

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)



American flag still represents notion of a people undivided in the pursuit of freedom

It was 242 years ago yesterday that the Second Continental Congress passed the Flag Resolution, officially adopting what would be the first of 27 versions of what we recognize as the symbol representing the United States.

Less than two months later, on Aug. 3, 1777, soldier reinforcements arriving at Ft. Stanwix from Massachusetts brought news of Congress's adoption of a flag consisting of 13 stripes alternating red and white, along with a smaller blue field with 13 white stars "representing a new constellation."

In that moment, while under siege from the British, American soldiers cut up their shirts into white stripes while officers' wives offered their flannel petticoats for red stripes.

The blue cloth coat of Capt. Abraham Swartwout was utilized for the Union rectangle adorned with 13 stars — all sewn together in haste amid cannon fire before being hoisted in a symbolic gesture representing a unified people under the United States of America.

Over the course of more than two centuries, Americans have waved our flag in celebration, hoisted it in

defiance, wrapped themselves in it to represent achievement on behalf of all Americans, and draped it over those who have sacrificed their lives for the values our flag represents.

At the same time, some have even burned it in protest — an act that I personally find disgraceful and more than ironic, considering it is the very ideal our flag represents that affords them that freedom to begin with.

Admittedly, as a kid, I

ment to something — in this case, the American ideal of a democratic republic founded on rights and freedoms that support the pursuit of happiness.

I have no problem aligning myself with those principles.

And while "under God" is also a part of our flag's pledge, every American has the right to eliminate it if they choose, in the same way they have the freedom to practice a religion — or, if they so choose, practice no religion at all.

Again, it's because of what the flag represents that Americans — unlike many living in countries throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa and parts of Europe — have the right to make their own choice.

In the same way that I didn't think about these things as a kid, we seem to be thinking less and less about them as a nation.

However, today's lack of appreciation stems more from a growing indifference or apathy rather than a lack of childhood perspective.

While I recognize we are far from perfect as a nation, the American flag itself isn't about representing a particular poli-

cy, election, partisanship, event or individual in history.

It symbolizes the ideal of freedom, the hope afforded by that freedom, and our commitment as Americans in the endless pursuit of both.

Ultimately, it stands for more than the past or even the moment we live in; it's a reminder of the infinite notion of freedom.

According to the New York State Historical Association, Capt. Swartwout was eventually reimbursed with a voucher for the use of his coat in the creation of our nation's first make-shift flag.

Though the exact amount is disputed by scholars, the one thing they — and I'd like to believe all Americans — can agree on is that the ideal which inspired the hasty patchwork of that first flag is something immeasurable. Yesterday, as we recognize the American flag in ceremonies across our nation, I hope we considered the pledge to liberty and justice it represents, as well as the notion of a people undivided in their pursuit of freedom.

Even when that freedom includes not recognizing our flag at all.

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From the Editor's Desk Ned Hickson

LETTER

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING OUR GRADUATES

For the sixth straight year, our community has set a record for total dollars provided in local scholarships to graduating Siuslaw High School students.

This year, our students received \$244,950 in local scholarship funds, an increase of nearly \$12,000 over

last year's total. As a result of this widespread community support, many graduating SHS students will be able to attend colleges or trade schools when such post-secondary education would not otherwise be possible.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the community for giving so generously and thus making it possible for SHS graduates to

pursue their personal and professional goals.

We live in a very special community, and at no time is that more evident than at the annual scholarship awards ceremony.

Thank you for your amazing support!

—Steve Moser and Bob Orr
ASPIRE at Siuslaw High School

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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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