

## Letters to the Editor:

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## OPINION

SATURDAY

FEBRUARY 14 • 2015

## 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.

## VIEW FROM UPRIVER



WESLEY VOTH  
For the Siuslaw News

## A valentine for the place we love

predictive window. The river has been high and unfishable, not much work getting done outside other than clean-up, but we have been walking outdoors a lot anyway. This is partly because we have had visiting children, have been taking care of one of their dogs, and because we like to.

On one of the recent stormy days we walked the Sweet Creek Falls trail, something we especially enjoy when that narrow valley roars with conjoined raindrop cataracts. On a rock in the center of a particular noisy torrent a dipper bird sat singing, its sweet tremolo only just discernable above the white noise of the white water.

If it is Valentine's Day as you are reading this, it is the day when the Siuslaw Watershed Council is giving away native trees to be planted along local waterways. From its offices on the Mapleton school campus and several other distribution points, such as in Lorane near the southeastern headwaters and Blachly near the headwaters of Lake Creek, volunteers are helping with the distribution as a hundred or so landowners pick up their requested species. I hear there are more trees this year than have been spoken for, with even more becoming available soon.

Valentine's Day also coincides with the birthday of Oregon, which celebrates its 155th year of statehood. Why not take the occasion to do something for this land we are currently stewards of? Planting native trees is one way, and if you own stream or lakeside property here you can access those free trees by calling the watershed office at 541-268-3044, emailing nativeplants@siuslaw.org, or finding more information through the link at www.siuslaw.org.

If you can't plant trees, you can probably clean up a place here you particularly like or frequent. Flood waters, stormy weather and thoughtless people have distributed unsightly and otherwise problematic trash almost everywhere one looks. One suggestion for someone living near where I do is just up Thompson Creek Road. A little more than a hundred yards up is a couch someone recently dumped. Who knows, maybe there are still some coins left under the cushions. Across the road a little further up and right in the creek itself is a mattress, giving new meaning to the term "streambed." I used to remove such items, but no longer have a pickup or the physical capability, and so settle for trash that can fit into bags. For all those who clean up wild places and stream banks and roadsides, for those who plant and help with the trees, you are my — and Oregon's — valentine.

And Happy 155th Birthday, one and all.

## YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME  
The History Channel

- On Feb. 19, 1473, Nicolaus Copernicus is born in Torun, Poland, on the Vistula River. Revered as the father of modern astronomy, Copernicus was the first European scientist to propose that Earth and other planets revolve around the sun.

- On Feb. 22, 1819, Spanish minister Do Luis de Onis and U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams sign the Florida Purchase Treaty, in which Spain agrees to cede the remainder of its old province of Florida to the United States. The Treaty put Florida into U.S. hands at no cost beyond the U.S. assumption of \$5 million in claims by U.S. citizens against Spain.

- On Feb. 21, 1926, glamorous Swedish actress Greta Garbo makes her U.S. screen debut in "The Torrent." Unlike many of her contemporaries, the Nordic beauty successfully made the transition to sound after becoming a star during the silent film era.

- On Feb. 18, 1964, the United States cuts off military assistance to Britain, France and Yugoslavia in retaliation for their continuing trade with communist Cuba. The action was chiefly symbolic, but represented the continued U.S. effort to destabilize the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro.

- On Feb. 20, 1974, Reg Murphy, an editor of The Atlanta Constitution, is kidnapped. Kidnapper William Williams drove Murphy around the city, stopping to phone in ransom demands to the newspaper. Managing editor G. James Minter delivered the money to Williams, and Murphy was released. After being caught, Williams was sentenced to 40 years for kidnapping and extortion.

- On Feb. 16, 1984, Bill Johnson becomes the first American man to win an Olympic gold medal in downhill skiing, a sport long dominated by European athletes. Johnson quickly became a national hero, though his fame was short-lived and he never again competed in the Olympics.

- On Feb. 17, 1996, in the final game of a six-game match, world chess champion Garry Kasparov triumphs over Deep Blue, IBM's chess-playing computer, and wins the match, 4-2. However, Deep Blue would go on to defeat Kasparov in a rematch the following year.

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## LETTERS

## Falling in love

Dear Florence,

With a nod to Neil Sedaka, "breakin' up is hard to do." Allegedly, falling in love is the best cure for a broken heart.

It was with heavy hearts in March 2013 that Vito and I left our family, friends and home of over 30 years in San Diego County bound for your city limits. There were naysayers galore who wondered what in the world we were thinking.

"You're going to leave America's Finest City?" "Why abandon near daily sunshine?" "Florence, Italy?"

We'd been tossing about a place to retire for years. East Coast or West? North or South? In June 2012 we were returning home after weeks of exploring Alaska. As we drove down Highway 101 on a crystal clear, sunny morning, we were in awe of the mountains meeting the shore, the forest with public parks and trails galore and the spectacular coast between Yachats and Heceta Head.

Not far beyond the Sea Lion Caves an amazing panorama opened up: a surf-tossed beach that stretched for miles, sand dunes, lakes and ponds glistening in the sun surrounded by green, everywhere green and air so clean it made you aware that you were breathing. It was you, Florence.

We were smitten. Our parting view driving up the Siuslaw toward Eugene made our hearts ache to leave you behind. So, we made the decision and began the process to move here as soon as we got back to California.

Now, nearly two years later, I thought that Valentine's Day was the perfect time to let you know how much we love you. We truly appreciate all you have offered to make our lives here just what we hoped it might be.

Your natural beauty is complimented by the many wonderful people who live here and love you as much or even more than we do. Your weather is dynamic and exhilarating. Sure it rains a lot, but I'm from Boston and her streets are suffocating under six feet of snow right now. I'm not sure we have a shovel for that in our garage.

Oh, and don't let the mid-summer grumbling you might hear about "all the traffic" bother you. Trust me, that is not traffic.

Have a great Valentine's Day, Florence.

Mary McCarthy  
Florence

## Health care 'exchange'

On March 4, the Supreme Court will hear King v. Burwell, considering whether the phrase "an exchange established by a state" buried in two technical sub clauses of the 2,000-page Affordable Care Act effectively deny premium subsidies to 7 million enrollees in the 34 states that have a federal exchange.

"Exchanges" are websites where insurers market and sell their qualifying benefit plans directly to individuals otherwise unable to obtain affordable care. All exchanges, state and federal, have to comply with the Act's minimum benefit and exclusion-prohibition rules. The Act preserves these safeguards for citizens of states without state-established exchanges by requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to "establish and operate" exchanges in the states opting to not do so.

In Oregon, Cover Oregon, the state-established exchange, crashed. Consequently, Oregon is transitioning to healthcare.gov, the federal exchange. Potentially, this means that unless Cover Oregon is revamped, tens of thousands of eligible Oregonians could lose their subsidies if the Supreme Court agrees that subsidies are not available in federal exchanges.

Is it plausible that Congress intended to leave the citizens unable to readily afford healthcare living in states unwilling or unable to set up exchanges without the premium subsidy that is at the heart of the Act? As the government's brief says, "the court would have to accept that Congress adopted that scheme not in a provision giving states clear notice of the consequences of their choice, but instead by hiding it in isolated phrases."

In determining what Congress intended, courts have to look at "the language itself, the specific context in which that language is used, and the broader context of the statute as a

whole." If the Supreme Court applies this basic rule of statutory interpretation, King v. Burwell ain't brain surgery. Which makes one wonder what objectives the requisite four justices voting to hear this case might have had in mind.

Possible objectives notwithstanding, there's a simple legislative way to protect the 7 million enrollees who would be denied their premium subsidies: Amend those two sub clauses. Except, maybe not so simple. On Feb. 3, the House of Representatives voted to repeal Obamacare for the 56th time and with it, "health care that is accessible and affordable for all."

Arnold Buchman  
Florence

## Mayor's response

Wow! What an open-minded mayor: "What you do in your spare time is up to you. I don't share your views on medical or recreational marijuana and I don't intend to visit a medical marijuana facility," said Joe Henry in response to a suggestion that Florence City Council members "visit a medical marijuana dispensary or at least get footage of a video if it's legally accessible," ("March Marks End of Marijuana Moratorium," Feb. 7, page A1).

I thought the role of elected officials was to listen to all their constituents and make decisions based on knowledge received first hand.

Guess not.

I was almost ready to say that thank goodness I don't live within the city limits any longer, but I forgot that almost everything decided in Florence directly affects all of us in the greater Florence area as well.

My one personal knowledge of the efficacy of medical marijuana is my son-in-law's case of shingles. It lets him get a night's sleep pain-free that could have otherwise been possible only with prescribed pain medication or alcohol, both of which would have left him with serious side effects the following day.

Luckily, he lives in Flagstaff, Ariz., where medical marijuana is prescribed and available locally.

Annie Schmidt  
Glenada

**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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