

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

Contribution and responsibility

Cris Converse, formerly of Pine Meadow Ranch, made an extraordinary bequest to the City of Sisters last week, in the memory of her mother, Dorro Sokol, longtime owner and operator of PMR.

After negotiating with the City to allow the acquisition of 2.1 cubic feet per second of quasi-municipal water rights, Converse on Thursday zeroed out the \$250,000 price tag, in effect giving the City the water.

Sokol was one of the people who shaped the community of Sisters — an outsized presence that belied her physical stature. She served Sisters on its planning commission and as a Rotarian. She felt strongly about what made Sisters a good place to be — and she was never reticent about expressing herself on that subject.

Converse's largess was offered in the spirit of service — of contribution and responsibility.

"The world is a little whacked out," she told the City Council. "But I believe that we,

by being responsible and contributing, can make a difference."

She's right. The national discourse has grown so bizarre and toxic that it sometimes feels like everything is coming apart at the seams. It's easy to feel like your voice doesn't count; that it's not even heard amid the maelstrom.

We're fortunate to live in a community that's small enough and tight-knit enough that anybody who feels responsible for the quality of their community can contribute and make a difference. Many, many Sisters residents do, every day. Contributions of time and talent are every bit as valuable as any donation. We're not all in the position to make a quarter-million dollar donation to the citizens of the town — but we can all do something.

And we can all tip the hat to Cris Converse for offering up a gift that honors a legacy of service.

Jim Cornelius, Editor

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

In response to the headline "Bus Barn to be built at high school," I say: "Hold on... not so fast!" There are big problems with this proposal.

Traffic safety issues are not adequately addressed. The proposed entry/exit is a potential choke point as buses, student drivers, maintenance vehicles, delivery trucks, bicycles and pedestrians converge. This traffic density will also degrade air quality.

Students who attend classes in the new technical education classroom must walk from the main building across several active traffic lanes.

Users of SPRD, skate park, bike park, disc golf and sports fields must negotiate a confusing route to their parking areas.

Snow removal will be significantly more

difficult, with multiple traffic lanes, a roundabout and chain-link fencing to deal with.

This plan is like dropping an industrial park in the middle of the high school landscape. It is ill-conceived, unsightly, noisy and polluting. A metal warehouse doesn't complement our beautiful high school building. Trees will be cut to make way for an ugly chain-link fence. Rows of yellow buses will be fully visible through that fencing from the State Scenic Byway (Highway 242).

What's the hurry to push this project through? It wasn't on the list of projects that taxpayers voted for in the bond measure. \$2 million is a lot of taxpayer money for a glorified bus barn! No overall vision has been developed for use of the windfall \$4 million grant.

See **LETTERS** on page 16

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Rain/Snow Likely 46/30	Rain Likely 43/26	Slt. Chance Snow 42/25	Mostly Sunny 44/30	Chance Rain 48/32	Chance Rain 47/31

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Jonah Goldberg

Among the many problems with the Great Gun Debate these days is that the pro-gun crowd wants to make it a culture-war battle and the anti-gun crowd wants to pretend that it isn't.

On public policy grounds, the pro-gun people have the better arguments. Firearm homicides have declined since the 1990s despite the loosening of gun laws.

Almost none of the remedies proposed in the wake of mass shootings would have actually prevented those crimes (though had so-called bump stocks been banned — as they should be — fewer would have died in the Las Vegas shooting last month).

Indeed, it's common in the aftermath of shootings to hear pundits and politicians call for the passage of laws that already exist. I've lost count of the number of times people have insisted that "machine guns" be banned — they essentially already are. Others talk about banning "assault weapons" as if such a designation describes a specific kind of weapon. It doesn't. Nor would banning assault weapons, however defined, put much of a dent in the problem. Rifles of all kinds account for just 3 percent of the murder rate.

The slaughter at a Texas church fits the pattern. Calls went out for background checks. But the shooter passed his; he just lied on the application. Some argued that people convicted of spousal abuse — like the shooter — should be barred from getting a gun. That's already federal law. (To be sure, such laws should be enforced better than the Trump administration seems inclined to do.)

More broadly, President Trump and a GOP-controlled Congress will not do anything significant to restrict gun rights in America. And the experience under President Obama, particularly in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, demonstrates that even some Democrats don't want to move against their electoral self-interest.

Indeed, the main reason for inaction isn't the "stranglehold" of the National Rifle Association — a relative piker when it comes to

political spending — but the fact that millions of gun owners are likely to vote on the gun issue, while millions of gun-control supporters are not. Also, a supermajority of Americans (76 percent to 23 percent, according to Gallup) do not want a ban on private gun ownership.

These facts probably help explain why the NRA has taken a dark turn of late, releasing ads that have virtually nothing to do with gun laws and everything to do with fueling cultural resentment. It's hard for a public policy lobbying outfit to keep membership dues flowing when they've already won.

Meanwhile, anti-gun campaigners cling to the belief that they are a cadre of dedicated pragmatists who merely seek sensible gun-control laws. No doubt there are some who fit this description. But given how the most vocal advocates of gun control tend to get basic facts wrong and have a history of praising countries such as Australia, which all but banned guns outright for normal citizens, it's easy to see why gun-rights supporters are suspicious about what their real goal is.

In 2015, the *New York Times* ran its first front-page editorial in 95 years to call for, in part, the confiscation of millions of guns. Last month, columnist Bret Stephens called for outright repeal of the Second Amendment.

It's a useful thought experiment to ask what America would look like if the gun controllers started to rack up policy victories, confiscating guns from law-abiding gun owners. Aside from the massive financial windfall for the NRA, millions of Americans would have their darkest suspicions confirmed, and the deep resentment already felt in much of "red state" America would intensify beyond anything we've experienced lately.

Perhaps there would be fewer mass murders and other gun deaths — though I'm skeptical. I'm sure our politics would be far uglier than they already are.

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