

Wyden co-sponsors accountability bill

A bill designed to hold police more accountable and change the culture of law enforcement is making its way through Congress.

The Justice in Policing Act of 2020 is co-sponsored by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and supported by 166 representatives and 35 senators.

“This bill is a comprehensive blueprint for reforming our country’s broken policing system, holding law enforcement accountable and enhancing transparency,” Wyden said. “(It) takes a vital first step toward accountability, and I am all in with pressing forward to achieve this legislation’s urgently needed refocus of resources and policies.”

The bill would:

- Prohibit federal, state,

and local law enforcement from racial, religious and discriminatory profiling, and mandates training on racial, religious, and discriminatory profiling.

- Ban chokeholds, carotid holds and no-knock warrants at the federal level and limit the transfer of military-grade equipment to state and local law enforcement.

- Mandate the use of dash and body cameras for federal officers and require state and local law enforcement to use existing federal funds to ensure the use of police body cameras. Warrenton’s officers are equipped with body cameras.

- Establish a misconduct registry for officers fired under misconduct charges.

Black Lives Matter movement comes to town

A group of 100 people – some of them bused in – brought the Black Lives Matter movement to Warrenton on June 5.

Alejandra Lopez, 16, a Warrenton High School student, organized the Warrenton protest. She set up a GoFundMe account to fund more protests in the county.

About \$1,200 had been raised by Wednesday afternoon.

In Warrenton, the group stood and chanted in front of City Hall and spread out through downtown. Many local residents joined the group.

A second, less peaceful protest was held the next day in Astoria, which drew counter-protesters.

At least a half-dozen Black



About 100 people protested racism and police brutality in front of City Hall on Friday, June 5.

Lives Matter protests have been held in the region. Additional protests are planned in

downtown Astoria on Tuesdays and Saturdays through June.

Old letter provides peek at problematic past

BY CINDY YINGST
The Columbia Press

A letter written with heavy racial undertones by a city official in 1925 shows that Warrenton has some sins in its not-too-distant past.

The letter is written by City Auditor Sidney Campbell to an out-of-town property owner, George E. Crawford.

Similar to today’s code-enforcement actions, the letter is an attempt to start the cleanup of property near downtown that included a rundown shack.

“This shack is owned by a Fin (sic) by the name of John Passo and he is nothing but a bootlegger,” the letter states. “He has made himself so obnoxious that the people living over in that part of town have asked to have him deported.”

The letter proceeds to talk about all the bums and drunks that like to hang out there and describes the shack

as a “hog pen and disgrace to your property.”

The property owner writes back, giving the city “permission to burn the shack -- rats, feathers and all.”

Should the city decide to “hang” the Finn, “kindly let me in on it,” Crawford writes in his response.

Warrenton City Manager Linda Engbretson said she found the letter years ago while going through files and gave a copy to historian Diane Collier, who passed it along to The Columbia Press.

“I had a good laugh, and actually have it framed in my office,” Engbretson said.

Even today, Warrenton’s city charter names the city manager as the town’s auditor.

“It’s absolutely not politically correct today, but times have changed,” Engbretson said.

“There’s a lot more red tape these days. No one would write a letter such as this to-

day, I would hope,” she said. “We move forward with empathy and understanding, and often outreach for resources. ... Things were simpler back then, but not better.”

Phillip Shoop, a retired commercial fisherman, bought the two-lot property on Birch Court in 1978, a good 50 years after the letter was written.

He and his wife, Judy, now live on one lot and the other is occupied by a group home.

“I think that’s kind of cool, kind of funny,” Judy Shoop said after hearing about her property’s shady past. Her husband was born and raised in Astoria.

“Phil’s been on this block here since 1978.”

