

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 their Government for a redress of grievances.



Who benefits most from more prisons?

In a May interview on NPR, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen compared the Trump administration's "Zero Tolerance" policy to the same policy experienced by incarcerated Americans every day in this country who are separated from their children. "If you break the law, you will be prosecuted. It's no different than what we do every day in every part of the United States when an adult commits a crime," Nielsen said. "We're following that same policy at our borders." And she's absolutely correct. In fact, we have a long history of state-sanctioned family separation that continues as a widespread practice today — particularly in our justice system, where approximately 2.7 million children have a parent behind bars. And the fastest growing group of prisoners? Women. According to a report

by the Prison Fellowship, there has been a 14-fold increase of women in prison since 1970, and 80 percent of them are single mothers. Whether guilty or innocent, men and women often spend weeks, months and sometimes years in prison awaiting trial for

Service (LIRS) and Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), between October 2013 and September 2014, the U.S. government apprehended 68,334 children accompanied by a parent at the southwest border — a 361 percent increase since the previous year. Keep in

Karnes Detention Center in Texas, which recently broke ground at that site in order to double its capacity. Another detention center was opened by Correction Corporation of America (CCA) in 2015 that holds 819 mothers and 1,000 children in a lock-down style facility.

From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

non-violent crimes, losing their jobs, homes and custody of their children before they've even had a chance to plead their case.

The fact is, the current "law and order" approach isn't new either. It was echoed by President Nixon in the late 1960s, as well as Presidents Reagan and Clinton and their attempts to combat the drug war by creating massive prison expansions to keep up with the demands of higher incarceration rates.

In addition to prisons, in 2014 the U.S. government massively expanded its detention centers for immigrant families.

According to reports from the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee

mind that more than half of all the children who entered into family detention facilities in that time were six years old or younger.

And that was before the "Zero Tolerance" posture taken by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, which has compounded the problem by demanding enforcement without the necessary resources to do so humanely.

But this is not a problem that is unique to the Trump administration, although its poor handling of it has made it uniquely terrible.

When the Obama administration began detaining families in large facilities back in 2014, for-profit correctional corporation GEO Group answered the call with the

Both GEO Group and CCA have had facilities closed in the past (Artesia Detention Center and Hutto Detention center, respectively) due to allegations of abuse and poor living conditions — only to re-open somewhere else with a government contract.

While I think we all agree that our borders should never be a revolving door, particularly in an era with the constant threats of global terrorism and illegal drugs, one must ask who stands to benefit most from an ever-expanding system of prisons and detention centers.

And whether tax dollars given to corporate prisons and detention centers is money well spent, or money spent to pretend that all

Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. 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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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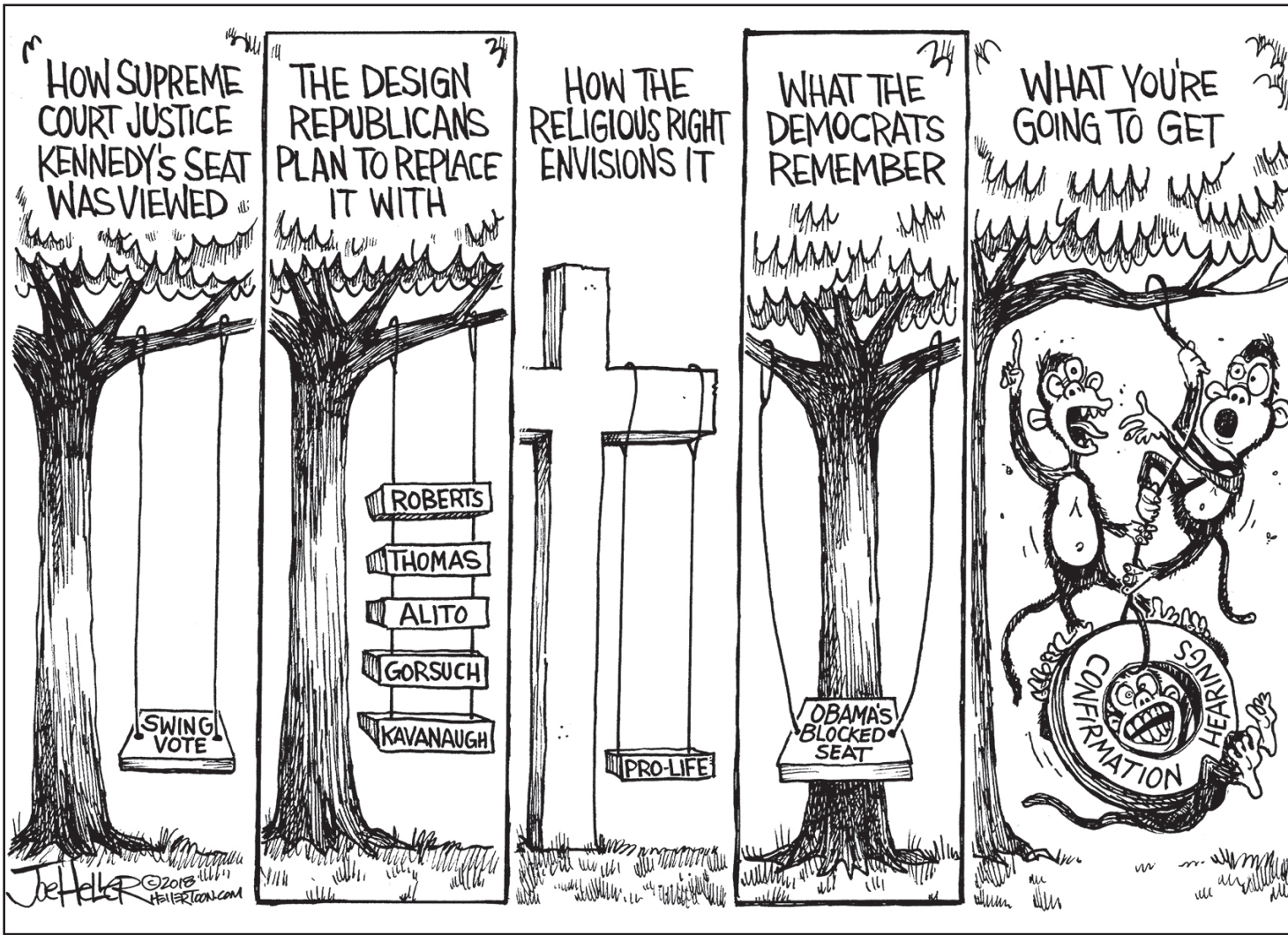
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LETTERS

A word on the Refinement Plan

Last night (July 16) the City Council voted to apply for a BUILD grant to implement the Main Street Refinement Plan, with only Councilman Kenneth Roberts voting against it.

Though Mayor Jeff Gowling voted in favor of applying for the BUILD grant, he stated his ongoing opposition to the Main Street Refinement Plan as it is currently written (he was the sole City Council member to vote against it in 2016).

He said he would continue to oppose making major changes to downtown Cottage Grove.

According to City Councilman, Jake Boone, the only portion of the plan to be focused on at this time is page three — Project Objectives and Considerations.

However, the entire plan will be filed with the grant application. Many of the members stated that the plan could still be "tweaked" if the city receives the BUILD grant and setting up an advisory committee was discussed along with more public comment periods though no details were provided at this time.

Just so everyone is up-to-date on what the Main Street Refinement Plan includes, here is a link to it: www.cottagegrove.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/4031/cottage_grove_main_street_adopted_2015_final.pdf

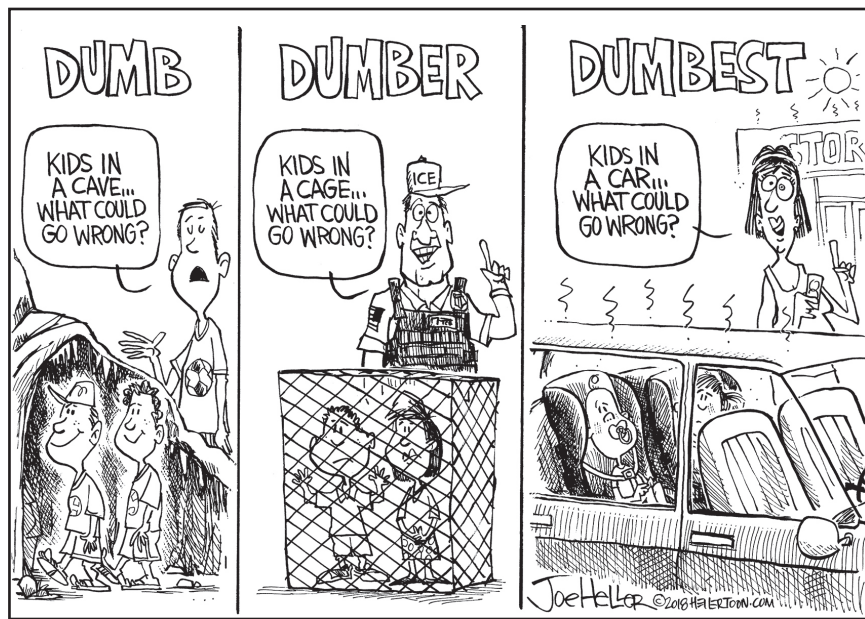
—Friends of Main Street Cottage Grove

Thanks after accident

A big heartfelt thank you to the residents at the intersection of Main Street and

R St. for your concern and support on the night of Friday the 13 in the aftermath of our accident. Kudos to Cottage Grove caring.

— Ray Kinkade and Roseann Ruga Cottage Grove



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