

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)



Something most of us can agree on

because it's second nature. I'm so used to it being there that I don't even think about how often — and in how many ways — I use electricity. The same can be said for our use of plastic. Here are a few statistics to help illustrate the scope of how plastic has become a second-nature element of our lives:

Worldwide, more than 500 billion plastic bags are used each year, or more than 1 million bags every minute. The average "working life" of a plastic bag is 15 minutes, after which it "retires."

In 1996, 3.8 billion plastic water bottles were sold in the U.S. By 2014, that number had grown to 57.3 billion.

It's no small irony that the process of producing a water bottle actually requires six times as much water as there is in the actual container itself.

In Lane County, our goal is to recycle two-thirds of our waste products by 2025. We were making great strides, leading the state in this campaign by being the only county in Oregon to send more waste to recyclers than we did to landfills.

While our dependence on plastic is a global issue, the solutions will need to be implemented one community at a time, with the first step in that process being education.

Before we can solve the plastic problem, we need to fully understand its scope and the ways it is intertwined — not only among those of us who use it, but how any changes we make could impact us economically.

Beginning Jan. 1, Oregon HB 2509, also known as the "Sustainable Shopping Initiative" passed by the Oregon Legislature earlier this year, will go into effect, prohibiting retail stores and restaurants from providing single-use checkout bags to customers, and placing restrictions on other checkout bags they may provide.

Like any change in routine, this will feel like an inconvenience until, eventually, bringing our own shopping bags becomes second nature.

In some cases, it will likely mean an additional cost for things like to-go containers or — should we forget our shopping bags — the need to purchase a multi-use alternative at the store.

While deep divisions continue over our impact as a society on the changing climate, most of us can agree on the need to find solutions to dealing with what we once embraced as an element of everyday life that seemed too good to be true — and was.

The question is what we can do — and are willing to do — as individuals, a community and society to address the true cost of convenience.

From the Editor's Desk
Ned Hickson

The inclusion of plastic in our lives has grown exponentially over the past 70 years, making our lives easier, more convenient and often providing a significant cost savings almost too good to be true.

However, over the past few years we have begun to realize that the ecological interest rate on the cost of convenience has come due — with an unexpected balloon payment.

We produce nearly 300 million tons of plastic products each year in the U.S., nearly half of which is designed for single-use purposes in what has increasingly become a disposable society. And despite efforts to educate the public about the importance of "Reduce, Re-use and Recycle," each year more than 8 million tons of plastic is dumped into our oceans.

When we lose electricity in our home, I still walk into every dark room and flip the switch

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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

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
Gerald Santana, Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1216
gsantana@cgsentinel.com
Veronica Brinkley, Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1205
vbrinkley@cgsentinel.com
Carla Skeel, Inside Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1203
csummers@cgsentinel.com

Editorial

Ned Hickson, Managing Editor... 541-902-3520
nhickson@cgsentinel.com
Damien Sherwood, Lead Reporter... Ext. 1212
dsherwood@cgsentinel.com
Nick Snyder, Sports/Community News Reporter... Ext. 1204
nsnyder@cgsentinel.com

Customer Service

Meg Fringer, Office Manager, Legals, Classifieds... Ext. 1200
mfringer@cgsentinel.com

Production

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

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Periodicals postage paid at Cottage Grove, Oregon.
Postmaster: Send address changes to P.O. Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.

Local Mail Service:

If you don't receive your Cottage Grove Sentinel on the THURSDAY of publication, please let us know.
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LETTERS

AWESOME GIFTS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

To the residents and friends of Cottage Grove, my family and I wish to thank all of the kindred

spirits in our community for the good work done and activities that take place.

To name a few, PeaceHealth Hospital, the new school, new pool and walking bridge.

Such awesome gifts unite us all, young and old.

Thank you and Happy Holidays to all of you.

—Marie Melton
Cottage Grove

