

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)

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Siuslaw News

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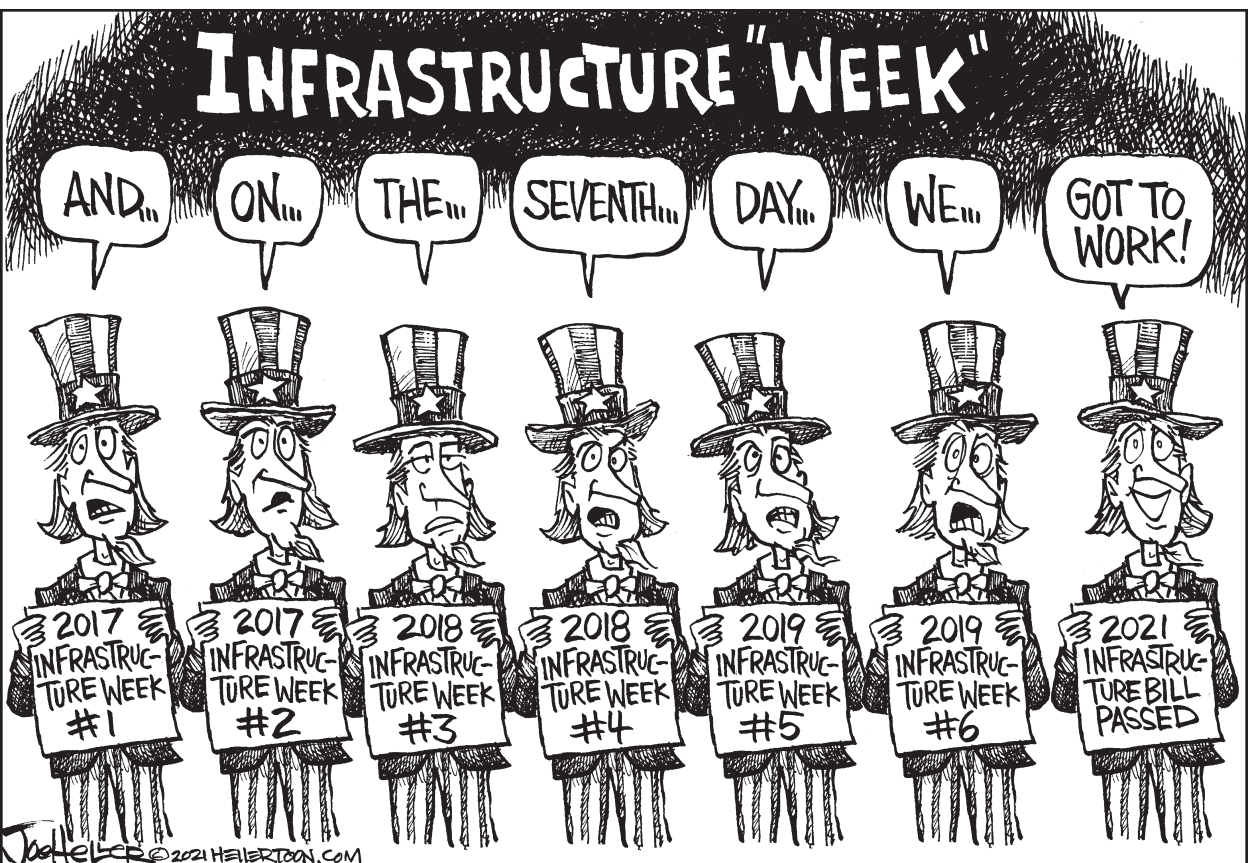
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LETTERS

(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.)

IDEALS OF EDUCATION

Oh, our public schools! There have been varied attacks — honorable, or not, based on legitimate concern for children first, or not — continuing a long effort to dismantle or weaken them.

In all, it seems you are either a supporter of public schools and the aim to educate all children. Or you're not.

Public education remains a key institution of our shared civic life. In addition to education, public schools provide kids food and services they would otherwise lack. They support learning and physical challenges some kids have. They offer enriching experiences — including art, music and social engagement — beyond the reach of each and every family.

The idea of a free education for all children, guided by experts considering the highest and best for all, and developing standards for what is taught, how it's taught, and when and where, was long ago established as a benefit for each and every one of us. To sustain this, it requires a united and prolonged effort of civility and support, spanning generations. An educated population tends to contribute more to society than those lacking basic skills.

I chose public school for my kids. I shopped and compared and found no great academic or social advantage to private schools in my area at that time—Palmdale, California, 1990s.

I wanted my kids to experience the world as it really is. A wide variety and diversity has been my exposure to this world. Also, I wanted every child to be given an opportunity to learn, gain the skills they would need to compete for jobs, understand and consider well this planet and humankind's potentials, patterns, and history, and discover the good that is available to them here in this moment. I wanted them to be equipped to deal with this life and all it takes to survive and thrive. I also wanted them to be free to be who they are.

The best public schools and their educators strive to do that, in my experience.

School boards do not need to hear from yelling parents. They need support, decency and reasonableness. As do we all.

Parents often feel frustrated and confused in their choices of what is best for their kids. Voices continue to scream against public education and the good it does. It matters tremendously and deep down all parents know that. Will they look wider and deeper into the issue of public school education? I fervently hope so.

— Darlene Norwood
Florence

FLORENCE FESTIVAL OF BOOKS NEEDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Florence Festival of Books for authors and publishers returned this past September. Much was the same, but much was different. It had the same events — Friday afternoon panel discussion, Friday evening Keynote Speaker, and book fair from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. And all events were held at the Florence Events Center.

But there were differences. Ev-

eryone, participants as well as attendees, wore masks. And there was a much wider space for walking from table to table because one-third of the tables had been eliminated. This allowed for social distancing.

The crowds for all events were small. But those that attended seemed pleased to be there and bought books. Friday's events, held also with masks and social distancing, allowed nearly everyone to participate in the question-answer segments.

Comments heard over and over were how pleased both participants and attendees were that the Festival of Books was happening in 2021. There was a happy vibe!

In spite of COVID, rain and small crowds, the Florence Festival of Books was a success for its 10th milestone year. Held each September at the Florence Events Center, it has become one of Florence's major events.

That brings us to the purpose of this letter: The FFOB Planning Committee needs new members.

Some members are no longer able to continue and others are having to cut back due to day-jobs. Without more members, there may not be a Festival of Books next year. The committee meets only half of the year — once a month April to May, twice a month June to August, and once a week in September prior to the event, with an evaluation meeting afterwards.

Next year's festival is scheduled for Sept. 23 and 24. All interested in helping keep this popular event alive should contact the Florence Events Center at 541-997-1994 or aleia@eventcenter.org.

—Judy Fleagle
FFOB Co-chair & Co-founder



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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