

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

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



What we have the moral right to ask

WESLEY VOTH
For the Siuslaw News

the many years I lived in Hawaii, coming to know the basic story of hundreds of people. None involved just a single individual; there were webs of family and friendships and dependencies and work relationships and skill intertwinings. No deportations happened without leaving wounds and scars — not just to the deported, but also the community from whose fabric they were torn.

Some even involved our country breaking its promises of citizenship in exchange for military service.

I think we all hold to some hierarchy of laws, ranging from ones we don't think are worth being enforced, to ones for which we believe there should be the severest of penalties, whatever we think are the worst acceptable forms of punishment.

The following ratings are mine:

A hierarchy for crimes against humanity: Anything that deprives others of life including health, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Murder, but also driving lethally. Harm to the vulnerable, whether it be by abuse, malpractice, negligence or creating a climate of terror or fear, which is the end result of hate speech. Harm includes use or dumping of chemicals that do harm, including in products, the air, earth or the waters. Way at the bottom of my list, below illegal drug possession in small

amounts, below jaywalking, below littering, is living in this country without all of the right official approvals.

A hierarchy for punitive measures: the worst penalty remotely acceptable to me is separation from family, community and the freedom to live life and pursue happiness that one had prior to the enforcement. I do not see a lot of difference between enforced deportation and incarceration, as they both deprive the person of liberty and the pursuit of happiness as they have known it. I do not find depriving people of life an acceptable form of punishment — it is, as a person I recently heard interviewed and who had conducted executions in the state of Georgia and still suffers the conscience of having done so put it in his interview, the most premeditated taking of life that we know. Loss of property, including fines, is somewhere in the middle, as is the loss of privilege to drive, or to practice ones profession, or other license forfeiture. The lightest form of penalty is having to pay our rightful debts, which at times appears to be beyond the willingness of the richest and most powerful among us.

I don't have a problem with holding specific people accountable for either predatory or reckless disregard for the life and property of others. I do have a problem with the kind of profiling involved with the rounding up of people by type in places like courthouses, schools and job sites. That sounds more like a police state than a "nation of laws."

It does more to perpetuate fear and terror

than to protect anyone.

Deportation is one thing if it immediately followed entering the US. If a person has built a life, paid their taxes, has a family, possessions and a network of responsibilities, to deport them solely on status or the minor infractions often arising from not having the status to accomplish things properly is not only cruel, it is shooting ourselves and our local communities in the foot. At the very least, if we do deport people, we should immediately compensate them for taxes paid and any property they can't take with them — and acknowledge the contributions they have made.

The memory of being an immigrant and why we fled our countries of origin is not lost in my family. And, as a farmworker, I grew up sweating alongside Russian Orthodox resident and Mexican migrant laborers. And even though my work ethic was impressive compared to some of my friends, it was nothing compared to the least of these others whose very survival was tenuous.

What if we were suddenly forced to accept back into our country every person who may technically be a U.S. citizen, but long ago cut their ties and loyalties to this country, have paid no taxes here, participated in no elections, have done nothing to fund education or finance infrastructure or improve life here other than be absent?

If this were to happen, and every person working here without citizenship deported, what a mess we would find ourselves in.

The green curtain of deciduous leaves is rapidly filling in, bogarting the light from forest floors and darkening the interiors of our woodlands. Much of what has been easily seen during the winter months now becomes hidden. It is the season when the smallest and most vulnerable birds can build nests somewhat in secret, but nests of any birds are vulnerable, and hiding them amidst the foliage and employing various forms of camouflage improves the chances of nest success.

Martin Luther King, Jr. noted that what hurts most in the end is not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. I have been hearing a lot of discussion about what it means to be a nation of laws, and whether the current federal enforcement of some laws — in this case immigration status laws — is a good thing or bad. I don't pretend to know anything about immigration law, but I know plenty about selective enforcement. And I do know what I've seen growing up here in Oregon and

LETTERS

CLEARING UP CONFUSION OVER VETERANS PARK

I would like to clarify some misinformation and misunderstandings that have been expressed recently regarding the proposed Gen. Ben King Memorial Gateway on Kingwood Street, and the Oregon Coast Military Museum (OCMM).

Some of these comments have been expressed in public testimony, some in Letters to the Editor, and some relayed to board members of the museum.

While there are similar goals shared by both the museum and Deeds of Valor, Inc., the memorial's proponent, they are in fact two separate entities.

And while there are some individuals who are involved in both organizations, and although the museum's board of directors does endorse the creation of the Memorial Gateway as an enhancement to our museum and its mis-

sion, the project is not a museum project.

I am, however, a part of both organizations.

There have been statements of concern regarding display of "weapons such as tanks and missiles." I want to clarify that Deeds of Valor Inc. has proposed no such thing. It is one of our hopes to be able to display one of the many types of aircraft which Gen. Ben King flew during his distinguished career — which is also appropriate as an entrance to the airport as is done in so many other communities.

In an effort to also honor other disciplines of military service, we may or may not also display other icons of service, such as a Jeep or Coast Guard boat.

One individual expressed dismay that the museum's "Freedom and Remembrance" wall held bricks in the name of non-veterans, such as businesses.

While the Veterans Memorial Wall on Bay Street was in fact created with the requirement that only veterans be allowed, the museum's wall was not. It was intended as a display to not only honor those who have served or still serve, it was also intended to allow those who wanted to thank or show their support for our veterans.

It was also intended to be a part of our fundraising effort, without which we would not have been able to build the museum.

I fully appreciate that in any community there will be divergent viewpoints on a number of issues. It is our right to express those viewpoints for which our veterans have served and fought to preserve.

I hope those with viewpoints different from ours will recognize our right to honor our veterans with expressions we deem appropriate.

Cal Applebee
Executive Director OCMM

LARGER CONCERNS ABOUT EDUCATION

I have read with interest the Letters to the Editor concerning whether or not it is advisable to build a new high school in Florence. As a retired teacher with more than 40 years of teaching experience, I would like to add my perspective to the discussion. I would agree that a new high school should be built to give the stu-

dents of the Siuslaw School District the best opportunity for success.

Nothing will be gained by bashing teachers and the public school system, nor by educators telling the general public that they are not qualified to voice their concerns. Whether or not to build a new high school is not the issue. I believe there is a larger concern, which is that the educational system in the United States needs a major overhaul.

The present structure was developed for a different time, social reality and work place. It is based on an 18th century calendar, a 19th century curriculum and 20th century technology attempting to prepare students for the new and rapidly changing demands of the work environment in the 21st century.

The adult population in Florence who went through the public educational system from the 1950s to the 1980s must realize that when they graduated from high school they had the necessary skills to find a good paying job that would allow them to raise a family.

This is not true today and it is not because teachers are not doing their jobs or demanding excellence from their students. Educators must be willing to accept the fact that supporting an educational structure that does not prepare their students for the demands of today's society is infuriating to the general public that is being asked to accept an increase in their taxes.

The \$40 million to \$50 million investment to build a new high school is only a down payment to insure a stable future for ourselves and future generations. However, building a new school will not solve the problems with the educational system.

We need to work on making the changes that are necessary so our students are truly prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century workplace.

There is not enough room here to fully discuss these important issues and challenges.

I am very interested in the discussions which need to take place regarding the changes that need to be made.

Timothy J. Tuttle
Florence

THANKFUL FOR SUPPORT FROM LADIES OF ELKS

The veterans, volunteers and Board of Directors of South Willamette Valley Honor Flight would like to take a moment and thank the Florence Ladies of Elks for its financial donation in support of Honor Flight.

The Ladies of Elks donation means that more veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War will be able to experience their memorials. They will also get to experience the love and appreciation the citizens of the U.S. have for them as they are thanked, have their hands shaken and more than a few of them will get hugs and kisses.

The entire Florence community has been supportive of South Willamette Valley Honor Flight and we appreciate that.

Please keep sending your veterans to experience their own personal Honor Flight.

Ed Bock
Director
SWV Honor Flight

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry will not be published.

Write to: editor@thesiuslawnews.com

POLITICAL/ELECTION 'LETTERS' POLICY

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. The newspaper does not publish partisan letters that promote or endorse local political candidates based solely on their record, reputation and qualifications; this constitutes paid political advertising.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes. This also constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any such letter. The newspaper is particularly sensitive to organized "letter-writing campaigns." The newspaper reserves the right to reject any such letter.

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Monday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.
Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
Website and E-Edition: www.TheSiuslawNews.com

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