

Siuslaw News

P.O. Box 10

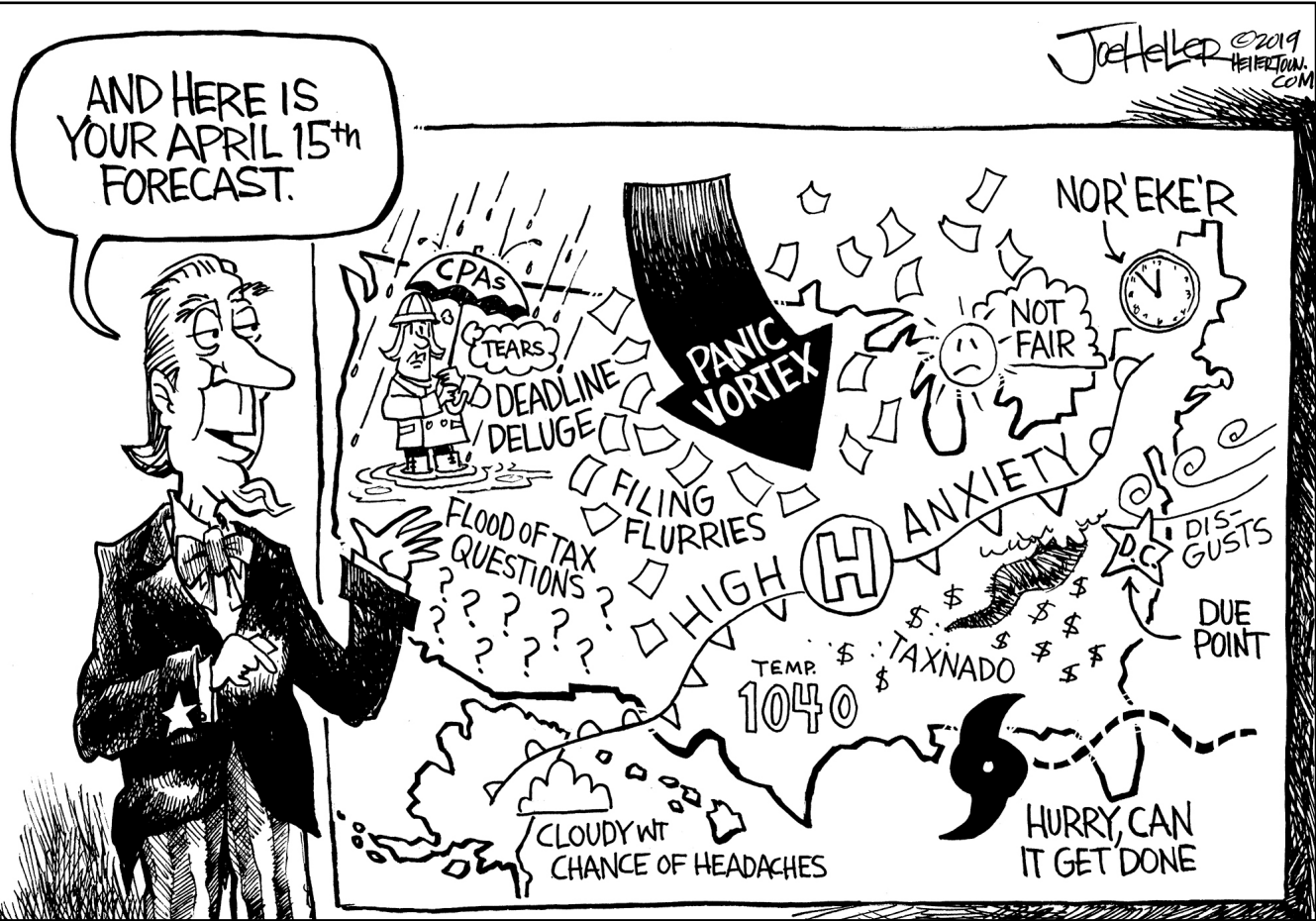
Florence, OR 97439

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)



LETTERS

WOULDN'T THE WATER TOWER BE A BETTER CANVAS?

It is incongruous to me why our Public Art Committee (PAC) would go far afield to find an artist. We live in Florence because we don't want the hassle of big city life.

We certainly don't want a frazzled city dweller's version of our fair city.

A simple beautification project would be to paint the Spruce Street water tower. It is a common topic among friends as to why the city neglects it so.

It could be painted three times around the circumference, so it can be read from Highways 101 and 126:

“Florence — America's Most Beautiful Small Town”

I'd be willing to bet that we could get the paint, labor and equipment donated.

Failing that, a subscription to get 'er done for a damned site less than \$48,000!

—Ian Eales
Florence

KENT SHOULD REPRESENT ZONE 4 ON LANE ESD

I'm voting for Nora Kent for Lane Educational Service District Board. I devoted 32 years of my professional life to teaching students from kindergarten through middle school in private and public schools in New York and California.

Here's why I believe Nora Kent is the best person to fill this important position:

1. Nora is a lifelong educator who has experience in alternative programs with students of all ages and backgrounds.

2. She has developed programs for students and families of varying needs.

3. She is currently an instructor at LCC Florence where she teaches GED testing prep and Adult Basic Skills.

4. She has organized a number of community events to raise our awareness about issues facing our students and families.

5. Nora supports our schools through promoting levy and bond measures.

6. She will be a voice for the needs of rural school districts including ours.

In Kent's own words she states, “I want all of our students in Lane County to have the opportunity to succeed.”

Given this information alone, I urge your support of Nora Kent by voting for her to represent Zone 4 on the Lane ESD Board.

—Judith Preisler
Florence

Some help and hope for Oregon's suicide crisis

(Editor's Note: This editorial is part of a week-long focus by media sources throughout Oregon on the subject of the state's rising suicide rate among teens and the elderly. It was originally published in The Oregonian on Sunday and shared as a statewide collaborative from April 7-14. For its part, Siuslaw News has teamed up with Newport News-Times, the Cottage Grove Sentinel and The Creswell Chronicle in a month-long, four-part collaborative series focusing on different components of suicide in Oregon. The second part of that series is on A1 of this edition, contributed by Stephanie Blair of the News-Times.)

That 825 Oregonians died in a single year by suicide is a sobering assessment of our collective ability to help those who feel trapped in their own despair.

That it's such a hidden statistic, however, is an embarrassing reflection of our collective ignorance. Hundreds more people died by suicide in Oregon in 2017 than by traffic crashes, firearms or drug overdose. The suicide rate in Oregon is well above the national average, as it has been for the past three decades. Yet this undeniable public health issue has lacked the public attention and sustained outcry that it desperately needs.

Some of that stems from the stigma that persists around mental illness and suicide, shutting off conversation or even acknowledgment that a suicide has occurred. Some may stem from the fear of encouraging “copycat” behavior. Regardless of the motivation, however, our families, schools, communities and media

organizations have too often chosen the easy way out by simply keeping silent. Meanwhile, the suicide rate in Oregon and the United States has continued to climb.

Clearly, silence hasn't worked.

This week, news organizations around the state are collaborating to bring attention to the problem of suicide, report on populations at highest risk and share resources on how to prevent it. While the “Breaking

the Silence” project won't necessarily provide answers, it aims to start a statewide effort to confront it. Using responsible reporting practices that examine, not sensationalize, suicide, these stories can provide the common understanding, motivation, tools and questions that can help the community mobilize against this public health threat.

The data show just how widespread a problem this is. Oregon's suicide rate is 14th highest in the country and suicide is the second leading cause of death for those ages 10 to 34, according to the Oregon Health Authority. One fifth of those who kill themselves are veterans. More than half the deaths are caused by firearms.

While those statistics may seem daunting, they can also provide possible avenues where leaders can make a difference. Such data, in the aggregate, can help build support for increased funding for veterans' health services or provide tangible prevention options, such as the 2017 law

that allows family members and police officers to petition a court to take away firearms from someone at risk for suicide or causing harm to others.

We also need to recognize that Oregon's youth are struggling. Nearly 9 percent of eighth-graders self-reported having tried to kill themselves one or more times in the previous year and nearly double that percentage considered it, according to Oregon Health Authority data.

That children just entering their teen years would even think of suicide as an option should be its own open-and-shut case for more counseling, support and training in schools. And health officials can lead by providing guidance for families, schools, health departments, physicians and nonprofits on how to talk about suicide both as a general public health issue and on an individual basis.

This is not an insurmountable problem. Resources already exist and show that crisis counseling lines and other outreach efforts make a difference. Even friends and family members can take steps to help a loved one who is struggling by asking a series of questions about whether they have wished they were dead, thought about killing themselves or made any plans toward killing themselves.

But it requires the willingness to have those uncomfortable conversations in the first place.

The effects of suicide reach far beyond the individual. The injury is borne by families, friends, communities and the public at large.

It's long past time to start treating it that way.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By the Editorial Board of The Oregonian

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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:
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TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213
www.whitehouse.gov

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