

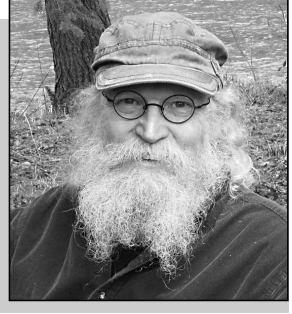
**Siuslaw News**  
P.O. Box 10  
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# Opinion

## 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



## Right as rain?

WESLEY VOTH  
For the Siuslaw News

cized by three letter writers in this same venue.

The criticisms in these cases always seem the same to me: the person has no right; or is exercising that right at the wrong place and time; or is simply seeking attention — only to be told it is an ineffective waste of time.

Donald Trump has made some comments about protesting athletes, using the words “their disrespect” to “our flag, our anthem.”

I find it ironic that it is our very flag and anthem, as well as the rights of protestors and those of the president, that’s kind of the point.

I have zero interest in spectator sports of any kind, or in the rituals — patriotic or religious — that go on in those grandstands. But it does interest me when a fellow human being goes against what has become the norm to make a point.

Or simply because, morally, they cannot follow along and still live with themselves. And I especially begin to pay attention if they take heat for it.

I admire their courage, much as I did when, as a young student, I saw a photograph of a lone man in a German crowd not giving the Nazi salute; or in my religious upbringing hearing the story from the Jewish Bible of Daniel and his

three companions who would not bow down and show the proper patriotic fervor to the golden image of the king when the music sounded — and were therefore sentenced to the fiery furnace.

These days, I am not in the awkward position of being in a public place when the U.S. national anthem is played, or in places where a pledge of allegiance is administered, or where loyalty oaths must be sworn as a condition of employment.

But I have been. I know what it feels like to resist.

It is not a feeling of glee. It is not satisfaction. It is awful.

Do such protests work? Well, they can inspire, including life changes on the part of at least some other people. I may not take the same action as the Chandlers, but I am encouraged when someone doesn’t just think it is hopeless and, instead, takes it upon themselves to do something.

I have been more moved and changed and persuaded by protestors over the course of my life than just about anything else. Prophets, civil rights marches and civil disobedience. United Farmworker strikes and boycotts, people standing with signs in Florence, watching a depiction of the life of Gandhi — they inspired me to act on my core values.

We are still arguing about

gun control. I have been looking at gun numbers and types, as well as death statistics. Like Paul Ryan, I wondered how bump stocks — or any modification that allows weapons to fire as if automatic — became legal.

As I discovered, big retailers like Walmart and Cabela’s have been selling them (including online) because “bump stocks” technically aren’t weapons.

Now these sellers are not offering them — or so it seems — probably because it looks bad.

In the gun statistics I researched, a couple of things stand out to me:

First, states with more guns have more suicides utilizing guns while states with fewer guns have fewer gun-related suicides.

One study that bears this out, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, has an additional startling statistic regarding women: suicide rates by women not using a gun are the same in both sets of states. However, in states with more guns, women killed themselves with guns at a rate of 8 times higher — and therefore had almost double the number of female deaths by suicide.

You’d think if we actually cared about our safety and the lives of those around us, we would reduce and restrict guns that seem to be as plentiful as drops of rain.

## LETTERS

### I HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO BE KILLED BY GUNFIRE

Yesterday morning I was greeted on the morning news by a man with his arms in the air, standing in front of the scripted logo we have all seen that starts with “We The People...” flanked by the United States Flag, while screaming at the top of his lungs “I have the right to own an assault weapon!”

I felt sick.

What he says is exactly true, but I seriously question if he understands what he is saying.

The word “assault” indicates the attempt to attack and/or kill another living being. Given the recent disaster in Las Vegas, I feel the definition is very accurate — and in the mind of the shooter, was exactly what he wanted.

I feel everyone who owns one of these weapons is making it very clear that they share the same feeling as that man on the 32nd floor.

After all, it is called an assault weapon.

The owner may be your neighbor, relative, Congressman, Senator or someone you do not even know, and I have to assume they are very proud of their “assault” weapon.

I now have my arms in the air, and I am screaming at the top of my lungs:

“I have the right to attend a concert without being killed!”

A gun owner’s right shouldn’t trump my rights.

— Charles Pennington  
Florence

### CONVERSATION MAKES COMMUNITY STRONGER

First, nice work on interesting articles with a local focus; hats off to Siuslaw News reporters.

Second, a note to millennials: Snow on the roof don’t mean the fire is out. Our retirees come from all across our great nation. In a sense, we are the blueprint and technical manual for your world.

No matter what, in all likelihood we’ve “been there, done that” and perchance can save you an unnecessary tumble.

One of the greatest friends of my life

was my best friend’s father. In spite of our 30-plus-year age difference, we had more in common than not. This fellow quit school at age 16 to join the Merchant Marines. He taught himself just about all there was to know about engines and electronics.

An accomplished guitar and bass player, we shared many an hour listening to great music.

Great times.

One of the high points of my recording career was schlepping an entire studio recording setup from Los Angeles to Indio to record him and 50 or so of his contemporaries in their retirement community “big band,” The Happy Wanderers.

Some were old-time radio, studio and big band players. All loved music. Over a long weekend, we all had a great time swapping stories. In fact, his son still plays the music.

Hopefully other copies are still floating around, connecting the generations.

So millennials, get yourselves out to our wonderful Florence Events Center and the live theatres — and help fill those seats. Talk to your senior seat-mates. Chat up somebody new at the interval.

Who knows what friend you’ll meet?

As my wife’s millennial nephew once said to me, “You’re just like my grandmother. You’ll talk to anybody.”

We also like to listen.

Our community will be all the stronger for it.

— Ian Eales  
Florence

### IN SUPPORT OF SCHOOL OPTION LEVY

On the November ballot, voters are being asked to approve the renewal of the local option levy that was originally passed in 2008 and renewed again in 2012.

The Siuslaw School District is requesting this renewal to maintain class sizes, retain music, art, shop and extra-curricular activities, as well as meeting the financial demands of an unfunded state mandate to increase physical education.

The levy currently pays for nearly 7

percent of the schools’ operational costs. Without those continuing funds, the district would have no choice but to make difficult cuts including teaching positions, educational programs and possibly school days.

This is not a new tax.

The .75 cents-per-\$1,000 of assessed property value is a continuation of the existing levy that has made it possible for the school district to maintain educational opportunities despite economic uncertainty.

The Siuslaw School District must deal with future challenges such as an uncertain federal education budget and lack of funding to fully implement Measure 98 for career and technology education.

The renewal of the option levy is vital to helping the district weather these financial storms.

I will vote to support the children of our community by supporting Siuslaw School District Local Option Levy Renewal Measure 20-281.

— Bill McDougle  
Florence

### THANKS FOR HARD WORK FROM CAMP FLORENCE

Bravo, Camp Florence Work Crews! For several years the young men of Camp Florence have helped us cut brush and plant trees on our farm north of town. Yesterday, a crew of six working as a team hauled a pond liner weighing 1,250 pounds a distance of 100 feet and then carefully spread this most ornery piece of rubberized material over a 35-by-65-foot hole.

I’ve read that young people today do not know how to do hard physical work. These young men clearly refute this belief. Yesterday, for example, we rolled, lifted, pulled, pushed, fell, got covered in mud and dirt and sweat, but got the job done.

The crews are well led by Camp Florence staff, always on time, always polite and always hard working.

We plan to employ them in years to come and recommend them to our friends.

— Jim and Jane Pittenger  
Florence

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## Siuslaw News

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## 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, or letters from outside our readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

### POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this 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 letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

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