

**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)



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anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.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



**Will we allow ourselves to be informed or distracted?**

protected by the intellect of an informed society.

One of the key ingredients to a foundation strong enough to support the weight of democracy

sons of trust between the American people and those who govern, whether it be in Washington D.C., state government, a national corpora-

powerful visual medium of television.

In 1955, during an awards dinner where he was the keynote speaker, Murrow spoke of the new television medium and the paradox it presented for journalists and our society; it's a paradox we find ourselves facing once again in the age of social-media-style journalism — and in particular, the ease in which assumption can be passed along as fact.

In his speech, Murrow challenged us to utilize the new medium of television as a way to enhance our understanding of issues and each other. "Otherwise," he said in his final remark, "television is nothing more than lights in a box."

As we enter into the upcoming election season — both nationally and within our own communities — we need to ask ourselves whether the age of information will enhance our understanding or simply distract us with the lights inside the small boxes in our hands.

**From the Editor's Desk**

Ned Hickson

within our Constitution is the freedom given to the press. Its intention is to guarantee a level of transparency within the government and, just as importantly, keep government from manipulating the information its citizenry receives.

Shortly after the Missouri School of Journalism was established in 1906, its founder, Walter Williams, wrote The Journalist's Creed. Within it are these words:

*I believe that clear thinking, truthful statements, accuracy and fairness are fundamental to good journalism, and that the supreme test of any journalist is the measure of their public service.*

Journalists are liai-

tion or with local officials and institutions.

The trust we place in journalism is one of the cornerstones of maintaining a unified, peaceful society. Without the trust and belief that we are an informed people, the ensuing uncertainty is fertile ground for chaos, mistrust and division.

Today's Information Age, thanks to the internet and social media, has forged its own two-edged sword with the potential to do as much harm as good. In the late 1950s, iconic newsman Edward R. Murrow recognized this paradox. News reporting was being transformed from the purely word-driven medium of radio into a much more

While watching coverage of the Democratic debates along with my normal intake of national news, I switched between CNN, ABC, FOX-News, CBS and others. I read news articles online and in print. Even after two years, I continue to be struck by how one event can be seen so differently by so many news organizations — nearly all of which had a clear slant, whether for or against.

When our forefathers included Freedom of the Press in the Constitution, they knew it was a double-edged sword with as much potential to do harm as it could to ensure the exchange of factual communication free from governmental interference.

However, they knew it was a risk that needed to be taken if America was going to have a chance at establishing a peaceful democracy — one that is

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