

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.

LETTERS

GIFT OF LOCAL STUDENT MUSIC PROGRAM

I had the pleasure of attending the Willamette Valley Concert Band Festival to hear our Siuslaw High School Symphonic Band play.

It was obvious these students and director had worked extremely hard to prepare for this event. We can be proud of their performance and how they represented our community.

We can be proud of our music program and it is such a pleasure to hear our music students play. For those interested and able, our symphonic band will play again in Corvallis on April 5, and Coos Bay on April 11.

Thank you musicians and music director for your gift of music.

—Bobbie Spencer
Florence

STUDENTS DESERVE A VOICE

I'm not sure where Ian Eales got the statistics he listed in his letter ("Sad That Children Being Used as Pawns," March 24) regarding school shooting deaths of children versus other causes. I was unable to find any statistics for the scenarios he set forth.

At the behest of the NRA, Congress passed a piece of legislation many years ago (The Dickey Amendment, 1996) that precludes the CDC from research or keeping any kind of statistics of any death as the result of the use of a gun.

Therefore, there are no reliable statistics available.

Mr. Eales also bemoaned the manipulation of students by adults. Clearly, this grass roots movement was started by the survivors of the Parkland, Fla., shooting — high school kids, not politicians.

It was born from the horror, pain, grief and fear of these young people after being sprayed by bullets — an experience that most adults have not had.

Gun control is *not* about taking away anyone's rights or taking away guns used for hunting or for personal protection; it's about universal background checks and keeping guns out of the hands of those who should not have them for specific reasons.

It's about keeping weapons of war in the hands of the military and not in the hands of civilians.

And it's about the lives of children.

When I look at the photo on the front page of the Siuslaw News of the student walkout (March 17), I do not see Nazi indoctrination. I see our local students democratically protesting, as is their right.

They are the ones "in the line of fire," and they deserve a voice. They want, and deserve, safe schools. They want and deserve to live without fear of being shot to death or receiving physical and emotional scars that last a lifetime.

—Marybeth Marengo
Florence

ADDRESS REAL FAILURES IN PREVENTING SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

As I watched the marchers last Saturday, it was unclear to me whether the purpose of this demonstration was for school safety or for gun control.

If the march was to encourage more feel-good gun laws that evil and mentally deranged people ignore, then it was just a nice walk in the rain.

If the purpose was to protect our children with well-trained, armed resource officers, then I applaud your efforts. With rare exceptions, teachers are not qualified in that capacity.

If you truly believe that gun-free zones are effective, then let's start by removing armed officers that protect politicians in Washington D.C. and Salem.

Do politicians deserve better protection than school children?

There is an obvious media bias against the use of force to stop shootings as it doesn't fit its narrative. The "other paper" had an article a few days ago that headlined, "School Shooter Wounds 2." A more accurate headline would be: "Officer Stops Armed Student." The brave actions of (armed) resource officer Blaine Gaskell stopped further carnage when he stopped the shooter by force.

The Florida shooting resulted from the failure of the FBI, the school system and local law enforcement. Although no NRA members have been involved in any school shootings, they make convenient scapegoats.

I have read that school officials believe that armed resource officers are too expensive. If you do not believe that the

safety of school children is priority number one, then you are in the wrong job.

—Keith R. Kraft
Florence

GUN SAFETY BEGINS WITH AWARENESS

Spring Break is here. Grandchildren, nephews and nieces and their friends are coming to visit.

To those who have guns in their homes, this is a reminder that the safest thing we can do to assure against tragedy is to keep firearms locked in a safe, keep the ammunition locked separately, and put the key or code in a place that is not easily accessible to others.

—Karin Radtke
Yachats

BRAINWASHING PEOPLE TO FEAR GUN REGULATION

I take exception to the questionable statistics Ian Eales listed in his recent Letter to the Editor ("Sad That Children Being Used As Pawns," March 24).

Anyone with internet access can, within a couple of minutes, easily discover that school shootings have *not* remained fairly constant for more than 150 years, as his letter claimed.

Just visit wikipedia.org — which has a good reputation of providing factual data — and you will see that school shootings in the U.S. have become *much* more frequent in recent decades. (Reference: Wikipedia article "List of school shootings in the United States.")

I did not even bother to waste my time checking Mr. Eales' other claims about the likelihood of children being killed on school buses or in a traffic accident involving texting.

In response to the Parkland, Fla., high school massacre, student organizers planned the nationwide March for Our Lives in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Every Town for Gun Safety. This hardly compares with the Hitler Youth of Nazi Germany; nor does it exemplify "brainwashed young adults" mentioned in Mr. Eales' letter.

Any change to the Second Amendment to the Constitution would require ratification by three fourths of the states. Does anyone really believe that such a Constitutional change will actually be made in the foreseeable future?

With our divisive politics, I doubt it would even happen in this century.

I am a conservative with respect to most socio-political issues, but I have come to regard the NRA as a corrupt lobbying organization — one that really represents gun sellers and not the rights of individual Americans.

From my perspective, Mr. Eales' letter exemplifies the NRA's goal of brainwashing people into fearing that "Big Brother" is someday going to raid your home and take your guns away.

I can only wonder if Mr. Eales is as sad about the tragic loss of life from the now-routine gun violence in this country, as he is about the Siuslaw News' front page photo of the school walkout kids.

—Stephen Johnson
Florence

PROTECTING OURSELVES IS A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

Recently, Sherry Harvey wrote an extremely informative Letter to the Editor on guns and protecting children in all schools ("Conspiracy Theory or Truth?" March 21).

Our greatest resource is our next generation. Today our children are being murdered, in one case while unprotected by security officers whose job was to secure the school against any who would do harm to our most precious resource.

Remember Tiannamen Square? Without the Chinese people possessing firearms, their oppressive government controlled the citizenry. They are living in a Communist/totalitarian state.

When the British were marching to Lexington and Concord attempting to end the Revolutionary War before it started, they were headed to the repository of firearms to control the citizenry.

The brutal Soviet Union regime starting in 1917 was determined to confiscate all firearms (which they eventually did) so that the government could control the citizenry.

The history of nations is who has the power: government or the people?

In America it's the people, which historically is something different. We have a written Constitution to turn to and a Bill

of Rights to honor. In this day and age, we are discarding tradition in favor of lack of study and issues of popularity.

Sherry Harvey is correct — we are killing our next generation for the sake of political correctness. If Hollywood elites can have security guards, then why would they deny that to school children? It's not enough to blame the NRA, which is merely a lobbying group for the *sacred* Second Amendment.

Why sacred? Because without the Second Amendment, how would we enforce the other nine? Yes, the Framers had muskets and we have AK-47s. But the principle remains the same: protection for the citizenry.

It seems today's populace either hasn't read Madison, Hamilton and Jay from the Federalist Paper, or think they are wiser than them.

We have the rights of protection, safety and law in this country like no other in recorded history. Let's not throw it away to those who either no longer revere those rights.

Benjamin Franklin said it best at the 1787 Constitutional Convention: "God governs in the affairs of men."

It seems we are now in a time when men govern in the affairs of men.

May God continue to bless America.

—Joel Marks
Florence

FACT-FREE ZONE MORE DANGEROUS THAN GUN-FREE ZONE

Imagine if Ms. Sherry Harvey's Letter to the Editor ("Conspiracy Theory or Truth?" March 21) was a movie pitch. The plot would be a conspiratorial effort to frighten the public into supporting anti-gun measures. Bad guys with AR-15s target children in a school gun-free zone.

We learn the bad guys are abetted by well-intentioned but misguided gun-control advocates who see the tragedy as a way to pressure government into confiscating firearms. At the same time, the liberal main stream media downplay mass killings when guns are not used and ignore gun violence in cities where guns are illegal.

The conspirators organize school walkouts and marches and threaten our favorite stores into curtailing the sale of guns.

The plot twist? It is revealed the real conspirator is "another world power, dictator or ideology" looking to establish a country-wide, gun-free zone that will enable the take over of America.

From gun-free zones of a movie plot to the fact-free zone of her letter, Ms. Harvey argues it really *could* happen. The deranged act of a disturbed school shooter being co-opted by an anonymous conspiratorial cabal to help nullify the right to bear arms.

At risk is the constitutional founding principle that enables citizens to protect themselves against an oppressive government.

This constitutional contention promoted by the NRA disregards the place a well-regulated militia had in the thinking of the Founding Fathers who were fresh from fighting an autocrat's standing army. The Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution and its Bill of Rights are better source documents than the Second Amendment interpretations of Wayne LaPierre.

Among the founding principles, free speech, a free press, religious freedom, right to due process, freedom from self-incrimination and freedom from double jeopardy are, at least, on a par with the right to bear arms.

As Justice Scalia in *Heller vs. D.C.* pointed out, the right to bear arms is not absolute.

"Getting rid of gun-free zones" argues Ms. Harvey, "would save more lives than banning guns."

In the real world, confiscation is not an imminent threat. But, in a fact-free zone, fatality statistics or the realities of Sandy Hook, Parkland and every other school shooting fail to persuade that reasonable gun controls are necessary and constitutional.

Back to that movie plot. It would be Oscar worthy if by exercising that other founding principle, the peaceable assembly of the younger generation in Washington and around the country, persuaded their government — *our* government — to address gun grievances beyond the usual, condolence thoughts and prayers from the usual political suspects.

—Arnold Buchman
Florence/Scottsdale, Ariz.

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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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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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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