

OPINION

Hood River News

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A look back

Stats and themes of Our Readers Write 2019

Letters to the Editor submissions were down all around in 2019. We received 639 letters from 379 writers this year. Contrast that to 2018, when the News received 865 letters by 476 different writers — that's 226 fewer letters and 97 fewer writers this year.

The most prolific month for letters this year was October with 78, although both May and July came in at a very close second with 77. The fewest letters came in February and December, both with a mere 31; September was next lowest at 43. Steve Kaplan wrote 33 letters this year, the most from any one person. Coming in second was Benjamin Sheppard with 20. Close behind was David Warnock with 18; Bill Davis and Gary Fields both wrote 16 letters.

Now, the reoccurring themes: President Donald Trump had 16 letters this year in support of his administration; topics covered the border wall, his State of the Union address and the Mueller report exonerating him from wrongdoing. But Trump additionally was the topic of 86 letters against various aspects of his administration, including his relationship with Russia, his stance on climate, dealings with Iran, treatment of immigrants and acceptance of white nationalism — among others.

Rep. Greg Walden received five letters in support of his work and another 23 against his policies and stances, including his support of President Trump, conditions for immigrants at the border, his high rating by the National Rifle Association and his stance on healthcare. He had another eight letters that asked for specific answers on topics ranging from Trump to forestry practice — or urging constituents to call Walden to ask for answers — and two praising his support of the Bridge of the Gods proposed bike lane.

Politics in general was a popular topic: There were 78 of those in total, ranging from gun control (six in favor, one opposed) to various House and Senate bills both nationally and at the state levels. The June walkout in the Oregon Senate by Republicans saw 15 letters against Sen. Chuck Thomsen's participation in the walkout, with four letters written in favor of the move.

Climate change was also a big topic, with 22 letters supporting climate legislation and/or striking students, and eight dismissing the threat.

Locally, both the May and November elections were hot topics on the letters page. Candidates received a total of 27 letters of support in the May port, parks and school board races. In November, there were 30 letters of support for Measure 14-67, the Protect our Parks charter amendment, and 22 against; the measure ultimately passed.

Affordable housing and the Morrison Park issue were two linked topics for letters to the editor this year. There were 17 letters in favor of keeping Morrison Park a park, with seven on the pro-development side. Six more agreed that affordable housing was needed, regardless of where it is placed.

The Hood River County School District's HEALTH Media club at the middle school level wrote 12 total letters urging county residents not to smoke (two) or drink and drive (seven). They also penned three letters detailing fun, healthy things to do in the summer months.

We also keep track of all the letters we receive regarding the Hood River News. We had 15 total regarding the newspaper, mostly negative (12) — that we need to focus on investigative journalism, that we are biased towards the left and that we are more propaganda than news. Three of those were from people unhappy with our editorial cartoon choices; one letter writer additionally expressed disappointment that we publish viewpoints, cartoons or letters, from those who oppose the president.

It's hard to put every letter into a neat category. We had 164 letters that fell into the "other" slot — meaning we'd get one or two on a certain subject. These letters ranged from Hood River Reads event listings to support of local theater productions and from CASA training events and garden tour routes. There were also letters against increasing noise at the airport, as well as against Pacific Power's plan to cut power on windy days as a forest fire prevention measure.

The News thanks all who have written letters this year and in past years. Letters form a vital role in the efforts of this and any newspaper to present an open forum for diverse viewpoints. We appreciate the time and effort it takes to express those views.

Keep them coming again in 2020. We'll be keeping a list.
— Trisha Walker

Our Readers Write

Christian oppression

World history has offered untold incidences of the oppressive and murderous tactics of Christianity over the last 2100 years — we all know about the dark ages, genocide of natives in North and South America and many more examples of persecution.

Some Christians tell me that they are changing, now the religion is one of love, healing the hearts of people and spreading god's love. I have tried to be patient when Christians passed laws against my gay friends or persecuted women needing to make medical decisions with their bodies, or even childishly refused to make cakes for sinners. I listened to their "logic" that it is oppression to not be able to oppress gays or women. I tried to give them the benefit of the doubt that maybe they are trying to make the world a better place with their biblical based ideas at least in their minds and hearts.

But now that I see Christians have become such fervent supporters of an immoral commander in chief, I realize Christians have made no progress whatsoever. To be honest, it is a relief for me to know what is really in their hearts. I now realize that just as when they persecuted "witches," destroyed

Egyptian temples, persecuted Jews, killed Native American "heathens," and burned ancient Mayan writings, to name a few examples, that they will still to this day in 10 minutes revert to their murderous oppression. They love a president that has actually broken many of the 10 commandment laws and, in fact, continues on an ongoing basis without remorse of any kind.

I now realize they are not interested in biblical penance and salvation but the oppressive implementation of their ancient ideology. I can see no behavior or fruits of an eternal christian god of love but the tribal hatred of an ancient tribe. To me, Christians are not being oppressed, as they love to whine about, but are actually the oppressor and now must be placed in the dangerous category of a belief system that will oppress all non-Christians and destroy American democracy if given the ...

Ken Earle
Hood River

Editor's note: This letter was submitted through the newspaper website and automatically cut off at 350 words. (See letters policy, page A5.)

Safety at 13th and Belmont

I submit on behalf of the Hood River City Council their



Photo by Kirby Neumann-REA

RUNNER CROSSES 13th Street at Belmont, where ODOT changed pedestrian access in summer 2019.

2020 New Year resolution:

Whereas: One of the prime responsibilities of the City is public safety; and

Whereas: One of the most dangerous traffic intersections is 13th and Belmont; and

Whereas: Traffic use is rapidly growing both along 13th and along Belmont; and

Whereas: The posted speed limit of 25 mph is much too fast; and

Whereas: The 13th/Belmont intersection seriously lacks adequate traffic safety controls; and

Whereas: The intersection is dangerous for all pedestrians, with or without baby carriages or wheelchairs; and

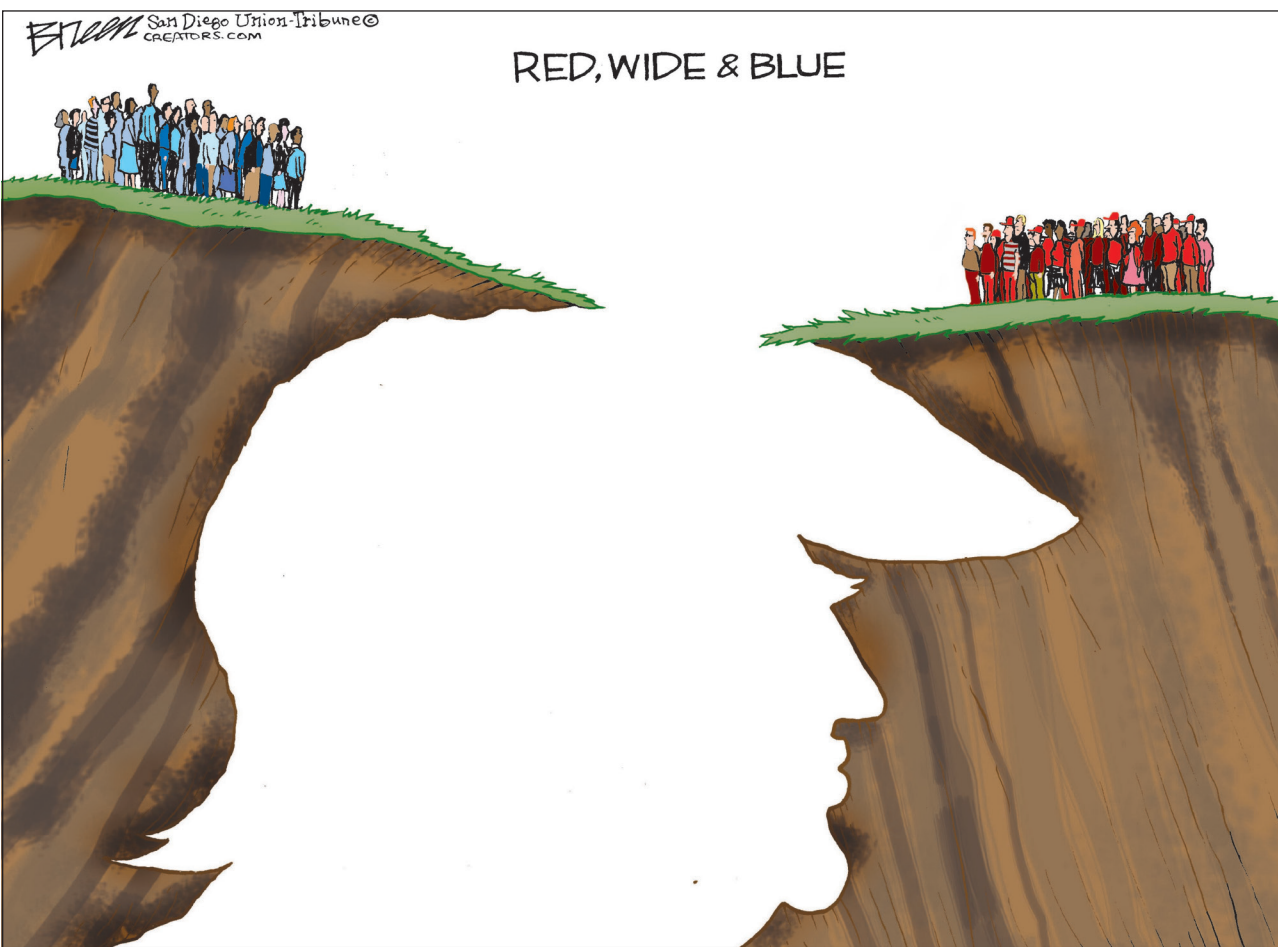
Whereas: An increasing number of drivers travel four blocks or more out of the way

to avoid the dangerous intersection, thus adding unnecessary carbon emissions; and

Whereas: The City acknowledges that three public agencies share responsibility for 13th/Tucker Road along its entirety;

Now, therefore, be it resolved: The City of Hood River will do anything necessary to fix this intersection to make it one of the safest in the city, such actions to be taken immediately, and unilaterally if necessary.

David Hupp
Hood River



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

May '20 keep us from decade distorters and other Riff Raft

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

The most surprising thing about the last month of 2019 is that we have not seen more "end of decade" coverage in the media.

Sure, we've seen a few "10 top trends of the decade" and other such listicles but I think most people, editors included, get that the new decade starts a year from now. Sure, it's fun to jump-start it at the nice round "2020" number, but let's wait 365 days.

Hah — 366! Almost got ya there, eh? The '20 fun includes

Leap Year Status, after all.

Buster and Buddy Bear at Ninth and State streets say it well with their new sign this week: "May we all have good vision in 2020."

As to addressing the decade distortion, I can't put it any better than our good friend and Entertainment writer Jim Drake, who wrote: "The 'First Decade' of 'people keeping track of decades with calendars' consisted of the years '1' through '10.' The 'Second Decade' consisted of the years '11' through '20.' Due to many people erroneously saying that 2019 is 'the last year to do

something for the last time in this decade," I say: No. We still need to go through 2020 to get to the next decade. And I believe the Farmer's Almanac agrees."

Perhaps society learned not to overreact to these "0" dometer years back in 1999. Remember Y2K and the fairy dust that settled out of that dire situation? I worked for a school district in Washington during that time and the last two months of 1999 was daily panic mode. We might have started a radio station and blared: "THIS IS Y2K! All Y2K, all the time!"

Let me start the final year of the Twen-teens decade with my list of band names inspired by a year's reading. I make sense of each year by collecting phrases I hear or read and re-imagining them as band names and album and song titles.

(We'll probably run out of room in print, so find the rest of this at hoodrivernews.com...)

Join me in this random recitation, this hymnal of hybrid ideas:

Mr. Haha Jones — A Truman Capote character — and **Magic Winch Not Available** (from a TV car ad).

Invisible Zeroes — A spur of the moment original conundrum from my wife, Lorre, and **My Gray Cells Are Red Hot** — a reference I wrote down but cannot remember.

Riff Raft, from a canoe team name I read (or **Rift Raff?**) doing **A Blow of Dice Will Never Abolish Chance** (a Stephen Mallarme poem).

The Hapsburg Lips (a genetic mutation common among 19th century European royals) and their new album among 19th century European royals) and their new album **Mascots of Internal Divisions**, (composer Robert Schumann's term for the multiple ways his mind operated).

Lorenzo Nevermind and **Bad Spill at the Balloon Foundry** — Two cartoon references: Garfield and Rubes.

The Courtesy Loners — Definitely a country band (got that idea waiting for my car to get fixed) would have to do **Whiskey, Sterioids and Softball** (from a book title I saw — no, did not read). They would be a great double bill with ...

The Expired Pirates (it was an auto-correct when I tried to type "expired plates") and **A Rattlesnake, Powdered Uranium and Kentucky Whiskey in My Dodge** — A headline about an Oklahoma traffic stop ...