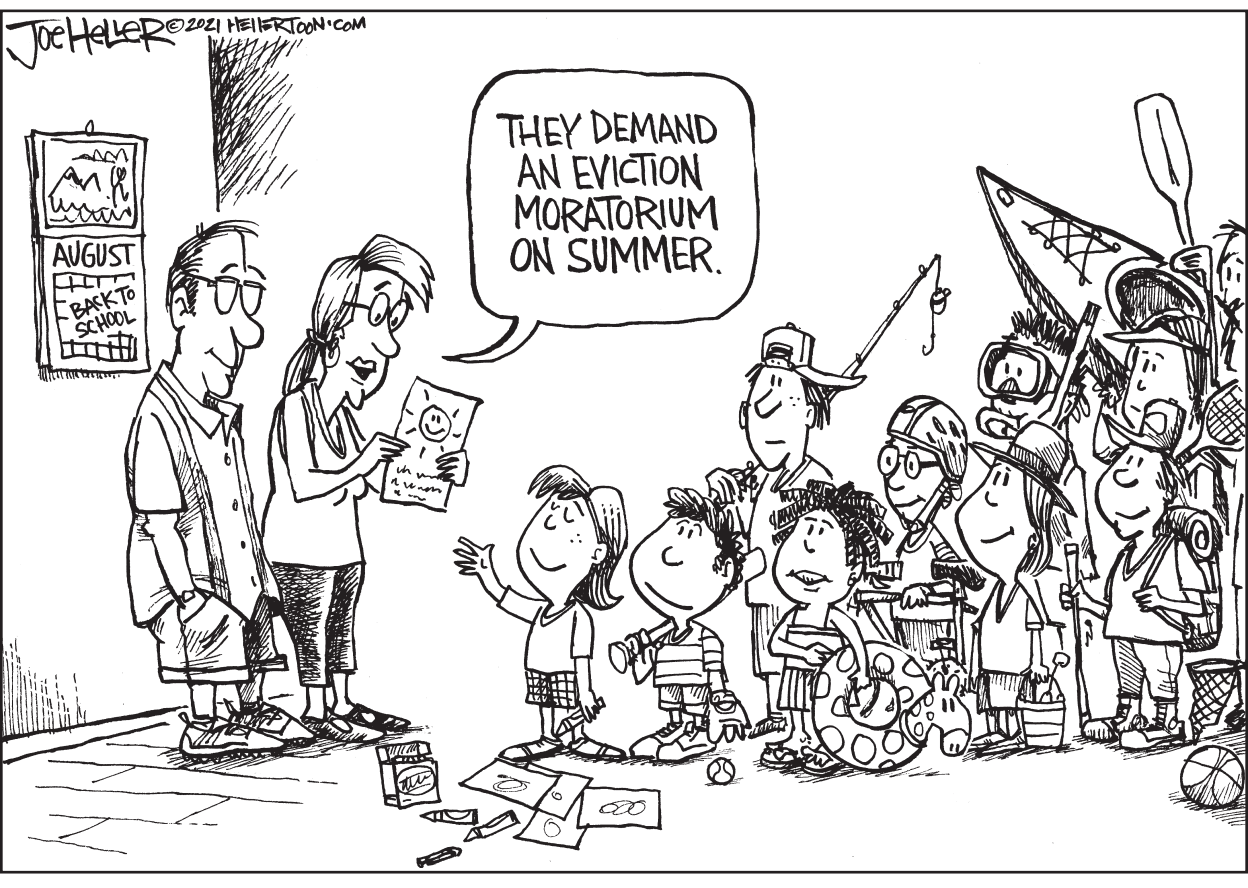


Siuslaw News
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Opinion

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)



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.)

UNCONSCIONABLE DECISION

As a longtime resident of Dune City, I was very disappointed to read about the city council's reaction to Councilor Bob Orr's very reasonable suggestion on mask protocols for in-person council meetings. Since all public school

and other civic administrators are willing to wear protective masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is unconscionable that our local elected officials would refuse to do likewise.

— Mike Babcock
Florence

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

To the "medical freedom" protesters and the anti-vaccine community: What will you do — what will you do when you or a loved one gets the virus (and you will)? Will you buy some ani-

mal dewormer, or will you call 911 and ask the ER doctor if it's not too late to get vaccinated as they put you on a ventilator?

The state's healthcare system is collapsing because of you.

People are going to die or be financially wiped out (perhaps you will be one of them).

So when your lungs fill up with fluid because of your "freedom," don't call the overburdened hospital — call hospice.

If that seems extreme, I have some skin in this game. My daughter is the

head of an ICU unit in the only hospital in a county in this state, and she has been the last human contact for dozens of people exactly like you — people dying convinced that COVID-19 doesn't exist.

It has affected her physically, mentally and emotionally, same with her staff, same with every healthcare worker in this country.

So fine, don't get vaccinated — just don't ask for help when you get sick.

— Edward Gunderson
Florence

Why I Support Public Over For Profit When it Comes to Ambulance Service in Western Lane County

(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 I have been on the Board of Directors for Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) for the last 16 years, this letter represents my opinion, not that of Western Lane Ambulance District or its Board of Directors.

Currently, WLAD collects property taxes to help support the emergency medical service (EMS) needs of Western Lane County. The total amount is \$0.77 per \$1,000 tax assessed value. Last year, WLAD taxes accounted for 7% of my property tax bill.

WLAD's service area is large. It runs from the Lincoln County line to the north to Douglas County line to the south. To the east, we service beyond Swisshome and Deadwood on Highway 36, and to milepost 26 on Highway 126. Switching to private for-profit ambulance service might reduce our property tax bill a little, but what would we lose?

The district is governed by a board of directors elected from our local area to represent the citizens of the district.

Private ambulance services are privately owned and operate to make a profit. They are not locally controlled by the people of the district.

With local control, we can respond to changing demands of the community. Would a private, for-profit entity be as responsive? Would they make decisions related to staffing levels, equipment and the like based on the need of the community, or on their need to make a profit?

The WLAD Board of Directors provides management oversight and establishes goals and expectations

for the district. Since its inception, the board has established high goals and service expectations. Meeting those expectations is not free. It requires an investment in both people and equipment. WLAD works to attract and retain

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Mike Webb
Community Member

highly skilled employees to serve the people of the district. The district's pay scale is on par with other Oregon Public agencies that provide fire and paramedic services. It needs to be to attract and retain the quality our taxpayers expect.

In addition, employees participate in ongoing training programs and take advantage of opportunities offered to improve skills and advance certifications. This encourages the some of the very best to come to work for WLAD, and to stay.

As a result of extensive training, the majority of Western Lane's Paramedics are certified as Critical Care Paramedics, which meets PeaceHealth standards for transporting high-risk patients to RiverBend in Springfield, Ore. With taxpayer assistance, the district is also provided modern, well-maintained ambulances and additional lifesaving equipment, tools considered necessary to the quality expectations of our taxpayers.

With the assistance of your tax dollars, the District is also able to maintain staff at levels needed to cover expected demand, even when the demand doesn't meet "profit" expectations. Normally, WLAD staffs three ambulances 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If it's quiet, staff remains in place and dedicated to responding when the need arises.

Our district is somewhat unique—when calls come in; they tend to come in bunches. Sometimes three ambulances aren't enough. There are times when the district has five calls at once. Working closely with Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, we have access to additional resources that help maintain service levels even during periods of extreme demand.

In 2020, our response time met standard of cover expectations, an industry response time measurement, 98% of the time. A nearby private ambulance provider met the same standard of cover expectations less than 80% of the time during the same period. Serving to this level may cost more, but I strongly believe it helps save lives.

Western Lane also serves the outlying areas of Mapleton, Deadwood, Swisshome and beyond. The upriver areas have volunteer fire departments with no full-time staff. WLAD works with the volunteers to provide training to help with them with initial medical response, but they still depend on WLAD to provide medical treatment and transport. Calls to the outlying areas of the district stretch resources, taking medics away from the population centers for extended periods of time. Our taxpayer dollars help the district cover the service area and help save lives. I would like to find a way to dedicate more service to the upriver communities.

Would a for-profit ambulance be able to cover the outlying areas? Would it cause an undue burden on the volunteer fire departments?

I'm not in favor of privatizing the ambulance service. Personally, paying under \$200 in annual property taxes to assure me and my family that we will have quality emergency medical service seems like a pretty good deal.

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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

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 suggested 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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