

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)

Time to ask serious questions of state legislators

(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.)

Fall is in the air and as we move toward the end of another outstanding year in the City of Florence, we will soon be presenting our State of the City message and I assure you that it will be exciting.

That, however, is not what this message is about. As your Mayor, it is easy to become inwardly focused on the success of our community and to forget about some of the issues that our state is facing. With election time just around the corner, it is also easy to get lost in all the rhetoric from both extremes and simply not focus on what some of these issues mean to you and to me.

Now, in recent weeks our legislators and prospective legislators are showing up in our community to let us know how concerned they are about local issues, but it seems that concern disappears shortly after election time. Shortly following the November election, the 2019 legislative session will convene and address some 2,000 bills that will be introduced under the guise of making Oregon a better place for all of us.

Now first, I must tell you that I am not a legislative expert, nor will I ever be, so whatever I tell you here is filtered by my own perception and pretty much limited to what I am told by others. That said, in recent political forums, such as the League of Oregon Cities Convention and the Oregon Coastal Caucus I have been enlightened with what I believe will be the legislative priorities in the coming

2019 legislative session. Four of the top priorities will be:

- Public Employees Retirement System unfunded liability has risen to \$25.3 billion (Yes *billion*) That is a debt that each of us owe and will someday have to be paid. It is expected that some form of revenue bill will be enacted to begin to reduce this debt.
- Cap and Trade: a bill that pur-

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Joe Henry Mayor of Florence

ports to reduce carbon emissions however estimates are between \$800 million and \$2.0 billion in revenue to the state which will come from our largest businesses and in turn will be passed along to the consumer.

In short, the state will sell carbon coupons to businesses and if they don’t use all their allocation they can in turn sell their coupons to other companies to be used to pollute the atmosphere and you and I will pay.

- Property tax reform. Regardless of what they tell you, there will be legislation introduced to level the playing field and tax all real estate at fair market value rather than assessed value.

I am pretty sure that no one’s taxes will go down and that it will adversely affect many Oregon property owners.

- I listened to a leader of one of the houses emphatically state that the session will not end without some form of Sales Tax.

These are only a few of the top legislative priorities being talked about by your legislators but there are many more bills that will be considered.

Almost without exception the have

a price tag and the ones that will ultimately pay that bill will be you and me.

Take for example the \$5.3 billion transportation bill that was passed last year under an “Emergency Provision” that allowed this bill to be passed without being on the ballot. Did you notice a new bite on your paycheck on July 1st titled “Oregon Trans Tax”?

Have you purchased a new car and noticed a \$500 excise (sales) tax or a new bicycle with a similar tax? Soon, your license fees and other fees will increase substantially.

I know nothing about this organization but according to the Taxpayer Association of Oregon Foundation, but this is how Oregon ranks compared to other states:

We are No. 5 on spending: Oregon state spending per person is the fifth-highest in the nation, outpacing the national average by more the 55 percent, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The most recent information from the Census Bureau shows state and local government in Oregon spends \$11,300 per person, which is about 7 percent higher than the average across all states.

Over the same time period, personal income in Oregon was 8 percent lower than the national average.

If this is in fact true, shouldn’t we be asking our legislators why? And what is being done about it? Not just our elected officials but those who are seeking election to those positions?

I think that it is time to ask some serious questions before we become the #1 spending state in the nation.

LETTERS

IGNORANCE IS MORE COSTLY THAN EDUCATION

That slogan has been around for years, but it still resonates today.

It’s certainly what we citizens of Florence should think about as we consider support for our current school bond measure. Our current high school was built almost 50 years ago, and not only does it fail to meet current building safety codes, it does not provide our students and teachers the environment they deserve ... and our community needs.

We will be voting “yes” on Bond Measure 20-291.

—Carole and Mike Babcock
Florence

COMPELLING WORDS FROM A CANDIDATE

Last week, I heard some compelling statements made by a candidate running for office:

- 1) Politicians do not want to solve the problem; they only want to benefit from them
- 2) When politicians oppose anything, they call it a lie.
- 3) Don't believe in career politicians.

The man who made those statements was Art Robinson, who is running for U.S. Representative form Oregon.

In my opinion, he is a brilliant and humble man.

For those reasons, I am voting for him.

— Lita Edwards
Florence

TEMPERMENT ALONE SHOULD DISQUALIFY KAVANAUGH

I watched the entirety of the Senate hearing on Sept. 27, and heard the testimony of both Christine Blasey Ford and Brett Kavanaugh. Whether you found Dr. Ford’s testimony credible or not is a personal decision that each person must make.

I found Judge Kavanaugh's testimony disturbing. Judges are supposed to be impartial and non-partisan. He showed he is neither. Judge Kavanaugh was belligerent, loud, arrogant and entitled, just as Dr. Ford described him during his alleged attack on her.

He was rude and combative with the Democratic senators and generally disrespectful and inappropriate.

If Judge Kavanaugh did not attack Dr. Ford, he has a right to be angry — but as a man in his position, he should know better how to express that anger.

The FBI investigation is a re-opening of Judge Kavanaugh's background check. It won't provide any conclusions regarding the alleged sexual assault, but it will provide additional facts which senators can use to make a wise and informed decision as regards this nominee.

If he is truly innocent of the attack, he should welcome this.

In my opinion, based on Judge Kavanaugh's behavior at the hearing, he lacks the impartiality and the judicial temperament to sit on the bench of the highest court in America.

That alone should be enough to

disqualify him.

—Marybeth Marenco
Florence

WILL MISS WORKING WITH PATIENTS IN FLORENCE

It is time for me to retire from medical practice in Florence. There is a conflict for me in leaving because I am aware of how difficult it is for patients to access care given the limited availability of physicians and the increasing struggles in navigating the current medical system.

I will miss the wonderful staff and my colleagues in the Department of Orthopedics. As a group, they have consistently tried to do their best by patients.

I will miss the staff and clinicians at Peace Harbor who try to meet the needs of the community, fighting for small successes in the face of financial and corporate forces that work to diminish the human connection and dedication that is at the core of excellent medical care.

Mostly, I will miss you — the patients — who have shown incredible courage and coping skills in the face of major life challenges. Although often seeing you in pain has been distressing, overall it has been a joy to work with you.

Successes we have achieved together in improving your health and life constitute my greatest satisfaction.

—Michael Weinstein, MD
Florence

WHERE TO WRITE

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