

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)

Protect each other with compassion, vigilance

(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.)

While binge-watching movies, here is a line that jumped out at me:

"I don't want to kill you and you don't want to be dead!"

We are living in extraordinary times. There's no event that has ever been a global threat to mankind until now. That's how real this battle is. Americans have become complacent because we haven't had to fight a war on our own soil since the Civil War.

The idea that the facts that have now turned into law somehow don't apply to you is simply stupid and selfish; we must all stick together and help each other.

Governor Brown has looked at the facts of our state preparedness and it's going to take more time to be prepared statewide. In being proactive and trying to "flatten the curve," the governor instituted the current stay-home policy into law, as did our city council.

If you break the law, you can be arrested for consequences much worse than a misdemeanor: your own illness and potential death. The reason we adopt-

ed the governor's policy was to minimize the spread of a killer virus.

Truth be told, if we band together now, we could hold the line because we are a small rural area.

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Joshua Greene
Florence City Councilor

Personally, I think we must all wear masks, preferably home-sewn from 300-600 thread count sheets and then decorative fabric on the outside. Old T-shirts or even a simple bandana helps. (Who doesn't want to dress up like a cowboy?)

Consider making some and donating them to friends and neighbors. (Here is a link to mask design: www.ci.florence.or.us/em/ppe-donations)

This will leave the N-95 masks for our critical care workers, public works employees, grocery clerks, gas station attendants and first responders who are on the first line every day.

Wash your hands and stay 6 feet away from others at all times when outside the home. Have a routine where you clean off your coat with disinfectant and then shower and put on your in-house clothes.

We all must be vigilant and clean our groceries before

bringing them into our homes. We are counting on each other to our part.

If you haven't yet, I implore you to change your behavior or you are endangering our entire community.

When we go out, all of us have to stay 6 feet away. No exceptions; it's the law.

Our region — from Deadwood to Dunes City, to north of town at Sutton Lake — equals nearly 18,000 people. Yet our local ICU has just 12 beds ready. Our medical staff would run the highest risk if too many folks were to become infected. So, let's do all we can to slow or stop this killer from spreading through the Florence area and Siuslaw region.

How would you feel if you were to discover that you've been infected for four days, then realized you had infected someone close to you who then became ill? What if they suffered permanent lung damage or even died?

In crime circles that is equal to involuntary man slaughter.

That's how real a responsibility we share — to ourselves and each other.

All of us must protect each other and help find solutions to live with grace, compassion and remain vigilant in protecting one another as members of our community.

LETTERS

WE'RE BEING MARGINALIZED

In Lane County, there is Eugene/Springfield and then there is everyone else, the so-called "rural" residents.

As it has been reported in the *Siuslaw News* (April 4), if you live in Eugene/Springfield and you are diagnosed with COVID-19, your case is reported to the city and the city then has the data to identify medical needs.

However, if you live anywhere else in the county, it is a secret except that you live in "rural" Lane County. This must mean that all the other population centers in the county — not to mention those living in the countryside or "off-the gridders" — basically get those medical needs met by best guesses of the health departments involved.

The large population centers get the most attention. While it may seem that an old animosity between "Townies" and country folk is maintained as us-vs.-them, we need to understand the practicalities of assigning and distributing medical assets.

However, we here in Florence in rural Lane County can't help but feel marginalized; we don't count enough to be recognized.

The arguments around HIPAA and fears of victimization are specious.

Which towns have shown more caring communities that come together to help each other? Big towns where your neighbors are anonymous or small communities where you can know who needs help and see that help is given, often most freely?

One more thing: If you now know something about what it's like to be unrecognized and de-valued, think about how many voters would effectively lose their political voice if elections were purely based on popular vote totals.

We have the Electoral College so that we don't have less-populat-

ed states being marginalized. We hope Lane County will be making some needed adjustments in COVID-19 case reporting.

—John Culp
Florence

WHY NO PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR RURAL AREAS?

It seems the Lane County Public Health's public information officer is prevented from releasing possible life-threatening/saving information to the public in rural areas because of the Lane County Commissioners, including our own commissioner Jay Bozievich.

They have taken it upon themselves to inhibit the ability of local press and media to inform the general public.

Why is there a Lane County public information officer if they cannot disseminate life-saving information to all communities in Lane County and not just Eugene/Springfield?

Maybe they should save Lane County the expense of a position that cannot do the job it was designed to do?

—Michael Ksen,
Florence

CURRENT COVID-19 REPORTING PROTOCOLS BY LCPH ARE MEANINGLESS

After reading Saturday's *Siuslaw News* report and editorial, we urge the board of Lance County Commissioners to re-examine the county's COVID-19 disclosure policy.

We understand that detailed information about confirmed cases must be withheld to protect personal privacy, but protecting privacy by hiding confirmed cases in unnecessarily large populations and regions defeats efforts by health authorities and news media to track and inform the public of viral spread.

Disclosing the location of cases outside Eugene/Springfield as "rural Lane County" (120,000

residents in 4,200 square miles) is vague and meaningless.

Disclosures could be more specific and useful and afford equal or greater protection of patient privacy.

If the age and gender of the confirmed case is publicly released, the question is: How small can the population of a specific area be and still maintain the anonymity of a confirmed case described typically as "female in her 50s"?

Common sense tells us that Florence, at around 9,000 people, is large enough to prevent an individual from being identified from such a description.

In areas made up of small towns, a wider geographic region of several thousand residents could be defined by County Ambulance Service Areas, Fire Districts or other such boundaries currently existing — or even boundaries created so that any confirmed case is in a population large enough to protect a patient's identity based on an age/gender description.

A more elegant solution, suggested by *Siuslaw News* editor Ned Hickson, is to eliminate age and gender altogether. Though health authorities may need them for statistical analysis, the public and news media do not. Why not simply notify media of a confirmed COVID-19 case in such and such a city or area?

Or you may determine that a combination of the above is necessary for some regions.

Whether they live in Florence, Deadwood, or any other part of Lane County, residents have a right and need to know if confirmed cases are close to home. It affects how seriously people take the threat and their response to it, and that affects the spread.

—Rollin Olson and
Madelyne Barnett,
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 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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