

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)



The dangers of co-mingling prisons, detention centers and politics

In an interview last May on NPR, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen compared the Trump administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy to the same policy experienced by incarcerated Americans every day in this country who are separated from their children. "If you break the law, you will be prosecuted. It's no different than what we do every day in every part of the United States when an adult commits a crime," Nielsen said. "We're following that same policy at our borders."

And she's absolutely correct. In fact, we have a long history of state-sanctioned family separation that continues as a widespread practice today — particularly in our justice system, where approximately 2.7 million children have a parent behind bars.

And the fastest growing group of prisoners? Women.

According to a report by the Prison Fellowship, there has been a 14-fold increase of women in prison since 1970, and 80 percent of them are single mothers.

Whether guilty or inno-

cent, men and women often spend weeks, months and sometimes years in prison awaiting trial for non-violent crimes, losing their jobs, homes and custody of their children before they've even had a chance to plead their case.

The fact is, the current "law and order" approach isn't new either. It was

of all the children who entered into family detention facilities in that time were six years old or *younger*.

And that was before the "Zero Tolerance" posture first taken by past Attorney General Jeff Sessions, which compounded the problem by demanding enforcement without the necessary resources to do

CCA have had facilities closed in the past (Artesia Detention Center and Hutto Detention center, respectively) due to allegations of abuse and poor living conditions — only to re-open somewhere else with a government contract.

In a new paper written by Oregon State University sociology professor Brett Burkhardt and published this week in the journal *Criminology & Public Policy*, Burkhardt draws a clear line connecting private-run prisons and detention centers to politics and special interests.

In it, Burkhardt notes that "The big picture view of this industry shows that companies operating private prisons and detention centers shape politics and policies..."

While I think we all agree that our borders should never be a revolving door, particularly in an era with the constant threats of global terrorism and illegal drugs, one must ask who stands to benefit most from an ever-expanding system of prisons and detention centers.

And whether tax dollars given to corporate prisons and detention centers is money well spent — or money spent in order to pretend that all is well.

echoed by President Nixon in the late 1960s, as well as Presidents Reagan and Clinton and their attempts to combat the drug war by creating massive prison expansions to keep up with the demands of higher incarceration rates.

In addition to prisons, in 2014 the U.S. government massively expanded its detention centers for immigrant families. According to reports from the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), between October 2014 and September 2015, the U.S. government apprehended 68,334 children accompanied by a parent at the southwest border — a 361 percent increase since the previous year. Keep in mind that more than half

so humanely — a situation that still continues.

But this is not a problem that is unique to the Trump administration, although its poor handling of it has made it uniquely terrible.

When the Obama administration began detaining families in large facilities back in 2014, for-profit correctional corporation GEO Group answered the call with the Karnes Detention Center in Texas, which broke ground at that site last year in order to double its capacity.

Another detention center was opened by Correction Corporation of America (CCA) in 2015 that holds 819 mothers and 1,000 children in a lock-down style facility.

Both GEO Group and

From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

LETTERS

STAND FOR OUR FREEDOMS BEFORE WE LOSE THEM

I am so disappointed with the Siuslaw News for allowing Martin Cable to include in his letter to the editor a despicable lie about President Obama.

Obama's exact words concerning the Constitution in his farewell speech were: "Our Constitution is a remarkable, beautiful gift. But it's really just a piece of parchment. It has no power on its own. We, the people, give it power. We, the people, give it meaning. With our participation and with the choices that we make, and the alliances that we forge. Whether or not we stand up for our freedoms. Whether or not we respect and enforce the rule of law. That's up to us. America is no fragile thing. But the gains of our long journey to freedom are not assured."

Mr. Cable twisted and changed these words and took them out of all context to suggest that President Obama does not respect the constitution. It is President Trump who cherry-picks the Constitution to suit his agenda (or maybe he really doesn't know what it says, though he took an oath to defend it).

He apparently doesn't care for the First Amendment, which protects a free press and freedom of speech (since he threatens journalists with libel, calls for sanctions against "Saturday Night Live" for its satire of him and suggests that peacefully protesting football players "maybe shouldn't be in the country"); or the Fifth Amendment, which guarantees due process (since he seems to be in favor of targeting the families of terrorists, wants to deny immigrants due process); or the Eighth Amendment, which prevents cruel and unusual punishment (he has expressed great enthusiasm for waterboarding); or Article I, which enshrines the separation of powers (as he attacks the judiciary when they won't do his bidding, usurps the powers of Congress when they won't do his bidding, and suggests the whole system of checks and balances must be changed because it restricts his power).

Our constitutional democracy is under attack on multiple fronts from this man-who-would-be-king, while a complicit Senate enables and encourages his dictatorial impulses.

President Obama was right — it's time to stand up for our freedoms, before we lose them.

—Donna Mlinek
Florence

ABUSE OF POWER IN SALEM

It is obvious that the Democrat power structure in Salem will do whatever it wishes, regardless of public opinion. They can act this way because blind devotion to the party ensures their re-election no matter what they do.

The Cap and Trade issue is a matter that is so important to all Oregonians that the *public* should decide that issue at the ballot box. I am an independent voter and my wife is a life-long Democrat. We are both alarmed at the abuse of power issuing from Salem. This abuse is shown when 66 percent of voters said that undocumented persons should not be issued drivers licenses — yet Gov. Brown proceeds to overrule the public vote. By definition, that is dictatorship.

Also, the Gov. Brown wants to circumvent the 12th Amendment by requiring that Oregon's electoral votes be given to whomever wins the popular vote — another issue that should be decided in a general election.

These political dictates are undemocratic and demean the power of the public vote.

—Keith Kraft
Florence

STAND FOR OUR FREEDOMS BEFORE WE LOSE THEM

I am a 10-year resident of Florentine Estates. I wish to respond to complaints from some of our residents during the recent City Council meeting.

Several years ago, the FEHOA Board responded to numerous requests by homeowners and heirs of owners to have a means by which

the contents of homes could be liquidated. Many times, this was needed due to older residents needing to use assets to finance personal care at the end of their lives. Other times, heirs were unable themselves to remove contents of a home, or simply did not need what loved ones had left behind.

The board, after much discussion, determined that the only kind, compassionate and sensible solution was to allow estate sales.

Sales are limited to one time only per owner and must be conducted by a licensed outside party. There are strict regulations about traffic, parking and hours, which are frequently reviewed and amended as needed by the board.

A very tiny fraction of owners have attempted to eliminate these sales from the start. They represent fewer than 10 of the the 440 lots in Florentine Estates.

For years now, they have demanded to be heard over and over at meetings and are not willing to hear the other side or budge an inch from their position. Now, we are at a point where threats have been made at estate sale personnel and board members, and our visitors have been treated unkindly. This is as sad as it is deplorable.

That is *not* who we are.

Multiple boards at multiple times have surveyed homeowners as to their wishes. Florentine owners are generally known to be considerate, kind, generous folks who care deeply about their neighbors. At each survey, we overwhelmingly see the need to allow estate sales, even if it is personally inconvenient for a day or two. I kindly ask the unhappy folks to consider the need and think ahead to the time when they may need an estate sale of their own.

I am not now — and never have been — an FEHOA Board member. But I am a proud and happy Florentine homeowner.

—Marta Daniels
Florentine Estates

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:
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
OREGON GOV. KATE BROWN 160 State Capitol 900 Court St. Salem, Ore. 97301-4047 Governor's Citizens' Rep. Message Line: 503-378-4582 www.oregon.gov/gov	STATE SEN. ARNIE ROBLAN (DIST. 5) 900 Court St. NE - S-417 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1705 FAX: 503-986-1080 Email: Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov
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