

Cottage Grove Sentinel  
116 N. Sixth St.  
Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

# 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)



## Finding common ground in your phone calls

beyond a meal and table service.

If you can turn a dissatisfied guest around, you build a certain kind of loyalty though that shared experience.

Did I always manage that feat?

John had some very good points that I took to heart.

Though our viewpoints differed, we could agree that these kinds of conversations are important ones and a necessary part of our own

that seemed to be politically motivated.

Eventually, our conversation turned to our joint concern about how political affiliation has begun to supersede our affiliation as Americans, within its citizenry as well as within our government.

It was clear that we had supported different candidates in the past. However, the common ground we shared about our nation's polarization went beyond election results.

Naturally, not every phone call ends that way, any more than I was able to exceed the expectations of every guest who ate at my restaurant.

But I also know that for every conversation that didn't take place, we both lost an opportunity.

I want to thank the "Johns" and "Sharons" out there who take the time to call and provide an opportunity to turn things around — and build relationships that reach beyond these newspaper pages.

### From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

Of course not. But I always tried. It's the same approach I take to your phone calls as editor.

Each is an opportunity to build a relationship which, in this case, reaches beyond Wednesday's newspaper pages.

This morning I got a call from "John," who wanted to know why we allowed one letter writer to use the phrase "admitted anti-Semite Stephen Bannon" on our Opinion page a few weeks ago.

This led to a discussion about our differing points of view on whether guilt by association is or isn't a proper indicator of intent.

system of checks and balances as a community — here in Cottage Grove and beyond.

It was through this discussion that we also found other common ground, quite literally in Atlanta, where we had both spent time.

It was the kind of conversation that left us both feeling heard and, more importantly, resolved in the sense of understanding one another's perspective.

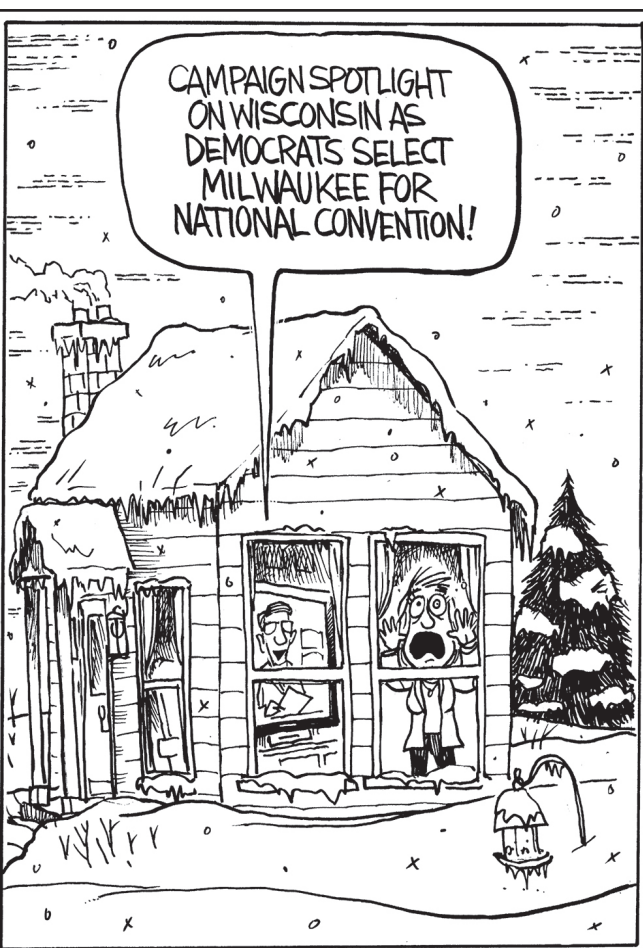
A short time later, I got a call from "Sharon," who wanted to let me know about a troubling trend involving the destruction of certain "adopt-a-highway" signs

On the one hand, I'm never quite sure what to expect when my phone rings here at the editor's desk; on the other hand, I do know it's always an opportunity to share an exchange of viewpoints, ideas or — sometimes — a point of contention with someone in our community.

Many years ago as a restaurateur, I learned that when a guest wants to talk to a manager about a bad experience, they aren't seeking excuses, or reasons as to why you couldn't meet their expectations.

They want two things: 1) Some form of resolution, and

2) To be heard. My wait staff always knew I was willing to address issues at a table because I viewed every situation as an opportunity to build a relationship with a guest — the kind that reaches well



### 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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