

# OPINION

The opinions expressed in the letters below are “your voice,” and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Columbia Gorge News*, its staff, publisher or advertisers.

## YOUR VOICE

### School supportive

Dear Hood River County School District,  
After reading Superintendent Polkinghorn's June newsletter, I began reflecting over the last year's challenges for everyone within the Hood River County School District. My granddaughter graduated last year from HRVHS, and even though the celebration was altered and may have been a little disappointing, no prom or the usual senior activities due to COVID-19, the teachers, staff and community members made it wonderful and memorable. For me it was the parade to the high school on graduation day!  
The teachers, councilors and staff at HRVHS have gone above and beyond to help my daughter through her junior year. She has every opportunity to be successful and graduate because of their efforts.  
I am so appreciative and thankful for your tireless support, determination and courage in the face of adversity (pandemic).  
I cannot express enough my gratitude to each and all in the Hood River County School District. Your commitment to the youth of Hood River County is exceptional. You are all heroes!

**Kari Goben**  
*Cascade Locks*

### Right or privilege?

In response to letter about voting being a privilege:  
Privilege (N): An immunity or benefit enjoyed only by a person beyond the advantaged of most.  
Right (N): That which is due to anyone by just claim, legal guarantees, or moral principles. Responsibility (N): Being answerable or accountable for something within ones power, control or management.  
It does seem that the conservative right are attempting to reserve voting for a select group. This is evident by the restrictive laws passed by many states limiting voting places and removing drop boxes in high density as well as sparsely populated districts among other restrictions throughout the United States.  
While I agree "Election Day" should be a day employers allow employees the time to vote during the work day, I would go a step further and make "Election Day" a national holiday for presidential elections.  
However, voting "in-person only" and only on one day as you suggest will exclude tens of millions of Americans from the "privilege" or "responsibility" of voting.  
This leaves out most convalescing voters, those serving in the armed services overseas and those with a debilitating physical condition.  
The cause of these restrictive voting laws passed in more than 16 states is based on the fear mongering and lies of a few that there is, or has been, widespread voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. Yet there is zero proof this exists.  
It's a well known fact that Oregon, Washington and Colorado, all states with mail in voting, have the safest and most secure elections in the country.  
So yes, by all means, if you are able, vote in person.  
However, we must not exclude safe and secure methods of voting for those unable to endure the unending hours (not minutes) in voting lines many Americans are subjected to.

**Peter Dallman**  
*White Salmon*

### Right, not Privilege

I feel the June 9 letter "Voting is a Privilege" missed most of the key issues experts concerned about voter suppression across the U.S. have expressed.  
First, and foremost, voting is a legal *right*, not a privilege. Any adult who meets a state's criteria is granted the right to vote in an election. Many of the new laws referenced in the June 9 letter purposely created barriers and undue hardships on voters, effectively limiting their legal right to vote.  
Below are just a few of the

realities about the issues from the recent past:  
In 2020, Houston, Texas, election officials permitted only one drop box for a county of more than 2 million residents. Hood River had the same number of drop boxes for 10,000 people even with mail-in ballots.  
Many legal voters do not have cars and cannot drive. In some rural areas, these voters are now forced to drive up to three hours each way simply to apply for a voter ID to take to the polling station. Certainly that goes beyond the threshold of reasonable effort.  
In counties where many people of color reside, access to polling stations has been restricted under the guise of "election security." This forces these voters to stand for hours in extreme weather simply to cast a vote. Frail or elderly people are harmed by putting forth the unreasonable effort. New laws actually prevent well-meaning people offering a bottle of water to a dehydrated voter to limit voter tampering.  
The only privilege I can see in this is for healthy individuals whose employer permits them to miss work to vote. Without a national holiday, there can be no equality, and the GOP would be foolish to support that.

**Steve and Jacob Kaplan**  
*Hood River*

### Thank you Sawyers

Each year the fifth grade students at Dry Hollow have an egg drop activity. They build an egg drop container that can keep an egg intact after a 30 foot drop. For the last 10 years, Sawyer's Ace True Value and Hardware has been gracious enough to loan us a lift.  
It is nice to have a business in The Dalles that supports education and is willing to go the extra mile for kids. Sawyers is that kind of business. Thank you for your support!  
Sincerely,

**Courtney Kiser**  
*Dry Hollow Elementary School  
The Dalles*

### Get involved in city planning

The City of White Salmon is starting a "City Lab Board" of 10 Citizen Advisers, two shall be city council members, three City of White Salmon residents, plus five members that can consist of residents in the White Salmon Urban Exempt Area, Columbia Gorge tribal reps, high school students or other "regionally appropriate stakeholders" to develop and recommend ordinances, resolutions, and/or building code changes that support the adopted Comprehensive Plan.  
I don't want developers, real estate brokers and out of town "stake holders" on the "City Lab Board" who want to cram tiny houses into our established neighborhoods.  
Too often, our city council is listening to more of those from out of town than the tax paying residents in White Salmon.  
A local developer is currently constructing apartments/vacation rentals on Main Street in White Salmon. He commented in the May 12 *Columbia Gorge News* that "a friend in Portland recently finished a 100 unit development" with six off-street parking spots.  
He was complaining about the number of parking spaces he had to provide for renters of the new building. His new building will have more than 40 parking spots but I sure hope he understands that White Salmon does not have a Max train or Tri-met bus coming along every 30 minutes either.  
If it weren't required for his units, they would be taking all the parking spaces close to city hall and the surrounding neighborhood.  
I am concerned about the people who move to White Salmon because it is a "quaint little town in the Gorge" and then set out to change our town to look like the place they just left. We don't want our White Salmon to look like Portland or California.  
To the residents of White Salmon, I say "get involved." Getting

## Roving Raptor



A red tailed hawk perches on a dead branch in the morning sunshine in the Fulton Canyon area east of The Dalles Thursday, June 10. Photo courtesy Gary Elkinton

involved is the only way we can keep White Salmon as the quaint little town it is. Call City Hall, 509-493-1133. Join us on Facebook at White Salmon Community News.  
**Dorothy Herman**  
*White Salmon*

### Chip seal bad for bicyclists

The Fruit Loop is listed on the Hood River County website as one of our richest recreational tourism assets. It's front and center under "Community Profile," and I quote: "The county's scenic, almost pastoral setting has made it a famous destination for visitors who come to drive or bike (for emphasis) the famous Fruit Loop..."  
Unfortunately, the collective group of Hood River County commissioners, engineers and public works personnel, by chip-sealing East Side Road, have diminished, if not practically destroyed, full public access to this valuable resource.  
We trust our public officials and employees to protect our community and to safeguard our infrastructure resources so that all members of the public will equally enjoy proper use of our public right-of-way... But instead, in the name of choosing short-term economics over long-term community prosperity and health, and by choosing chip sealing rather than a pavement or seal coat overlay, that trust has been squandered in the most ignorant, incompetent, and negligent way.  
The display of the county's myopia and lack of true understanding is abhorrent. The entire cycling community and even more problematic, some inexperienced tourist riders, will now be forced to use the narrow shoulders of Highway 35 as the only other north-south connective route. There are no other viable east hills / east valley road-bike cycling routes, and without East Side Road, where are we to go? It will be 15 years before East Side is resurfaced and smooth again!

So much for bucolic, healthy recreational experiences that benefit the Hood River tourism economy and for our county officials actually respecting and understanding the recreation portion of our population and having the sophistication and wherewithal to know how and what to do to accomplish the right thing for this segment of citizens.  
I, and others like me, demand more from our county government and we would appreciate their acknowledging their failures and finding newfound commitment and resolve to do better in the future!  
Perhaps then, they'd actually improve not only the life of our roads, but the lives of those citizens they

only pretend to serve.  
**Douglas Knight**  
*Hood River*

### Falling apart

The Grand Old Party is falling apart. Disintegration or division seems inevitable for the Republican Party.  
Division seems the better alternative in terms of a more peaceful, constructive and less disruptive resolution. Our two-party system has worked pretty well, but it has been successful because two major parties have worked within the constitutional system established back in 1789 for these United States.  
If it is to be division, a new name will be necessary. The Republican Party is a proud name with a rich history, except for what has happened over the past several years. That name should continue, but be free of the burdens it has carried during those recent years. What to call those who divide and depart is the challenge.  
Moving under the new name should be all those who continue their allegiance to Donald J. Trump. The time seems right to seek ideas for that new name.  
We need to further the conversation about severance, in the interest

of preserving our two party system and our democracy. Too much attention is being paid to the noise created by a small number of loud voices, and not enough to reality.  
The reality is that while we may read that "a large majority of Republican voters still back the former president" Republican voters represent only about 25% of those registered to vote. Unless a large percentage of those registered as Independent support the Big Lie, or efforts to deny voter access succeed, the odds are good that the unnamed group will not be winning many elections.  
A name is needed. What should it be? Lemming and Mugwump have been suggested. Google those and see what you think. Look for the David Frum article about the Mugwump name.  
The Frum article not only explains the name, but also provides some comfort in knowing that our current situation is not without precedent, as the union survived a prior crisis in the Grand Old Party.  
**Keith A. Mobley**  
*Dufur*

## Want to write a letter?

*Columbia Gorge News* encourages readers to submit letters to the editor for the weekly opinion page. Letters on all topics are welcome.  
Writers must include their name and hometown (for publication) and daytime phone number (for verification, not for publication). Letters from an agency or group must be credited to the author or a contact person.  
Anonymous or "name withheld by request" letters are not accepted.  
Letters must be 350 words or fewer; generally, the briefer the message, the better. Opinion pieces longer than 350 words may be published as a guest commentary at the discretion of the editor.  
Letters are published as space allows, and efforts are made each week to provide as much space as possible.  
Deadline for letters is noon on the Friday prior to publication.  
We reserve the right to edit all letters.  
Letters must be civil.  
Vulgar or inappropriate language will not be considered, nor

malicious, false or misleading statements.  
Letters attacking an individual, rather than an opinion, are not acceptable.  
Letters criticizing a particular business over a particular complaint or grievance will not be considered.  
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