

Letters to the Editor:

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OPINION

SATURDAY

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LETTERS

America's 'hug'

I am sorry France! I watched in horror on CNN and FOX News as James Taylor plugged his way through "You've Got a Friend" while John Kerry posed off to the side of him.

Not only did our President decide that the French people didn't need our support, he, Obama, decided that sending Mr. Kerry with Mr. Taylor with the message of here's a big "hug" from America would be the right thing to do.

Using the excuse that the President's security entourage would be distracting to the march was a lame, pathetic excuse for not representing the United States of America in a compassionate and caring way to the people of France and Europe who are under siege from terrorists.

I want it clearly understood that if ISIS comes to Florence and somehow makes me a casualty, I do not want James Taylor or John Kerry bringing my family a big hug. But wait, only people that strong arm shopkeepers and then assault a police officer merit the full attention of the White House.

So no worries after all.

Liz Burtleton
Florence

Rally for better health care

Health Care for All Oregon is sponsoring a rally in Salem on Wednesday, Feb. 11, to call for a penny-wise health care system to replace our present pound-foolish entrepreneurial free-for-all. The cost of prescription drugs exemplifies the problem.

In 2013, U.S. healthcare spending on retail prescription drugs was \$271.1 billion. While slightly more than the GDP of Belgium, a very small proportion of the total \$2.9 trillion U.S. healthcare bill. But still, not chump change.

Private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid — in other words, all of us who pay insurance premiums or taxes — pay the vast bulk of this prescription-drug bill.

We are paying for an effective pharmaceutical lobby that has gained for the industry what Peter B. Bach, director of Memorial Sloan Kettering's Center for Health Policy, terms "a mix of laws that force insurers to include essentially all expensive drugs in their policies."

This has enabled a company to keep raising the price of a drug even after it has delivered billions in profit. Laws such as those prohibiting Medicare from using its market power to negotiate drug discounts ensure that out-sized profits will continue to flow. At the same time, the industry spent over \$3 billion on advertising prescription drugs to consumers, mainly through television commercials. Pharma calls this "consumer education." It might better be called a self-diagnosis primer.

In Europe, direct-to-consumer drug marketing is illegal. This reduces the advertising costs built into a drug's cost and the pressure on doctors from "self-diagnosing" patients to write unnecessary prescriptions. In addition to the cost of those TV ads, Big Pharma spends lots of money on indirect marketing.

The Pew Charitable Trusts reported that in 2011, the pharmaceutical and medical device industries provided \$752 million for continu-

ing medical education courses. Although these courses are not supposed to be marketing tools, a 2007 Senate Finance Committee report found that "drug companies have used educational grants as a way to increase the market for their products."

Part of the reason for the United State's high drug costs — exorbitant when compared to the cost for the same drugs in most other wealthy countries — is that we are the only industrialized country without a single-payer healthcare purchaser to effectively negotiate lower drug prices from Big Pharma.

Finding the political will, we could address the pound-foolishness in healthcare with single payer. We could start by applying to drug makers the public-utility type rules that successfully regulate electricity, natural gas and water; products made relatively affordable by efficient regulation.

And, we could stop the TV commercials. We've been educated enough about the need to call a doctor after four hours.

Arnold Buchman
Florence

What about Siuslaw grads?

I was just sitting down and reading my paper when I seen an article on a fella that attended his class reunion in Washington ("Florence Man Attends Grade-School Reunion," Dec. 31, 2014, page A1). This is fine, but where is the punch line? Who is he?

No one from around here.

Did you know there are a few people who graduated from Siuslaw and still live here? In fact, I know of two that graduated in 1954 and one in 1956. That's not the old ones yet. I'll bet with a little research the old ones can be found. You know the ones that I am talking about. The ones who graduated when there was only one class. I know of some who live up the river that can remember going to school in Deadwood and the ones who graduated from the schools up Indian Creek.

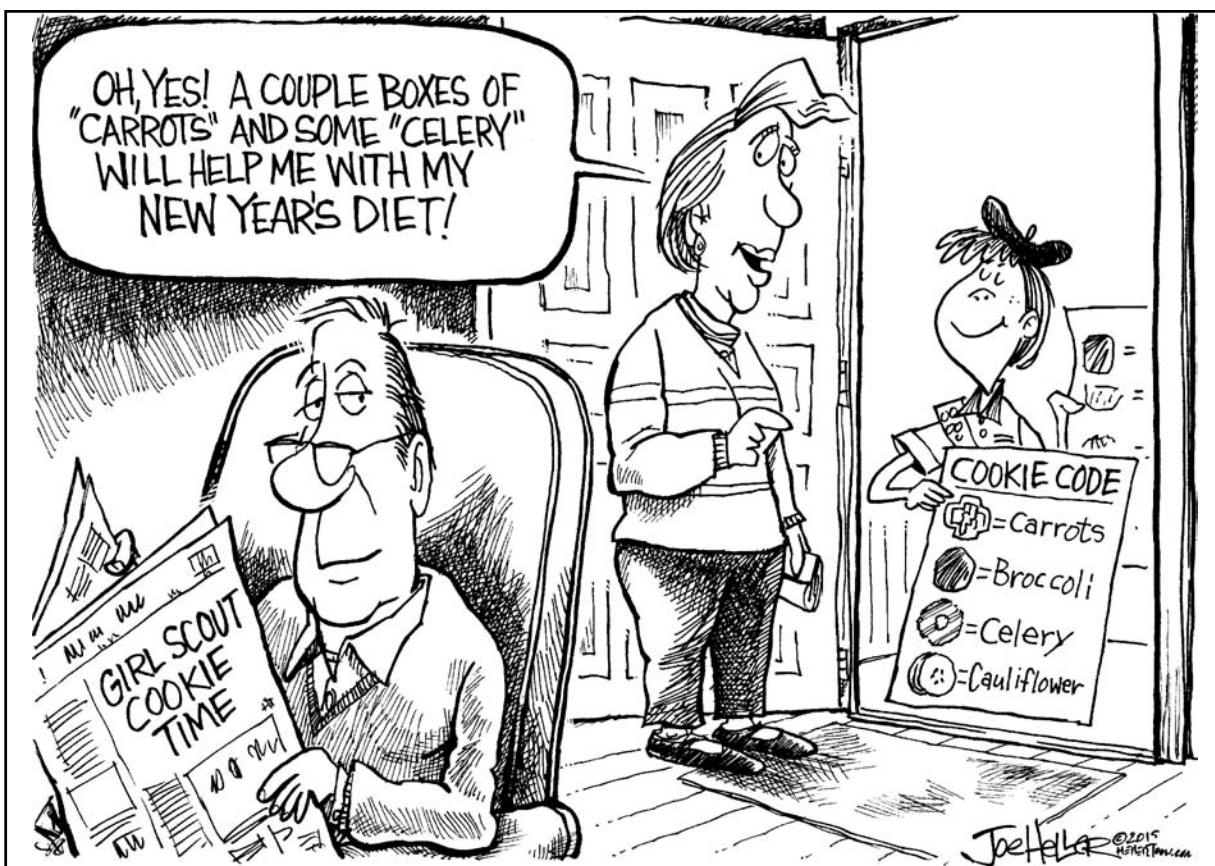
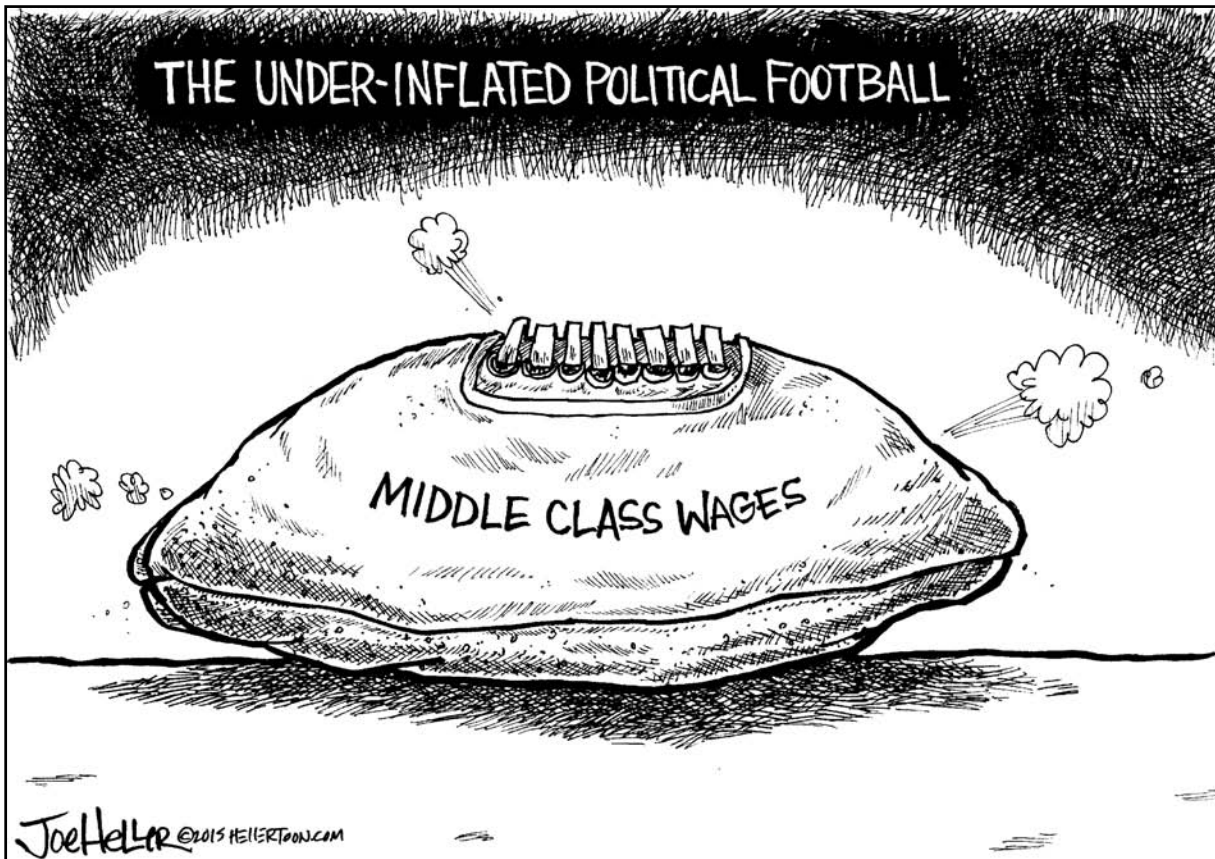
Now that's something about the area we live in that is cool — schools that do not exist today and haven't for 40 years.

Another topic that I was reading and not sure why it's taking place, but why are we even talking about a bike path? What about our road that everyone uses?

We can't even maintain our roads, so how are we going to maintain a bike path? And who is going to pay for this? Us? The people who live here and have to drive on this road to work, while someone bikes down a new path that is not important and only a rec ride?

There are some things that are not understood, like why and how it's being paid for. How is it going to help our little town and get people to visit us since we need visitors to come for our business to thrive? No business, no income equals no town.

Let's here about that.

Scott Burnett
Deadwood

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME
The History Channel

- On Jan. 27, 1785, the Georgia General Assembly incorporates the University of Georgia, the first state-funded institution of higher learning in the new republic. It wasn't until 1918 that the university began admitting women.

- On Feb. 1, 1885, John Taylor, the president of the Mormon Latter-day Saints Church, goes "underground" to avoid arrest and continue resisting federal demands for polygamy. Taylor had at least seven wives. Although the Mormons wanted freedom from outside interference, they also sought the benefits of being a part of the United States. Inevitably, these two goals conflicted.

- On Jan. 30, 1920, Toyo Cork Kogyo, a Japanese cork business, is formed. A decade later, the company produced its first vehicle and changed its name to Mazda. The Mazda-Go was a three-wheeled truck that resembled a motorcycle with a cargo-carrier at the back.

- On Jan. 31, 1945, Pvt. Eddie Slovik becomes the first American soldier since the Civil War to be executed for desertion. Slovik was originally classified 4-F because of a prison record, but was reclassified 1-A when draft standards were lowered. In 1944, he was trained to be a rifleman, which was not to his liking, as he hated guns.

- On Jan. 28, 1959, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League sign Vince Lombardi to a five-year contract as the team's coach and general manager. The Brooklyn-born Lombardi played college football at Fordham University as a guard on the offensive line, dubbed the "Seven Blocks of Granite."

- On Jan. 29, 1964, Stanley Kubrick's black comic masterpiece "Dr. Strangelove" opens in theaters to both critical and popular acclaim. The movie focused on the actions of a rogue U.S. military officer who believed that communists are threatening the "precious bodily fluids" of Americans.

- On Jan. 26, 1980, at the request of President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. Olympic Committee votes to ask the International Olympic Committee to cancel or move the Moscow Olympics in response to the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan.

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The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor on subjects of general interest to its readership.

Brevity is mandatory, and letters are subject to editing. Libelous letters and poetry will not be published.

Thank-you letters are generally inappropriate.

Publication of any letter is not guaranteed. Letters must be signed over the writer's name, address and phone number.

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