s fire commissioner and an early champion of the Portland Street Response concept, said “The community asked for a non-police response to calls that don’t require an armed police officer on site and we’re delivering. I couldn’t be more excited to see this team in action and to learn from this pilot period about how to make this program the best it can be.”

Hardesty added, “It’s rare in modern times for a new branch of a public safety system to be created from scratch. It’s rarer still for a city department to be built by the people who will be beneficiaries of the program. After many months of methodical outreach,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Taking Aim at Gun Law Loophole

### Charleston survivor testifies before Oregon panel

So many people are buying guns in Oregon these days that the state police are often unable to complete background checks in time, allowing the sales to proceed if the deadline isn’t met.

A handful of Democratic lawmakers have now put forward a bill in the Oregon Legislature that would close this loophole. It’s often called the Charleston loophole because Dylann Roof was able to buy a gun that way, and then murder nine Black people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015.

“You have the power to prevent a similar act of violence here in Oregon,” Sharon Risher, whose



Sharon Risher

mother and two cousins were killed in the church, said in virtual testimony Thursday before the Oregon House Judiciary Committee.

In Oregon, it’s up to the state police to do a background check. And they are warning that they are overwhelmed.

In 2019, the Oregon State Police completed 276,912 background checks, said Maj. Tom Worthy of the state troopers. In 2020, that total rose by 51% to 418,061.

“We saw exponential growth that we’ve never seen before,” Worthy told a committee of the Oregon Legislature on Thursday. “I can tell you that the unit is not staffed for that volume, and it would be impossible for us to stay current based on our current em-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

The Portland Observer

Established 1970 USPS 959 680  
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,  
Portland, OR 97211

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer—Oregon’s Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc. New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association



PUBLISHER: Mark Washington, Sr.

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

Office Mngtr/Clasfds: Lucinda Baldwin

Admin.Coord.: Quayuana Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

OFFICE ASST/SALES: Shawntell Washington

CALL 503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015 • news@portlandobserver.com  
ads@portlandobserver.com • subscription@portlandobserver.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208