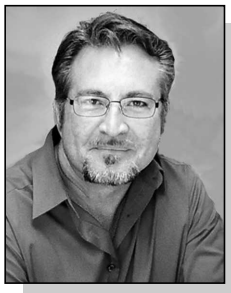


**Siuslaw News**  
**P.O. Box 10**  
**Florence, OR 97439**

# 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.



## Saying goodbye to 2017, a year that showed why our community is strong

A year ago tomorrow, Florence, Dunes City and our neighbors in the Upriver communities of Mapleton and beyond began the year with snow. Eight inches quietly fell overnight, signaling in a subtle way that 2017 was going to be anything but ordinary.

As a community, we shoveled snow and checked on our neighbors. Area churches opened cold weather shelters and provided community suppers to those in need.

A month later, a landslide just east of Florence trapped a mother and her infant daughter in their trailer before being rescued by local first responders.

In the weeks and months

ahead, the proverbial snow continued to fall as our small community became a microcosm reflecting challenges unique to our area as well as those rippling outward from the county, state and even national levels.

While an impending nurses strike, controversy over cannabis grows and the termination of our Port manager were some of the issues anchored from within our region, concerns about DACA, opioids, housing and homelessness mirrored conversations taking place in communities throughout the West Coast.

But what makes Florence

and the Siuslaw region strong is the willingness to have those conversations and, more importantly, work toward solutions. That willingness has been the catalyst for a lot of things we can be proud of in 2017, from rais-

ing more than \$30,000 for fifth-grader Malakai Kirk's bone marrow transplant, to helping our local Food Share through a holiday crisis and the official designation of Florence as the nation's 24th Coast Guard City.

A look through our annual Year in Review (in today's edition) is testimony to a year that brought its share of controversies and accom-

plishments, challenges and resolutions. It was also a year that saw a record number of your letters on this Opinion page as part of continuing community conversations.

If 2017 showed us anything, it was the ways in which the fabric of our community is spun from its diversity of opinion and perspectives — and how sharing them is the common thread of our regional tapestry.

Though there is no snow predicted for tomorrow, together we will undoubtedly find a way to make not just 2018 anything but ordinary, but rather extraordinary.

Write Siuslaw News editor Ned Hickson at [nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com](mailto:nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com) or P.O. Box 10, Florence, Ore. 97439.

### From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

### LETTERS

#### REAL CAUSE FOR VENEZUELA'S SUFFERING

In the article Dave Robinson's latest disaster preparedness article, "Listening to Venezuela" (Dec. 30), the author failed to correctly address the cause of the people of Venezuela's suffering.

Venezuela is indeed having problems with supplying sufficient food and medicine to its people. However, this is not the result of neglect or malfeasance on the part of its government.

Last August, President Trump ordered a blockade against Venezuela. As a result, financial institutions like Citibank refused to pass payment on to suppliers. Shiploads of foods and medicine were held up and not delivered.

Meanwhile, Columbia refused to sell Venezuela anti-malaria medicine so it had to buy it from India; the country has entered into contracts with Mexico and Panama to supply it with food; and it is doing all it can to counter the shortages imposed by the crippling blockade.

—James Sherwood  
 Florence

#### COMMUNITY RESPONSE, CARING IS AMAZING

The generosity of the Florence community continues to amaze me. The Salvation Army "Red Kettle" campaign has been a huge success this year with over \$27,000 donated during the four-week effort.

Over 110 citizens volunteered to "Ring the Bell" during the holidays. I'd like to give a special acknowledgement to Paul Rumpca, who manned a kettle at least two hours, every day of the campaign.

Wayne Sharpe and George Henry did an excellent job of "talking up the campaign" on the radio and they actually rang the bell for over 12 hours.

A special thanks is due to Lisa Hall at U.S. Bank, who cheerfully "counted the loot" every day to ensure we had accurate totals.

The managers at all the kettle locations are to be thanked and their employees were helpful and courteous in securing the kettles.

But the "true soldiers" who "manned the kettles" for over 500 hours were the caring, generous, loving people of our wonderful town. Without them coming forward, we could never have reached — and exceeded — our goal.

To each and everyone of you, I would like to publicly express my personal thank you for your generosity and commitment to making this, our town, the wonderful place it is.

—Sam Spayd  
 "Red Kettle" coordinator, 2017

#### SAY 'NO' TO NO MORE TAXES

Many of us pay for health insurance on our own. It is one of the biggest issues facing young families. My daughter and her husband, along with their new baby, live on one full-time and one part-time salary while paying \$750/month for health insurance with a \$20,000 deductible.

That means they can't afford to have special procedures or care because it all would come out of their own pocket.

I know there are lots of folks who can't afford health insurance at all, but the concept of taxing health insurance is not smart.

There are other ways to pay rather than putting the burden on local school insurance plans (Oregon districts will total \$25 million), charge college student plans, community colleges, small businesses and even Medicaid providers.

Few states in the country impose a tax on premiums, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. And most states that have expanded the population eligible for Medicaid, including California and Washington, have covered increasing costs with General Fund dollars.

This way, everyone pays for Medicaid, rather than singling out those who pay for healthcare.

I believe in a healthcare safety net for the state's most vulnerable residents. Oregon is among the fastest growing states in the U.S. and the economy continues to generate record revenue. There are alternate funding proposals to fill the Medicaid gap.

The question of how to fairly pay for such an essential program is exactly what the Oregon legislature and governor should have figured out — and can if we send the issue back.

A "No" vote is the only way to hold the Oregon Legislature and our governor accountable for their failure to budget responsibly. Until you start holding the people you voted for in Salem accountable, you can expect more and more taxes.

—Sherry Harvey  
 Florence



## 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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## 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](mailto:PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com).

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**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, \$76; 6-month in-county, \$52; 10-weeks subscription, \$23; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$99; 6-month out-of-county, \$65; 10-weeks subscription, \$29; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$125; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$71.

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