

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)



Since becoming editor in 2016, one of my mantras has been "My door is always open" so people know they can stop by my office any time to discuss concerns, make suggestions, share their thoughts or simply have a cup of coffee and chat.

In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, my "door" has become messages on Facebook or phone calls forwarded from the office to my home each day.

Over the years, I've had many conversations with people on hundreds of topics and from a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints.

However, the phone call I received this past Monday morning has continued to reverberate through my mind for a couple of reasons.

First, because of the pain in the man's voice who called. And secondly, because the incident he described illustrates how

Compassion, not fear, has always defined our town

assumption in the absence of facts brings out our worst — and most fearful — side.

While the man, who is nearly 70, gave permission to use his name, I'm leaving it out because his identity doesn't matter; it's his experience that we need to remember.

shelter in place until he can return home.

Upon seeing his Washington plates, the woman began yelling at him in the parking lot, telling him to "go home" and stop putting everyone at risk, adding "I hope you die."

It was at this point in our phone conversation

can divide people.

In the weeks and months ahead, regardless of the level of information we receive regarding COVID-19 spread in our communities — whether confirmed cases in rural areas remain generalized or whether that information becomes more area-specific — we need to remember to be empathetic to one another.

Making assumptions or pointing fingers at others for the spread of a highly contagious virus is not a solution that will benefit our community.

What *will* benefit us is supporting one another by avoiding blame and assumption; protecting each other by following social distancing guidelines and wearing a facemask while in public spaces; and perhaps most importantly by each of us "keeping our door open" to sharing thoughts, concerns, suggestions and ideas.

Or simply to share a cup of coffee and a chat — things that have defined who we are as a community since well before the coronavirus, and will continue to define us now and in the future.

From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

Over the weekend while loading his vehicle after shopping at a local grocery store, a woman noticed his out-of-state plates..

The man, who has been here since November in his RV as part of an annual, months-long fishing trip he's been making to Florence for a decade, is from Washington and arrived well before the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S.

He has since been unable to return to Washington due to traveling restrictions and has received a special dispensation to remain at the campground he has been staying at since November — allowing him to essentially

that the man's voice broke.

"I love this town and have been coming here for many years," he told me. "It's my second home and I would never do anything to harm anyone here. At first, I was angry. Then I was just really hurt.

"She didn't know me or my situation. And she was telling me she hoped I would die."

Fear is something that can either bring us closer together as a community or force us apart. While I understand the woman's concerns for herself and our community, she is a cautionary example of how jumping to conclusions or assumptions due to a lack of information

LETTERS

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR POLITICS AS USUAL

I am totally disgusted with the way politicians are putting their agenda on the backs of all the people who are sick or have died from this virus.

Now is the time for the politicians to band together, as many citizens have, to solve this problem. It is not the time to use any action or statement to try to further their political ambitions.

There have been many mistakes made but this is the time to learn from those mistakes rather than fight.

Our own state has not handled this problem correctly. In a state, where, every time you turn on a radio or TV you are hit with a message "to prepare for emergencies," the state was woefully unprepared for this emergency.

If we had been hit with an earthquake we still would not have had proper medical equipment to treat the injured.

This is uncharted territory. When someone makes a statement, look at it but do not look for what you can say is *wrong* with it just to further your goals.

—Robert Smith
Florence

BOOMER IS RIGHT PERSON TO REPRESENT DISTRICT 9

Duane "Boomer" Wright is running for House District 9. I served on the Mapleton School Board while Boomer was superintendent of our district. As superintendent of schools, Boomer managed teachers, parents, state mandates and a large budget. Funding for schools comes with stipulations which require careful fiscal management.

Figuring out how to use funds requires careful planning and prioritization. Boomer Wright had those skills and did a great job in our district. He listened to our concerns and worked well with others.

Those same abilities will make Boomer invaluable when he goes to Salem to represent us. He'll re-

member prioritization and he'll chose carefully how to spend — or not spend — our hard-earned tax dollars.

It's exciting to think Boomer will represent us. I urge others to join me in voting for Boomer Wright — the person who has the experience to match the position.

—Randy Duval
Mapleton

CLEAVENGER FOR COUNTY'S DISTRICT ATTORNEY

I am endorsing a fantastic candidate for Lane County District Attorney, James Cleavenger. He is a man who will balance fairness and justice with his extensive experience in all facets of the criminal justice system.

He has worked for the courts, is a keen attorney, has been on the front line as a police officer in several jurisdictions, and has even stood up to corruption as a plaintiff and won.

An Oregon Peace Officers Association medal of honor recipient and current Oakridge police officer, James will include this vital experience as our next D.A. His integrity and commitment to transparency and fairness are resolute.

Cleavenger is hungry and excited about serving our county and will bring vigor, transparency and the progressive management I feel are sorely missed in this important office. I feel he will balance compassion and common sense with a toughness on crime — all while managing his staff brilliantly.

I encourage all Western Lane County residents to look at the facts and vote for the best candidate, who I believe is James Cleavenger.

—Michael J. Kello
Florence

MCLEOD-SKINNER FOR SECRETARY OF STATE

We are so fortunate to have Jamie McLeod-Skinner stepping up to the plate to run as a rural Democrat for Secretary of State. I met

Jamie when I lived in The Dalles when she ran against Oregon District 2 Congressman Greg Walden. During that race, Jamie traveled over 40,000 miles to connect with rural Oregonians to have conversations about what unites rather than divides us.

Even though the seat was retained by the incumbent, Jamie made an impressive showing and Greg Walden has decided to retire.

I am now a resident of Florence, and was proud to introduce Jamie McLeod-Skinner to Florence residents this last December. Her background and experience makes her uniquely qualified to assume the role of Secretary of State including:

1) Management of multi-million dollar projects to reconstruct schools in war-torn countries, providing community services, and improving organizations.

2) A Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) background with degrees in civil engineering (RPI), regional planning (Cornell), and law (U of O) with emphasis on natural resources, water, and Indian law, and

3) Government experience including frontline staff, management, an elected representative, and a union member.

With Jamie McLeod-Skinner as a candidate in the upcoming May 19 primary, Oregonians have the opportunity to vote for someone with proven leadership and experience in all areas of the role of Secretary of State.

McLeod-Skinner is the only candidate with grassroots support that does not accept money from mega-corporate PACS, the fossil fuel industry, or big pharma.

I encourage everyone to vote for Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Secretary of State. Not only is Jamie uniquely qualified to give a voice to Oregonians from every corner of the state, she listens, understands, and has a deep commitment to Oregon.

—Beverly Sherrill
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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WHERE TO WRITE

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