

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)



Local News Hangs In The Balance

(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.)

The Senate is now deciding the fate of local news.

As part of the Build Back Better Act, the Senate is in the next few days considering an important proposal: providing a payroll tax credit to local news organizations to retain or hire local journalists.

Why? Local news is in a deep crisis. The internet has fundamentally broken the business model of most local newspapers. The number of reporters has dropped by more than half since 2000.

There are at least 1,800 total "news deserts" — communities with no local newspapers at all — and thousands more have "ghost newspapers" that have been so gutted that they barely cover the community.

Professor Penny Abernathy, the leading authority on news deserts, this week projected that if past patterns continue more than 100 newspapers will close next year and 500 will shut in the next five years if Congress doesn't act.

This is having catastrophic consequences. Studies have shown that when local news declines, communities have more corruption, more waste, lower voting and even lower bond ratings. It cripples the community's ability to solve their own problems.

How can residents know how to fix their schools if no one is providing

bipartisan issue. The communities harmed are disproportionately Republican but every town and city suffers when people don't have accurate information.

No journalist loves the idea of the government helping them out. The crisis has become so existential that temporary measures like this are necessary — and this particular provision is shrewdly constructed to avoid First Amendment problems. It's a tax credit to all those newsrooms that cover local communities; there's no federal bureaucracy dispensing grants to local newsrooms that the president likes. It's content neutral and would benefit newspapers, TV stations, websites and public radio.

The cost is miniscule compared to the rest of the Build Back Better package — less than 0.1% of its total. But this provision is the only thing in the bill that would help save democracy.

Please urge your state's senators and Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer to support this nonpartisan provision to help save local news.

Learn more online at <https://news-papers.org/ljsa/>.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Steve Waldman

Chair of the Rebuild Local News Coalition and co-founder and president of Report for America

them accurate independent information about how their local tax dollars are being spent? How can you address economic development, crime or health care without knowing the facts? Where will people learn accurate information about local COVID vaccinations?

The decline of local news has fostered division and polarization. The vacuums that have been created have been increasingly filled by misinformation, national cable news and fake local news sites. The only way to combat misinformation is with trusted, accurate information.

This is a thoroughly nonpartisan,

LETTERS

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HUGE ESTATE SALE

God blessed us with two beautiful sunny days to have our estate sale. I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, those who helped me — Sandra, Sandy, Tai and Sha, our little shining star. I couldn't have done it without your help.

Thank you to all the wonderful people I met. They were so warm and understanding of this difficult time, of the passing of my mom and the selling of her possessions.

It was good to see who was getting her things. It helped me to see people with big smiles as they left with their new treasures. And to those who had the need to steal, for whatever reason, I forgive you.

So, thanks to all and God bless.

— Laurie Sharrit
Florence

AN INSIDE SCOOP

I always enjoy the Kid Scoop page (in each Wednesday edition of the Siuslaw News) and hope many of

your older readers also find it interesting. As a senior citizen who likes to keep my mind active with brain games and puzzles, Kid Scoop is a weekly challenge.

Of course, I'm sure that a great many kids also enjoy the page.

Thanks to Oregon Pacific Bank, Rotary Club of Florence and Dentist Chad Clement for their ongoing support of the Kid Scoop page.

— Ann Lathrop, Ph.D.
Florence

CONSCRIPTION

Years ago, I served in the Army. Basic Training was an eye opening experience. From New Mexico I was sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana, in the height of summer — which was not pleasant. I was exposed to individuals from different ethnic backgrounds and mostly those from the South. Your physical identity was removed and your mental perspectives were changed. You had to learn to communicate and work together which at first was difficult for some.

We once had two programs that put people back to work when work was needed and taught individuals how to work together, and many learned lifelong skills. First there was the CCC (Civilian

Conservation Corps) and then the WPA (Works Progress Administration).

I propose that we establish a Conscription Service which would be a compulsory enlistment for national or state services for all 18 year old young men and women for two years. This might be military service like England and Israel have, or service in infrastructure, like working on roads, bridges, parks, recreation, education, communication or in the trades.

This would require something like Army Basic Training for eight weeks, where your physical individual identity is removed; no long hair or facial hair, no bling and everyone wears the same clothing. You learn to be a group member that works with others.

Then another important thing is no social media, which means no cellphone or computer for that period. It would also require separation. By that I mean that individual groups would comprise all levels of backgrounds and no individual would be placed with someone he or she knows.

The eight weeks would include physical activities like calisthenics, hiking and playing sports. Then there would be required classes in reading,

writing and arithmetic based on one's ability. In downtime, individuals might be exposed to music they have never heard or watch movies that they never thought of seeing. Exposure.

The required two years would be selecting which service you wanted to be a member of and what you wanted to learn. It might be in the military service, working for the National Park Service, working on building bridges and highways or learning a trade by working and learning about barbering, criminal justice, nursing, welding, culinary, carpentry or auto mechanics. Yes, we would need trade schools and companies to be involved. During the two years cellphones would only be allowed after hours and computers only used if your job required them.

The bottom line is that individuals would learn to communicate verbally and work together. This would create a generation of young people that realize their status in life has been improved whether they started out rich or poor because they learned to work together and communicate verbally, which is so lacking today.

— Win Jolley
Florence

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Siuslaw News Front Office
For Advertising: ext. 318
For Obituaries: ext. 320
Jenna Bartlett
Chantelle Meyer
Misty Berg
Jaanna Petersen
Mark Brennan
Zac Burt

541-997-3441
For Classifieds: ext. 320
For Faxes: 541-997-7979
Publisher, ext. 318
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Siuslaw News

Office:
148 Maple St./PO Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

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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.

WHERE TO WRITE

PRESIDENT JOSEPH BIDEN

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
TTY/TDD: 202-456-6213
www.whitehouse.gov

OREGON GOV. KATE BROWN

160 State Capitol 900 Court St.
Salem, Ore. 97301-4047
Message Line:
503-378-4582
www.oregon.gov/gov

U.S. SEN. RON WYDEN

221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244 | 541-431-0229
www.wyden.senate.gov

U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY

313 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753 | 541-465-6750
www.merkley.senate.gov

U.S. REP. PETER DEFazio

(4TH DIST.)
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6416
541-269-2609 | 541-465-6732
www.defazio.house.gov

STATE SEN. DICK ANDERSON (DIST. 5)

900 Court St. NE - S-303
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1705
Email: Sen.DickAnderson@oregonlegislature.gov

STATE REP. BOOMER WRIGHT (DIST. 9)

900 Court St. NE, H-476
Salem, OR 97301
PO Box 39000
Florence, OR 97439
503-986-1409
Email: Rep.BoomerWright@oregonlegislature.gov

LANE COUNTY DIST. 1 COMMISSIONER JAY BOZIEVICH

125 E. Eighth St.
Eugene, OR 97401
541-682-4203
Email: Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us

FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL

Florence City Hall, 250
Highway 101, Florence, 97439
541-997-3437
ci.florence.or.us

DUNES CITY COUNCIL

Dunes City Hall, 82877 Spruce
St., Westlake, OR 97493
541-997-3338
dunescityhall.com