

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)

Is Oregon truly a vampire that feeds on taxation?

(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.*)

Florence Mayor Joe Henry might consider asking State Legislators different questions if he has serious concern about perceived levels of tax burden in Oregon. His Guest Viewpoint ("Time to Ask Serious Questions of State Legislators," Oct. 3) appeared to summarize a stated fear that we may become "the #1 spending state in the nation."

Florence residents might also ask if his apparent focus on per-capita "spending" risks an example of a city "pot" calling the state "kettle" black?

The most recent research available through the Oregon Legislative Revenue Office, states: "Oregon's taxes are near the national average. Taxes are 25th highest on a per-capita basis and 21st highest on a percentage of income basis."

See page A4 of Oregon Public Finance: Basic Facts: Research Report #1-18, published last February (link is www.oregonlegislature.gov/lro/Pages/publications.aspx.)

Many reasons exist such that a mayor may want to distinguish general spending levels from taxation levels. The City of Florence, for example, appears to have significant spending beyond its own tax revenue. The city receives significant funding from the state, in many forms.

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Rand Dawson retired healthcare industry lawyer

A cursory assessment appears to show over \$5,270,000 of such funds in the current city budget — a significant proportion of the 2017-2019 budget total of \$14,754,000. Similarly, statewide, Oregon provides over \$6.7 billion dollars to supplement city revenues of \$21 billion, according to recent Census Bureau data.

Should residents criticize the mayor, councilors or city staff for their efforts in obtaining such funding for the benefit of local residents? If one focused on rating cities by "per-capita" spending, would that not be the impact?

Likewise, should the mayor seriously

criticize state legislators for similarly obtaining significant funding — beyond state tax revenue — which is then passed to cities, or school districts, or for Medicaid or similar uses?

Such a criticism is implicit in merely looking at state ratings by per-capita "spending." Nation wide, recent Census Bureau data states: "Federal dollars made up just under one-third of state revenues — 30 percent."

Have not 'local' or city leaders benefited from the state undertaking to provide Medicaid health support for over 1 million lower-income and disabled residents of cities through the state? For the 350,000 additional Oregonians having Medicaid coverage because of Affordable Care Act (ACA) expansion, the state paid 5 percent of costs for that population during 2017, 6 percent during 2018, and 7 percent through 2019.

The rest was matched by federal funds.

Yet this all totals as state "spending" — having no bearing to direct state tax burdens — but jointly representing the highest element of the state budget: about 22 percent.

LETTERS

DAUGHTER COULD NOT HAVE NAVIGATED CURRENT SCHOOL

Think of the many modern public buildings in Florence that provide benefits to residents and visitors: An Events Center with auditorium, full stage and conference rooms; a state-of-the-art hospital and medical buildings; a beautiful library; a senior center for activities and lunch; a fire and rescue station with large meeting rooms; a new public works building; a city hall currently being grandly remodeled; a justice building that houses the municipal court and police department; Lane Community College; and the Siuslaw schools.

Then look inside Siuslaw High School.

I did.

I looked around in disbelief, picturing my daughter trying to navigate in her wheelchair; so many obstacles, so many inaccessible areas.

I am proud to say she graduated from Sacramento State University but could not have successfully attended Siuslaw High School.

If we want to attract young professional staff with families to work in the field of health care, education and many thriving businesses in Florence, we must provide quality schools that all children can attend.

I will be thinking of others like my daughter when I vote "yes" on the Siuslaw Schools Bond.

—Sue Jones
Florence

PRESIDENT TRUMP PLAYS GOLF

The Five Ws: Who, What, When, Where and Why. As an independent voter, these are the questions I ask myself when trying to get answers on political issues.

These issues can be simple or complex. Case in point: Recently, a few folks have written to the Siuslaw News saying that Donald Trump has played golf 25 percent of the time he's been in office.

I found this figure hard to accept.

At the time of research, I checked over 13 golfing websites. Once I eliminated the political chaff, Trump visited his golf resorts approximately 157 times. He actually played 18 holes of golf less than six times. He played 2 to 3 holes less than 11 times.

So what was he doing on the other 140 visits? No one knows, but in my opinion he was taking care of the business of running the country in com-

fortable surroundings.

I also applied the Five Ws to the alleged 4,000 to 5,000 lies that are claimed on statements he's made. I didn't read through every statement so I don't know what they all say. But in my sampling of 100, they were simply a difference of interpretation based on political viewpoints.

During this search I focused on who was interpreting the statement. Was it friend or foe? Naturally, all the the negative interpretations I found were made by his foes and mostly taken out of context.

You know, one man's lie can be another man's truth.

This same Five Ws approach I used to research Trump's illegal immigration policy vs. Obama's illegal immigration policy. I also used it regarding the Senate Supreme Court hearings of Judge Kavanaugh vs. previous senate hearings on Thomas, Bork and Garland.

I've also used this technique on the upcoming Kate Brown vs. Knute Buehler race. I believe every voter should do this.

If only a little time researching was spent before writers regurgitate the late-night talk show host rhetoric or rely on op-eds by known Trump mainstream media foes, we all might become better informed voters.

—Michael J. Davis
Florence

SINGLE CARRY-OUT PLASTIC BAGS

In regard to a most informative article in the Siuslaw News ("EMAC Proposes to Curb Single-Use Plastic Bags" Oct. 6), a thank you to Mark Brennan and EMAC Chairwoman Maureen Miltenberger for conveying what the misuse of these bags do to our environment.

Just think: The average use of these bags is only 12 minutes, with only 1 in 200 being recycled. I didn't realize other major, and some small, U.S. cities and five major countries "... have instituted a major ban or fee for using a single-use plastic bag."

We can all buy those colorful, unique and inexpensive bags to use over and over. And, with no tax on groceries, it makes them all the more affordable in helping our environment.

I hope EMAC helps get the ban done.

—Rudy Kramer
Florence

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US?

I thoroughly enjoyed Mayor Joe Henry's Guest Viewpoint ("Time to Ask Serious Questions of State Legislators," Oct. 3), regarding Oregon on the road to be the No. 1 spending state in the nation. However, he left out one key component in that discussion: The impact Oregon's legendary land use system has on our state, both financially as well as constraining property owners.

Kudos to the City of Florence for partnering with NEDCO for grant dollars to lessen the impact of new development in the struggle to attain affordable housing (Siuslaw News, Sept. 26). The very fact that developers can receive up to \$75,000 *per unit* to offset development costs is a prime example of how our land use regulations and their financial burden are totally out of control.

The irony is that bonds through another state agency are funding this band aid approach. So, more state-level bureaucracy; adding more to the PERS obligation for the rest of us to pay — all in order for communities struggling with affordable housing to solve their need.

Don't get me wrong, I applaud our Florence staff and elected officials for taking advantage of this opportunity for our community. But what about the rest of us that don't get that opportunity?

Here's an idea: Let's lessen the regulatory constraints by replacing the existing land use law, or at least re-writing it, so it helps all of us and levels the playing field. It will help private homeowners, renters, business community, i.e., *all* manner of property ownership across the board.

I had the opportunity years ago to address attendees at Senator Arnie Roblan's first Coastal Caucus Economic Summit, and shared a similar message with the local, county and state personnel. They didn't like hearing that message and I was never invited back. One state representative (from another Oregon district) told me point blank that no one in Salem will address the Oregon land use system because it's a sacred cow.

I think its time we slaughtered that cow so the rest of us can eat at the table.

—Cal Applebee
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 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 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:
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WHERE TO WRITE

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