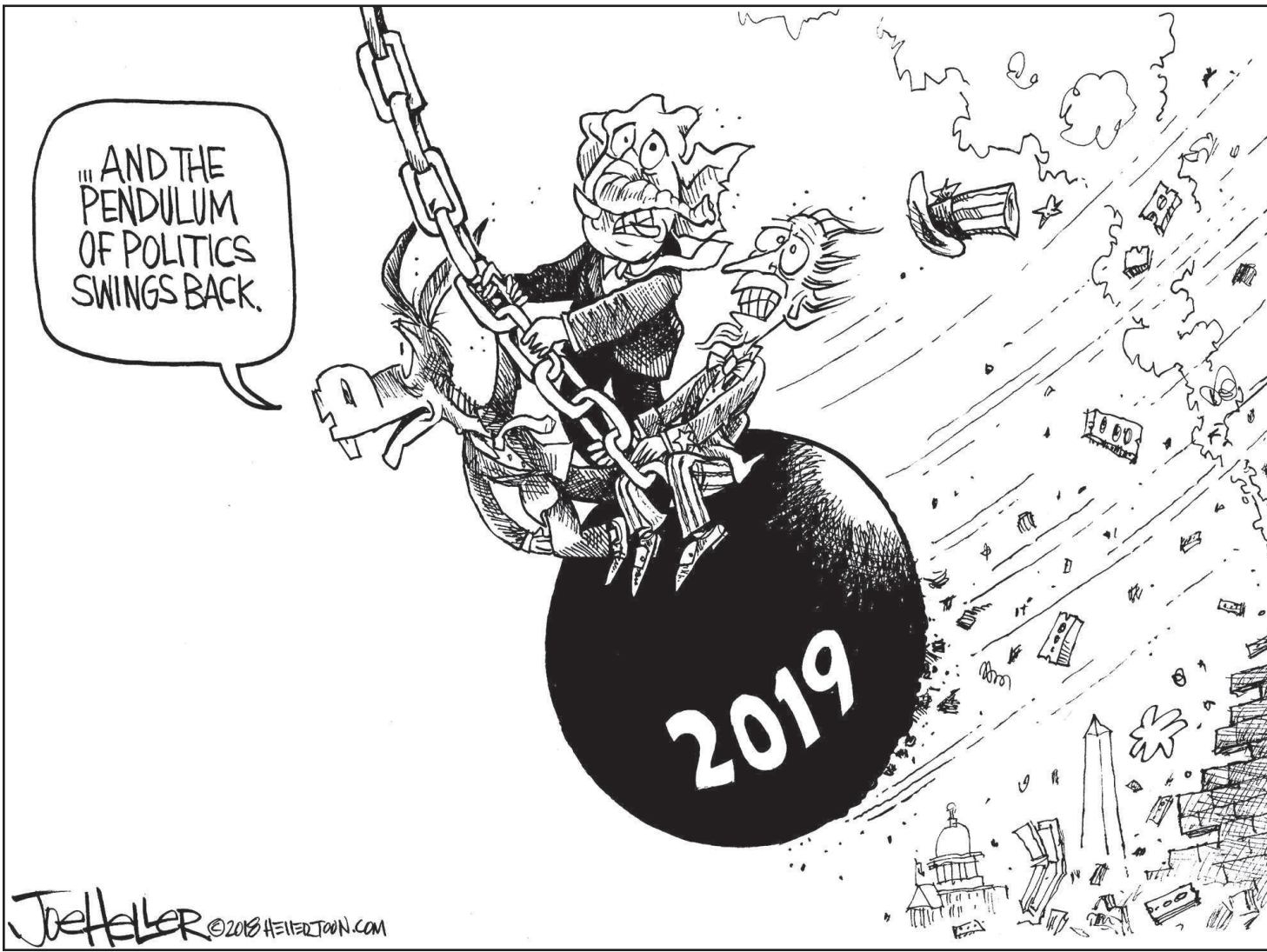


# OPINION

## 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.



## Another year gone, another year here



By Caitlyn May  
cmay@cgsentinel.com

Over the holiday break I was reminded of a story my favorite journalism professor once told me. It was about an editor named Alfred P. Reck at a California newspaper.

Back in the day, a young reporter was on Christmas Eve deadline, racing to complete a story about a terminally ill boy whose last wish was for fresh peaches.

The reporter had done his due diligence and called around, but it was winter and no one had fresh peaches. So, he started writing the story, made room for it on the page and went about his deadline until he got a call from his editor.

He told Reck about the boy and the peaches — and the deadline.

Reck told him to get the kid his peaches and gave him a few phone numbers, running him through until the reporter said he had to finish writing the story or he'd never make deadline.

Reck, as legend has it, told him, "I didn't say get the story. I said get the kid his peaches."

In any case, there's been a lot of change here at *The Sentinel* this past year. We broke in our new reporter—bringing our grand total to two. We continued to dip our toe into broader news stories with

the encouragement and support of a newly installed managing editor.

We've embraced new platforms for storytelling and reporting and, as we welcome 2019, we'll continue to do so. In fact, look for an exciting announcement in this space next week.

At the same time, let's be honest; it's been a hard year for news.

A recent study by the University of North Carolina's School of Media

and Journalism reported that more than 1,300 communities have lost all of their local news coverage.

Radio. Television. Newspaper. "Our sense of community and democracy at all levels suffer when journalism is lost or diminished," the study's researchers wrote. "In an age of fake news and divisive politics, the fate of communities across the country and of grassroots democracy itself is linked

to the vitality of local journalism." On Dec. 19, I marked my second year here at *The Sentinel*. I was fresh out of college, where professors and administrators had warned us hard times were coming for the news industry.

I invested here because Cottage Grove was small and *The Sentinel* was smaller. And I believe everything the researchers of that University of North

Carolina study said about the importance of small community newspapers and local media. As I ready to start my third year and we all ready to jump into 2019, I want to share my resolutions. I will resolve to be a better editor than I was last year as I (hopefully) became a better editor this year than I was the year before.

not going to halt in our coverage of the city council, school board, high school sports or local events. We're going to go all-in on our use of technology to enrich the community's stories and broaden our ability to cover their stories. So, what does this mean? Readers can expect more annotated PDFs of board reports or council resolutions. There will be more hyperlinks to sources in our online stories and the introduction of new platforms (like I said, stay tuned next week).

We're going to explain things more; we're not just going to tell you the school board approved a budget increase but also talk to teachers, administrators and financial officers to find out what that new budget amount amounts to for students and the classroom. Lastly, readers probably won't see it in the paper, but we hope you see it in the community — we're going to start getting the peaches.

In short, I think it's going to start looking up for news this year.

*The Sentinel* is going to bring you more enterprise stories this year but we're

### From the Editor's desk

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### 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.

### Send letters to:

nhickson@cgsentinel.com or cmay@cgsentinel.com

### HOW TO CONTACT YOUR REPS

#### Oregon state representatives

• **Sen. Floyd Prozanski**  
District 4 State Senator  
PO Box 11511  
Eugene, Ore. 97440  
Phone: 541-342-2447  
Email: sen.floydprozanski@state.or.us

• **Rep. Cedric Hayden**  
Republican District 7 State Representative  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Ore. 97301  
Phone: 503-986-1407  
Website: www.leg.state.or.us/hayden  
Email: rep.cedrichayden@state.or.us

#### Oregon federal representatives

• **Rep. Peter DeFazio**  
(House of Representatives)  
405 East 8th Ave.  
#2030  
Eugene, Ore. 97401  
Email: defazio.house.gov/contact/email-peter  
Phone: 541-465-6732

• **Sen. Ron Wyden**  
405 East 8th Ave., Suite 2020  
Eugene, Ore. 97401  
Email: wyden.senate.gov  
Phone: (541) 431-0229

• **Sen. Jeff Merkley**  
Email: merkley.senate.gov  
Phone: 541-465-6750

# Cottage Grove Sentinel

(541) 942-3325

### Administration

Jenna Bartlett, Group Publisher  
Gary Manly, General Manager ..... Ext. 1207  
gmanly@cgsentinel.com  
Allison Miller, Multimedia Marketing Specialist ..... Ext. 1213  
amiller@cgsentinel.com  
Gerald Santana, Multimedia Marketing Specialist ..... Ext. 1216  
gsantana@cgsentinel.com  
Gina Nauman, Inside Multimedia Marketing Specialist ..... Ext. 1203  
gnauman@cgsentinel.com

### Editorial

Ned Hickson, Managing Editor ..... 541-902-3520  
nhickson@cgsentinel.com  
Caitlyn May, Editor ..... Ext. 1212  
cmay@cgsentinel.com  
Zach Silva, Sport Editor ..... Ext. 1204  
zsilva@cgsentinel.com

### Customer Service

Mandi Jacobs, Office Manager, Legals, Classifieds ..... Ext. 1200  
mjacobs@cgsentinel.com

### Production

Ron Annis, Production Supervisor ..... Ext. 1215  
graphics@cgsentinel.com

(USP 133880)

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