

## 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

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on these and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

## TAXING THE WEALTHY NOT THE SOLUTION

Here are my thoughts concerning Win Jolley's recent Letter to the Editor ("Tax the Wealthy," July 10) — Why don't you give 91% of your money to the government?

Most of the wealthy people I know are the hardest working people I've ever met. I often hear about "greedy corporations" and "corrupt executives." We have as many bad actors in government as we do in business. Large government bureaucracies are just as dangerous as "greedy corporations."

Aren't you being just as corrupt and greedy by

wanting to take money from the wealthy?

Who says that YOU or people with your attitude can spend it any wiser? It is my opinion that your tax solution is altruistic and well-intended, but it is socialism at its worst.

I don't really have a solution on how to jump start the economy. But I do know that we need a strong capitalist society and a strong democratic system of governance. Most of all, we need diverse, hardworking and moral citizens.

— Rory Hammond  
Florence

## DANGEROUS TRAFFIC

Dear City of Florence Council, and Planning Commission:

Yesterday (a Saturday), I walked my two dogs separately at a later time ... mid-morning instead of early morning, and my ex-

periences as a pedestrian at and near the intersection of Oak and 35th Street are the genesis of this letter.

There is a pedestrian crosswalk at that corner, it crosses 35th on the west side of Oak. Typically on the early walk, cars stop and wait for us, even anticipate our crossing and let us go.

But not yesterday. Why not? Because there was so much traffic coming — fast — east on 35th, and then turning west off 101 onto 35th toward Rhododendron, too. There could have been at least one major pile up if someone had tried to slow or stop.

So I want to say, despite the findings of the traffic impact study that was conducted in the off season a couple of years ago for the big subdivision coming in at 35th and Rhody ... Please plan for a traffic

light at that intersection!

Not so much to impact what happens by the time the cars get to Oak Street, where many coming east turn north to get to Fred Meyer's, but because if it was this busy yesterday, it's gonna be worse by the time that Burger King opens soon at 35th and 101. And, oh yes, by the time the subdivision is completed.

Please be proactive on this. Maybe Oak and 35th needs to become a 4-way stop, I don't know, but there are kids on bikes, joggers, lots of walkers of all ages with and without dogs. It is really very short sighted not to consider safety on one of the main streets in town, 35th, at its main intersections of Rhododendron Drive, and also with Oak Street.

Thank you,  
— Ivy Meadow  
Florence

## Only in Florence do you pay 3 times for an ambulance ride

(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.)

Did you know that you and your neighbors pay three times for an ambulance ride? We didn't know it either until we joined the board and budget committee of the Western Lane Ambulance District, which is the government-run ambulance service in our area. As Florence residents and taxpayers, we got involved in the ambulance district because it's a big annual bill for home and business owners in Western Lane County.

As we began to look under the hood, we discovered that this government-run ambulance district is an expensive boondoggle. We're asking you take action and join us in demanding that the government officials in charge allow us to vote whether we want to continue paying three times for an ambulance ride.

Government-run ambulance services are rare and expensive. Most Oregonians aren't forced to pay extra property taxes for an ambulance ride. The vast majority of communities across Oregon use private ambulance services.

The government-run ambulance service in our area is too expensive and managed poorly. We know first-hand from serving on the board and budget committee. This special ambulance district is \$3.4 million in debt to the State of Oregon. Western Lane Ambulance District charges us two extra property taxes on top of the normal charges for a single ambulance ride.

The government officials in charge of the ambulance services in Florence and surrounding areas in Western Lane County are promoting a hasty government merger between our fire department and the area's government-run ambulance service. It would lock in their ability to force us pay three times for an ambulance ride.

The reason why the government officials want this merger so badly is pretty clear: it's the money. Ambulance and fire district administrators and government employee unions who want this merger are banking on higher pay and benefits — and taxpayers will foot the bill.

Here's the dirty secret: ambulance district personnel here in Florence are paid the highest wages and benefits in the State of Oregon

when compared to their peers. The median salary for paramedics in the State of Oregon is \$45,747.

The starting wage at our ambulance service is \$62,208, which quickly increases to \$81,689 with six years of service. The ambulance service has three shift supervisors earning \$122,000 per year, supervising four to five other EMS personnel. That doesn't even include their plush health care and retirement benefits.

The government officials run-

## GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Larry Farnsworth,  
RJ Pilcher & Joel Marks

ning our fire and ambulance districts expect taxpayers will just pick up the tab with no questions asked.

Not everyone uses ambulance services. The most frequent users of our ambulance services are local seniors who are being nicked and dimed by our boondoggle ambulance district.

Local seniors on fixed incomes are forced to pay two extra property taxes and then whatever Medicare won't cover for a single ambulance ride.

Marion Patton, a 93-year-old Florence great-grandmother took a four-mile ambulance ride this year and was still charged \$250 by the government-run ambulance service despite taxpayers paying two extra ambulance taxes. That's not fair. The vast majority of Oregon seniors aren't forced to pay three times for ambulance rides.

Small business owners in our community who have been hobbled by COVID-related business restrictions and financial woes are forced to pay ambulance taxes too. It is ridiculous to force our local small business owners to fund absurdly high salaries and benefits for ambulance district employees that they cannot afford for their own employees.

If nickel-and-diming our local seniors and small business owners wasn't enough, the extra ambulance taxes we pay subsidizes out-of-towners when they need an ambulance ride while visiting.

Government officials are trying to pull the wool over our eyes. They say that merging the fire and ambulance districts will somehow make our lives better and less expensive.

Last month, administrators spent \$14,000 of our taxpayer money on

a biased push poll to convince us that this government merger is a good idea. The poll, conducted by a Salem lobbyist's firm, did not contain a single argument against the merger. The administrators spent \$14,000 of your money on a "poll" to tell them what they wanted to hear.

The ambulance district and fire district administrators also recently considered spending \$60,000 of our taxpayer money to hire a Washington State-based campaign operative to convince taxpayers to renew their ambulance tax levy on the November ballot. This irresponsible spending is just another example why this government-run boondoggle must end.

Push polls. Lobbyists. Campaign operatives. Plush salaries and benefits. Who knew that a rural government-run ambulance service could be such a sophisticated cash cow?

If this merger is such a good idea for taxpayers, the government officials should welcome a vote on their merger. But of course, we know that if voters had a say, we would reject their plan because it's ludicrous to pay three times for an ambulance ride. Try to name a time when the government delivered better health care than private-sector health care providers.

To avoid a merger vote, the government officials are proposing a "consolidation" of the fire and ambulance district operations that would amount to a virtual merger. This "consolidation" would lock in their ability to force us to pay three times for an ambulance ride. They will do or say anything to prevent a vote on this merger.

We have joined forces with local seniors, small business owners and taxpayers to demand that the government officials and the boards of directors of the fire and ambulance districts immediately halt "consolidating" operations and put the merger to a vote this November. That is the only ethical, legal and fair path forward.

We encourage you to visit [www.stopambulancetax.com](http://www.stopambulancetax.com) and sign the petition to demand a vote, because the government officials know that if voters had a say, we would reject their plan to continue to pay three times for an ambulance ride.

Together, we can support critical emergency services in our community that are focused on their mission and are fair to taxpayers.

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## Siuslaw News

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The *Siuslaw News* welcomes Letters to the Editor and Guest Viewpoints as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level. 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.

Email letters to [cmeyer@thesiuslawnews.com](mailto:cmeyer@thesiuslawnews.com)

## TO BE CONSIDERED FOR PUBLICATION:

Letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. In addition:

- Letters reflect the opinion of the writer. The *Siuslaw News* cannot verify the accuracy of all statements made in letters. Authors should ensure any information is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay, and include sources where possible.
- Letters have a 300-word limit and may be edited for grammar and clarity.
- Authors must sign their full name and include their street address (only city will be printed), as well as a daytime phone number and/or email address for verification. The person who signs the letter must be the actual author. *Siuslaw News* does not accept anonymous Letters to the Editor.
- *Siuslaw News* will not print form letters, libelous letters, business promotions or personal disputes, poetry, open letters, letters espousing religious views without reference to a current issue, or letters considered in poor taste. Letters also may not be part of letter-writing campaigns.
- Writers are limited to one published letter every two weeks.

## TO SUBMIT TO THE SIUSLAW NEWS:

Emailed submissions are preferred. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed.

The newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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