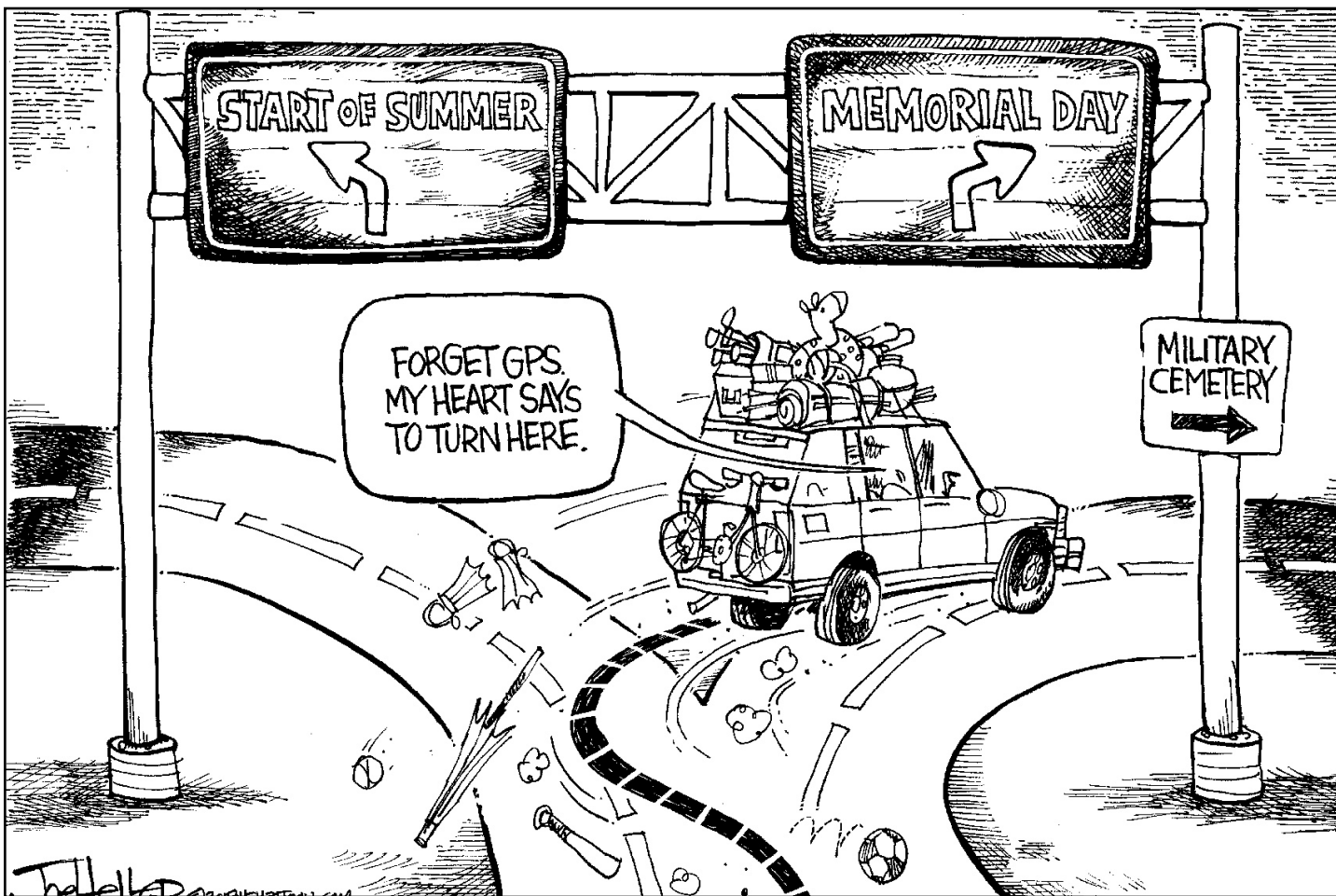


Siuslaw News
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Opinion

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)



A nation is forever grateful to its fallen soldiers

One hundred and fifty years ago, no family or community was untouched by the bloodiest conflict in American history — the Civil War. The four-year-long struggle claimed the lives of more than 620,000 soldiers, which is more Americans than died in both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam.

Combined.

It was on May 5, 1868, that the Grand Army of the Republic, an early veterans advocacy group comprised of Civil War veterans, first urged Americans to observe a "National Memorial Day" to honor the dead of the Civil War.

The tradition has grown in the 150 years that have followed. Today,

Memorial Day is a cherished and protected national holiday — espe-

cially in Oregon. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Oregonians attend ceremonies, town parades and other solemn events to pause and remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice — from the Civil War

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Mitch Sparks

Acting Director of Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

to the most current conflicts in the Middle East.

It is estimated that nearly 6,000 Oregon service members' lives have been lost in the line of duty since our state's inception.

However Memorial Day is celebrated in your community, and however different it may appear from the simple ceremonies of a grieving, post-Civil War America, the senti-

ment remains the same.

It is that of a grateful nation to its fallen soldiers: "Thank you. We will never forget you."

This Memorial Day, as we kick off the start of summer and turn to enjoy Oregon's incredible parks, beaches, rivers and mountains, we invite all citizens to pause and truly honor our fallen and our Gold Star families. We stand on the shoulders of all those who came before us and will never forget the service and sacrifice of all those who gave all.

Thank you all for your support of Oregon veterans, and bless all those still serving, at home and overseas.

Mitch Sparks is a retired Navy veteran and acting director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.

LETTERS

HOME SCHOoled KIDS

DON'T BECOME GUNSLINGERS

From the front page article in Saturday's paper on School Shootings ("Operation Emerald Shield" Tests Responders, Hospitals," May 19) — "... everyone agrees that communities and first responders everywhere should be prepared to confront and defeat an active shooter."

I wonder how much better it would be if communities and parents everywhere were working to prevent an active shooter. Society has come to accept it is a "given" that there are going to be more shootings. There are several "band aid" ideas out there that will only come to nothing because the root problem is not even addressed any more.

Am I dreaming, has no one a workable protocol?

There is one in place and working for those with courage and fortitude to employ it; it is called "home schooling," the largely persecuted movement that survives in spite of much government and public opposition.

It is not just the protection from getting shot at school that they provide, but much more. The moral caliber of home-schooled students prevents them from becoming gunslingsers. I do observe that their "classrooms" don't include "boob tubes" and war-games trinkets. Instead, they have real educational books and hold field trips — and not a little Bible ethics.

I also observe that these determined

people are not compensated for the financial burden they relieve the state of because they are forced to support the public schools system's tremendous costs through large portions of their property taxes.

This is really not a new kind of movement; it was instituted more than 200 years ago in this country, when all kids were home schooled.

—Allen J. Bartlett
Florence

REALITY TOTALLY BITES

Now listen up all you left-wing, socialist, Bernie-supporting, corporation-hating, tax-loving fools. Pay attention all you right-wing, gun-toting, flag-waving, line-toeing, media-bashing whackos:

Let's talk reality.

For those on the left, do you really believe all your progressive rhetoric is really likely to significantly lure people from the other side to your enlightened views?

And for you all on the right, do you seriously think there is any real possibility of convincing those on the left of the clear sense obviously inherent in your stance?

The reality is that within a few points one way or the other, the country is split down this divide somewhere around 50-50, varying somewhat more on specific issues — but still a division with no clear nationwide mandate for either side.

So what do we do about this?

Apparently we resort to personal smears, vehement denunciation, outright distortion and blatant fear mongering in order to make clear the evil that permeates the opposition.

Sure seems to be working.

Yeah, right.

Could there be a better way?

Wasn't there, not all that long ago, a better way?

—Jimmie Zinn
Florence

THANKS TO ANGELS DURING RHODY DAYS

I want to thank the half-dozen angels who appeared out of nowhere to help my sister when she tripped on the curb on Maple Street this past Saturday during Rhody Days.

It was a painful and very embarrassing situation for her, and you all made it easier to deal with — from checking her for cuts and bringing her wet cloths, to bringing a chair for her to sit in and making sure her jar of olives wasn't broken.

Thank you.

Your kindness and her sense of humor made a bad fall bearable.

You have all reinforced my belief that more people are good than the few who aren't.

Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart.

—Karen Prentice
Florence

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DEADLINES:

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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 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.

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.

Email letters to:

nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

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