

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.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)

Taking care of our Earth is common sense

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

Lately, I have been very encouraged by the millennial generation and younger people I have spoken with. Their passion and outspokenness on many important issues has been inspiring, especially their attitude that protecting the environment is a matter of common sense.

This is not about global warming. This is about the human race being responsible for the environmental footprint it leaves on the planet.

When I was 16 years old, my political science teacher organized a small group of 22 students who marched in Hartford, Conn., on the first Earth Day in 1970.

We marched to raise awareness of the damage that mankind was doing to the environment. Thirty-eight years later, Earth Day has grown into the largest civic observance in the world, with more than 1 billion people participating in activities.

Ever since my first march, I have been an advocate for common sense solutions to minimize the impact we make on our planet as a human race. Over the years, we have made progress in reversing acid rain, minimized the impacts of air pollution and have developed recycling programs for metals, glass, paper, cardboard and electronics.

Oregon was even the first state to implement a return deposit program for cans and bottles. Due to this grass roots effort, there has been a lot of positive progress since 1970, including the bipartisan passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Act, as well as many other groundbreaking environmental laws.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By JOSHUA GREENE
FLORENCE CITY COUNCILOR

Unfortunately, there is much more work to be done; we are choking our planet with plastic.

The plastic problem has become more urgent lately with China now refusing to buy our garbage. There are several reasons for this: the price of oil has gone down substantially, so they can afford to make their own new plastic products, negating the need to purchase from other countries; it is no longer cost effective to ship the plastic to China.

Another reason cited was our used plastics were too dirty. We had gotten complacent and did not properly clean the containers as needed, simply tossing used items in the recycling bin like it was another garbage can.

In 2012, there were 288 million tons of plastic manufactured globally, with only 10 percent of that being recycled. National Geographic has identified giant garbage patches estimated at 245 tons that have been found floating in the ocean, creating dire consequences for more than 700 species of marine life.

So what can we do as individuals and as a community?

There are small things we can do locally that can have an impact: Take your own thermal cup when you get a cup of coffee; fill your own personal water bottle instead of purchasing plastic bottles; get into the habit of bringing your own reusable bag when shopping for groceries (I even have one with collapsible wheels).

If you do use plastic bags at the grocery store, bring them back. Safeway and Fred Meyer recycle them.

Also, become aware of items that are not biodegradable. There are reusable alternatives for almost everything, even Saran Wrap.

What we ultimately need is a grass roots outcry where we ask manufacturers to put their products in biodegradable or reusable containers, such as a national campaign to insist manufacturers of the goods offer their soaps, oils, peanut butters and shampoos in biodegradable containers.

We can also institute programs where reusable or glass containers are brought to the store for refilling our detergents, soaps and more.

Become aware and familiar with recycle programs from manufacturers. Whether it is medical products or ink jet printer cartridges, many offer recycling programs.

The City's Environmental Management Committee (EMAC), as well as Lane County's Master Recycler Program, are great resources for information and recycling events happening in our community.

Tomorrow, April 22, The Siuslaw Climate Alliance is bringing together local organizations for Florence's first Earth Day on The Boardwalk. It will feature exhibits and information about pollinators and recycling, as well as plastic pollution. It is a fun and eye opening first step towards being part of the solution.

It is a family event and good to "teach your children well."

The primary culprit is an affluent society that prefers the ease of one-use, throwaway containers and bags.

It ain't going to be easy to change. Nobody likes to change, which is why this problem exists. But it's up to us to do something about it — now.

It's just common sense.

LETTERS

DOJ BUILDING CODE OPINION MISGUIDED

Opinions by the Oregon DOJ about the constitutionality of third-party building inspections have led many small cities to either face shutting down construction, having to hire building officials with six-figure salaries who are unaffordable and not available, or to sue the state.

HB 4086 was an effort by the House to mitigate against this effort to undermine a system that has been working for over 30 years and very efficient.

HB 4086 was flawed and the Senate did not act on it.

We know that statewide we are facing a critical shortage of every type of housing except in the \$700,000 and above range. This bureaucratically major error will shut down permitting in over 20 coastal and rural cities and municipalities.

We cannot allow this to happen.

Those of us living in coastal and rural Oregon are just coming out of the recession — or for many of us a depression. We need our leadership to put a halt to this totally misguided effort until the legislature can apply some intelligence to the situation.

The LOC and LCOG have also railed against this misguided opinion by the DOJ and the Oregon Building Code Division.

—City Councilor
Ron Preisler
Florence

THANKFUL FOR WOODBURY

I wanted to take a minute to appreciate Woody Woodbury, the former owner of Grocery Outlet, current Florence City Councilman and champion of the underserved.

As a vocational rehabilitation counselor, I understand the value of citizens like Mr. Woodbury to workforce development efforts. When the parents of a person with a cognitive or intellectual disability, and the person him or herself, understand the positive impact of working — not just on the eventual retirement account, but also in all the other ways it plays an important role in a life and a community.

But the hard part of actually working is finding an employer who will give such an

individual a chance, as well as coach him or her in collaborating with the family.

The work experience helps those individuals find their strengths, develop talents and skills, gain self-confidence and succeed in general. It's a very tough equation to set up and support — which is why people like Woody are so important to an inclusive workplace.

My hat is off to you, sir. You've touched a lot of lives in this town.

Thank you.

—Ivy Medow
Florence

TIME FOR A POSITIVE CHANGE

I'm writing in response to Donna Dobson's Letter to the editor in support of Jay Bozievich (April 11), wherein she claims the incumbent West Lane County Commissioner "has the experience to continue the job as commissioner," and the challenger Nora Kent "doesn't have the experience with economics in the capacity the job of commissioner requires."

I'm confident she may have overlooked the fact the incumbent had no economic or government experience, let alone commissioner experience, when first elected.

His background solely consisted of being an engineer, with no involvement in working with the community or public.

Kent has a demonstrated successful record of being a grass roots community organizer, as well as a first-rate educator, which should establish in anyone's eyes the basic requirement to serve as county commissioner. The position comes with no prerequisites other than being honest and ethical, and being dedicated to following the rule of law and serving the interests of the people — Kent has all of these virtues, desires, commitment and more.

The incumbent has not demonstrated the ability to serve his constituents other than, in my opinion, to provide excessive favoritism to the wealthy timber barons and other narrow-minded special interest groups who wish to poison our water, land and air — and worse yet, undermine the fundamental principles of our democracy.

This race is about who we The People want to represent our interests, ideas and moral values. This race is about sending a

clear message, from the local level, that representative democracy is alive and well and will not be suppressed by a few powerful interest groups.

It's time for a positive change by supporting Nora Kent for West Lane Commissioner.

—Bill Fleenor
Former West Lane County
Commissioner

LACK OF EXPERIENCE NOT AN ASSET FOR BEING COUNTY COMMISSIONER

I attended the forum on April 6, when Jay Bozievich and Nora Kent were given questions selected by a moderator. Kent advocates change in forest management, health care and affordable housing.

I did not hear anything about how these changes would be implemented, or even what changes would be made.

At what cost? More taxes?

We as Oregonians are already heavily taxed. Forest practices are now managed in such a way that revenue is brought into the county budget.

What would Kent change and how would it help the county?

One point that seemed to be a priority for her was getting a gravel road paved in Deadwood. While I appreciate how it might cut down on the dust in the Deadwood neighborhood, I doubt it would be a high priority for the rest of the district.

Many roads in Lane County require repairs. Where does she stand regarding the economy, property tax assessment, the county budget, our county park maintenance and tax increases?

Before the election, the voters should know more about Kent's platform. What, if any, are her qualifications? Has she ever managed a budget as large as the County Commissioner position entails? Many seem to believe her lack of experience is an asset.

I do not.

I will be voting for Jay Bozievich. He has proven himself to be an effective, skillful, experienced and trustworthy public servant.

—Robert Flowerday
Florence

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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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unourced 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.

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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