

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)

Oregon's nine tribes ask for voice in water planning

The following commentary summarizes a letter to Gov. Kate Brown from the leaders of Oregon's nine federally recognized Indian tribes. The letter was delivered Sept. 21, 2021.

Dear Gov. Brown,
We the nine sovereign tribes of Oregon thank you for your leadership in recognizing that our great state needs a water vision with at least a 100-year view. We are all dedicated to improving this beautiful place that we now call Oregon.

We have met as the tribes of Oregon to share and discuss our beliefs, concerns and needs for an Oregon water vision. Each of us is a distinct and unique sovereign, but we have all reached agreement regarding these issues.

Water is sacred. Water is life. Water is the heartbeat of our culture. Our understanding of these truths is based upon a legacy of survival and reliance on our Oregon oceans, rivers, and lakes. Whether we are planning for one year or 100 years, any water vision must, at its core, restore and protect cold, clean water.

As modern Oregonians we have not done this well. It is time for a step forward.

Our tribes and their fisheries lived together before Oregon existed. Our ancestors understood that they had to live in a balanced relationship with oceans, rivers, creeks, lakes, springs, marshes, and the flora and fauna that depend upon them. There was, and is, no other way to survive. Many modern Oregonians, however, act as if there are no consequences or

natural limitations of our water consumption, including groundwater.

Our people have seen the changes to our waters and our lands caused by mismanagement. There is a very real threat of extinction for steelhead, salmon, lamprey, suckers and other species in our oceans, streams,

GUEST VIEWPOINT

(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.)

rivers and lakes. We have known of these problems for a long time.

The extinction of these vital fisheries would equate to the genocide of our people and the end of our irreplaceable lifeways — because these resources form essential parts of who we are. The extinction of native fisheries is completely unacceptable to our nations. Whether intentional or not, we know our state is treading a dangerous path in several watersheds.

We have seen many planning processes come and go. If a plan fails to take on these issues, it will fail to create acceptable solutions. The truth is that the state and the tribes in Oregon know the main barriers to healthy oceans, rivers, and waters. We all have known for some time. What is missing is the will to change the way we do business. Our water and those who depend on it have paid the price.

As Oregon's "water vision" initiative moves forward, and to ensure

that our voices will be clearly heard in all that process might entail, the tribes request the following:

1. By executive order, establish a "Tribe-Agency Water Vision Task Force" to include representation from Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes and the nine state agencies identified in Oregon's Water Resources Strategy. The goal of this group would be to fully coordinate the vision and goals of a holistic water vision.

2. Collaborate with each of our tribes to develop specific recommendations for the water plan.

Each of our sovereign tribes may have unique, specific interests pertinent to water resources and/or water infrastructure within their ancestral areas.

All of Oregon's tribes are eager and willing to engage. The inclusion of Oregon's tribal voice in its water vision will ensure its comprehensive commitment to our collective human and ecosystem resiliency needs. Oregon's tribes hope your office can instruct all affected state agencies to reciprocate in kind.

All regards,
The nine sovereign tribes of Oregon

Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; Confederated Tribes of Siletz; Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Reservation; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians; Coquille Indian Tribe; Klamath Tribes; and Burns Paiute of Harney County

LETTERS

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WARNING ABOUT HOAX LETTERS

A friend suggested I send this to the Siuslaw News in an attempt to warn others.

Recently, I received a letter after the death of my husband asking for personal and billing information.

This is a cruel hoax happening here in Florence and all over the country. They are trying to get personal information from people and bilk them out of money they don't owe.

When I read the letter, it upset me and all I could think was, "How much money will it cost me to fight this?" because I knew there was nothing owed, having handled all the finances for 27 years.

Thankfully, I Googled it before I did anything else.

People should not respond or contact the letter writers — mine was from "Phillips & Cohen Associates, Ltd." — in any way.

Thank you in advance for anything you can do to protect others who are grieving.

— C.B.
Florence

END OF SUMMER AND REMEMBRANCE

Last weekend's rain threatened the end of summer on Sweet Creek. Autumn is descending upon us.

In Eastern Oregon, the golden carpets of wheat blanketing the rolling hills have been harvested. The Pendleton Round-Up is the big celebration of this area and culminates with the ever-popular Bronc Busting competition, which occurred last Saturday. It reminded me of a story of past systemic racism. It is not a sad story, like

George Floyd.

This is the story of George Fletcher and Oregonians' refusal to accept racism over fairness. George Fletcher migrated with his family from Kansas to Northeast Oregon during 1890. Though the Civil War provided freedom to Black people, the Oregon legislature stubbornly refused (for 58 years) to remove their laws forbidding them from owning property or residing in the state. The penalty was severe whippings, which were no longer carried out by the state; rather, Oregon's 25,000 Klan members upheld the spirit of the law.

Young George tried to attend the local school but was scorned, so he went to the nearby Nez-Pierce Indian Reservation. They schooled the young boy in their ways, teaching him their language and horsemanship. He became an extremely talented horseman and, at 21 years old, George entered the world champion saddle bronc event at the 1911 Pendleton Round-Up.

The grand prize was the coveted E.L. Powers & Sons saddle, with silver trim.

George easily worked his way to the finals where he so easily broke the first horse, Del, that the judges ordered he ride another bronc, Sweeney, the meanest of the bunch. The animal bucked wildly with

a limber George scratching and spurring the beast into a frenzy. The crowd screamed "Let 'Er Buck" until they were hoarse, knowing they had witnessed the clear winner. When the jury awarded the win to John Spain, who "pulled leather," the crowd erupted with displeasure at the clearly unfair racial pick.

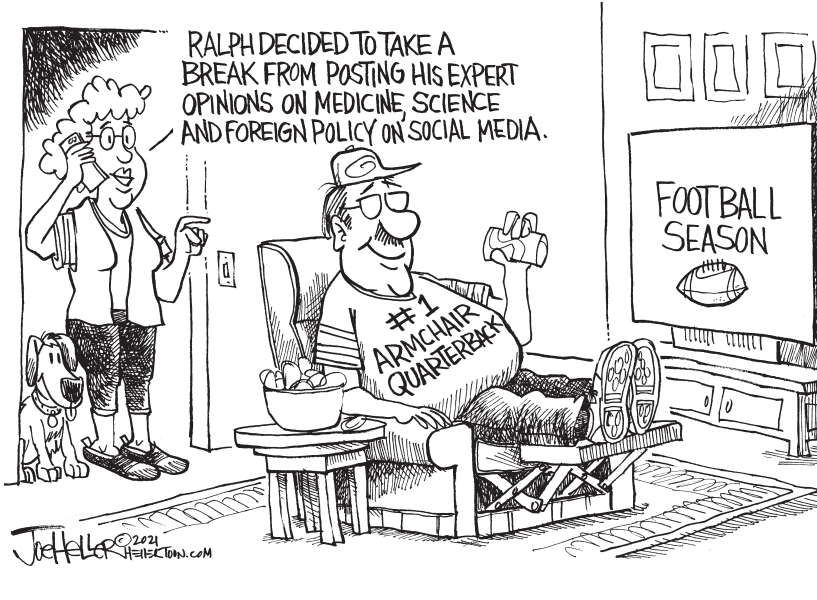
Many spectators booed and heckled until George reappeared. That's when the crowd started chanting: "People's Champion! People's Champion! People's Champion!"

The director of the Round-Up, Sheriff Til Taylor, approached George Fletcher and snatched his hat from his head before disappearing into the crowd. Sheriff Taylor had cut the hat into pieces selling them to George's supportive fans. Soon the sheriff reappeared and presented George with over \$700 cash and officially declared him the "People's Champion."

George Fletcher was able to purchase a prized silver laden saddle, with enough money left over to buy a new hat!

Back then, as with today, even when the authorities embrace racism, the Oregon crowd rejects it.

— Bill Shepard
Mapleton



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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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