

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.

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

'First Step' program will offer better future for families

(Editor's Note: The First Step Pilot Program is seeking approval of a temporary Conditional Use Permit to allow three camp trailers on Presbyterian Church property (3996 Hwy 101), just south of the church's sanctuary. The proposal is for a one-year transitional housing pilot project, after which the permit would expire. A Florence Planning Commission meeting will be held Tuesday, Sept. 11, beginning at 5:30 p.m., at the Florence Events Center.)

I am writing in support of First Step. This group has been meeting for some time to create transitional housing for Florence residents. I am impressed with the level of collaboration represented by the First Step Board, which includes civic groups, faith communities and other individuals concerned with the shortage of affordable housing in Florence.

Their experience is broad-based, with members informed about non-profit organizations, community resources, zoning regulations and more.

As a lifelong educator and child advocate, as well as a member of the Siuslaw School District Board of Directors and president of the Siuslaw Education Foundation, my particular concern is focused on the impact unstable housing has on students. In a practical sense, stu-

dents who do not have a stable home are challenged to have a place to study; to keep belongings organized; to have clean clothes; to have regular meals; and to have adequate sleep.

Each of these conditions often results in poor school attendance too. In terms of psychological impact, these students find themselves unprepared for learning in a

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Suzanne Mann-Heintz
President of Siuslaw Education Foundation

school situation. Some become humiliated or embarrassed by their circumstances and unable to respond to assignments in typical ways ("Draw a picture of your neighborhood," "Search your backyard for signs of fall," "Write a descriptive story about your bedroom," etc).

Some, unfortunately, experience teasing or peer avoidance. These undermine confidence, self-esteem and motivation. I don't want to assign that burden to any child.

Research indicates that students who live in poverty are less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to pursue higher education or post high school training programs, less likely to maintain

long-term relationships and are more likely to engage in problematic behaviors like crime, substance abuse and domestic violence. All of these conditions and behaviors maintain generational poverty.

The mission of the Siuslaw School District is "motivating and preparing all students to reach their greatest potential." School staff, administrators and school board members want this for our students just as, I'm sure, many in our community do.

Allowing First Step to develop its project is, indeed, a first step in that direction.

Students are not the only beneficiaries of First Step's endeavors. Florence needs to be a city that is attractive to businesses and professionals. The more we can provide a "leg-up" to those who need it, the better it is for the health of Florence overall.

I am confident that First Step has the knowledge and skills to carry out its project goals. I believe that their site selection and operational guidelines are well structured and doable. I believe that over time, this project will reduce the number of homeless families and empower them to break the bonds of generational poverty.

Finally, I believe that this project will provide yet another thread for the strong fabric of community that makes Florence such a wonderful place to live.

LETTERS

HOMELESS TRAILER PARK WILL LOWER PROPERTY VALUE

I live on Spruce Street and I was just informed that a trailer park for the homeless (First Step Pilot Program) is being proposed to go in behind where I live.

Apparently, this is being proposed in cooperation with the Presbyterian Church, which owns the property where the trailer park would be located.

In addition to lowering my property value, what about the environmental damage? I know many bear and other wildlife live there.

They say this will be through a temporary conditional use permit, but we all know what that means.

Please go to the Florence City Planning Commission meeting Tuesday, Sept. 11, beginning at 5:30 p.m., at the Florence Events Center.

—Louise Barney
Florence

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DEHUMANIZING OTHERS WHO ARE 'NOT LIKE US'

I saw recently on Facebook a video of a man rescuing six puppies deposited along a desert road somewhere in a Western state. How entirely cruel the owner of those puppies had to have been!

Ah, but the puppies were not human beings; their owner surely would not have abandoned six children.

In that same vein, President Trump and his administration deliberately separated some 500 children from their asylum-seeking parents seeking entrance into our country at the southern border.

His motive? It appears to be to send a message: *Come here with your children; you lose them.*

How can he and his supporters minimize this horrendously cruel act? Heed David Eckhardt's words in his Sept. 1 letter: "... it's on the parents for committing a crime by coming to the U.S. illegally. [Forget the fact that seeking asylum is not a violation of U.S. law.] They knew what they were doing, just as people who



commit crimes here and get sent to jail; they, too, get separated from their kids. Unless we do something worse by putting the kids in jail with their parents."

I am dismayed to suspect that there is a segment of our population that sees Latinos — and anyone else who isn't "like us" as criminals and rapists, gang members, drug dealers and murderers.

Thank you to our president, Fox News, Newt Gingrich and the rest of the political agitators on the airwaves who have not one scintilla of conscience, reducing "the others" to sub-human status.

That mindset seeks to make it palatable to the general population to separate vulnerable children from their desperate parents in the same way as leaving unwanted puppies to die of thirst and over-exposure.

—Harold Titus
Florence

GLAD FOR LUCIO MEET-AND-GREET

I recently had the opportunity to meet Florence City Council candidate Geraldine Lucio at a Bay Street meet-and-greet.

I asked Ms. Lucio several questions on issues that affect us all and found her answers to be direct, thoughtful and honest.

As a local business owner, Ms. Lucio is vitally interested in the betterment and growth of our community and local economy.

I will vote for Lucio at the November election and urge others to do the same.

—Ron Duzy
Florence

TAKE A KNEE

There's a Twitter movement afoot to "Boycott the NFL on Nov. 12 — Veteran's Day" to protest players "taking a knee."

This one-day protest apparently is a counter-protest to another on Twitter protesting the NFL over its new policy

that imposes fines on players who protest during the national anthem. Calls to protest and counter-protest about players protesting gets a bit confusing.

But, focusing on "taking a knee" may help sort it out.

NFL players have the right as Americans to peacefully protest police violence and systemic racism, real or perceived. In exercising that right by "taking a knee," NFL players have successfully used a symbol to start a national conversation — impossible to ignore — about anti-black racism and white nativism.

Starting with the Boston Tea Party, protests have been a part of the political landscape in America, (valued enough to be protected by the Bill of Rights). In living memory, many protests have been prompted by racial injustice. Rosa Parks on the bus in Montgomery, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, John Lewis on Bloody Sunday in Selma — each became a symbol dramatizing the unfairness of discrimination.

As a marketing genius, President Trump has recognized that by conflating disrespect for the flag, the military and the country by ungrateful, millionaire (black) players, he could turn the "taking a knee" symbol into a quintessential appeal to his base. His implicit message echoes in the language of the Boycott the NFL on Nov. 12 protest: "You who have insulted our flag, our country, our soldiers, our police officers and our veterans. You are living the American dream, yet you disparage our great country."

You versus our. Other versus us. Outsider versus American. Or, as President Trump said more directly on Fox and Friends to American citizens protesting by taking a knee, "You have to stand proudly for the national anthem or you shouldn't be playing. You shouldn't be there. Maybe you shouldn't be in the country."

Boycott the NFL on Veterans Day or everyday if you like. It's your right as an American. But understand what you are protesting and in doing so try not, in John McCain's last words, to confuse patriotism with tribal rivalries.

Whether to pray for guidance or to gain perspective, I suggest that President Trump — and the rest of us — would do well to "take a knee."

— Arnold Buchman
Florence/Scottsdale, Az.

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Jenna Bartlett
Ned Hickson
Erik Chalhoub

Susan Gutierrez
Cathy Dietz
Ron Annis
Jeremy Gentry

Publisher, ext. 318
Editor, ext. 313
Consulting Editor 831-761-7353
echalhoub@register-pajaronian.com
Marketing Director, ext. 326
Office Supervisor, ext. 312
Production Supervisor
Press Manager

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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 undocumented 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 partisanism 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

PRES. DONALD TRUMP The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20500 Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414 FAX: 202-456-2461 TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213 www.whitehouse.gov	U.S. REP. PETER DEFAZIO (4TH DIST.) 2134 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515 202-225-6416 541-269-2609 541-465-6732 www.defazio.house.gov
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U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY 313 Hart Senate Office Bldg Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3753 FAX: 202-228-3997 541-465-6750 www.merkley.senate.gov	WEST LANE COUNTY COMMISSIONER JAY BOZIEVICH 125 E. Eighth St. Eugene, OR 97401 541-682-4203 FAX: 541-682-4616 Email: Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us