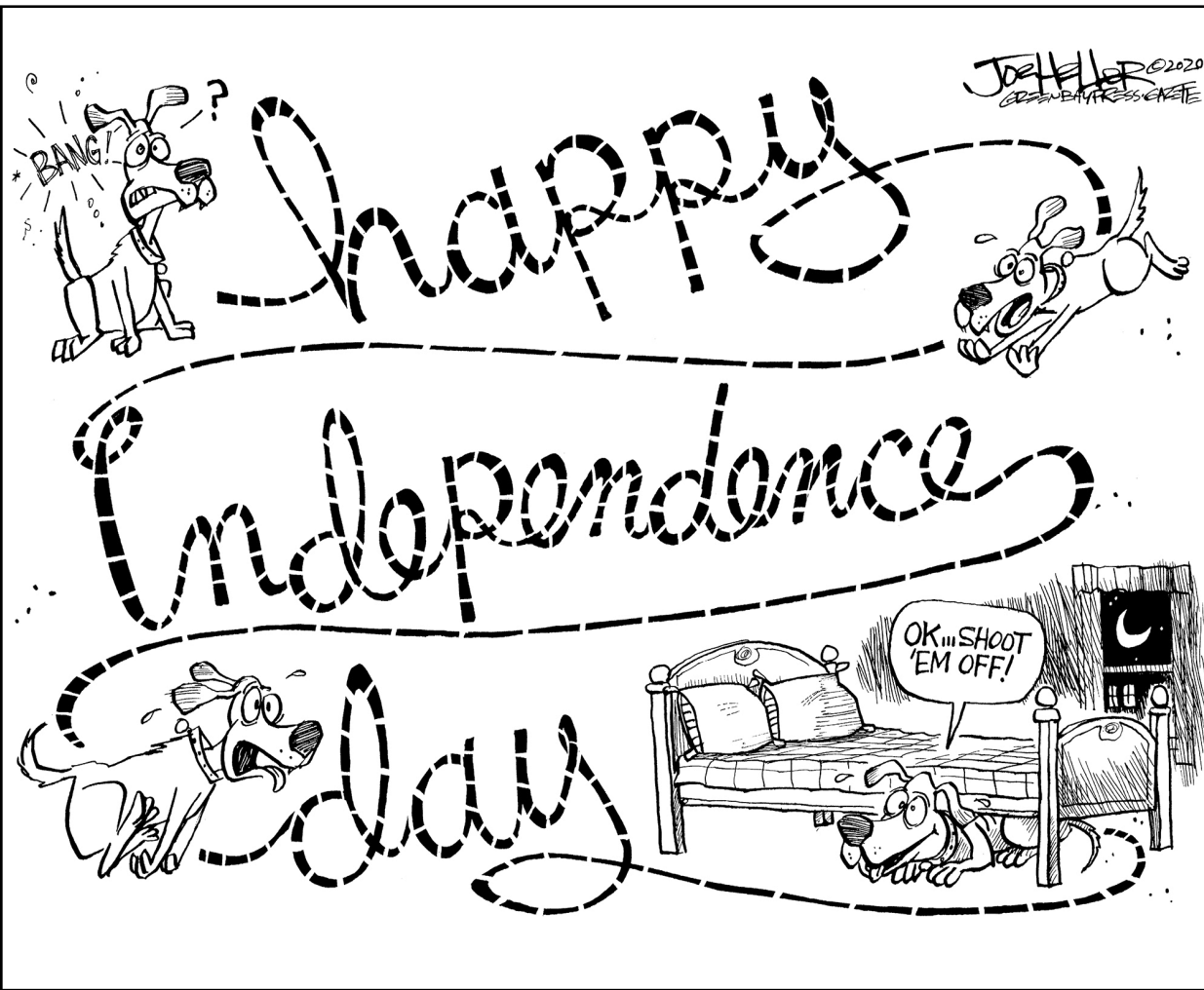


**Cottage Grove Sentinel**  
 116 N. Sixth St.  
 Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

# 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)



## On the lighter side of fireworks

full well their eyebrows would grow back by mid-summer. My kids don't believe me when I tell them this. That's because, each July Fourth, they have been handed "sparklers" that

trailer, it must be flagged during transport. 2) You must, by law, inform neighbors when using any fireworks that require a dynamite plunger. 3) Though there is

here in Oregon, at least we have them. In Georgia, they are illegal. In the past, this has meant watching public fireworks displays or, as many Georgians do, simply going outside and facing toward Alabama.

Even though these displays are beautiful, it's still not the same as being knocked unconscious by a runaway ground flower. Being as I lived in Atlanta for six years, I can tell you illegal fireworks *do* make their way across the Alabama border.

This, of course, is a huge problem. Especially if your boat trailer isn't big enough.

That all being said, my best wishes to you and yours as we celebrate our nation's Independence Day this Saturday in driveways across the country.

Something that could be the best part of this year's restrictions as we once again celebrate with friends and neighbors like we used to.

### From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

are basically sticks of incense that smell like sulfur.

No crackle. No shower of sparks. Just a momentary flame as the paper wick ignites and then, upon reaching its climactic flash point, fizzes into a puff of flatulent-smelling smoke.

Those who live in Alabama or Tennessee have no idea what I'm talking about.

That's because they have "real" fireworks — the kind that childhood memories (and a good portion of our nation's first-strike capabilities) are made of. In addition, the only real restrictions they have are as follows:

1) If a skyrocket is longer than your boat

no limit to the number of M-80s you can join together with a single fuse, the Department of Homeland Security warns it can't be held responsible should your area, as a precautionary measure, be swept with heat-seeking missiles. 4) If you have studded tires, you must remove them.

(This has nothing to do with fireworks; it's just a friendly reminder from the folks at the Highway Department.) And lastly,

5) Any and all sky-rockets capable of leaving southern air space must be pointed north.

The fact is, even though I whine about having wimpy fireworks

### LETTERS

#### SLCFR BOARD MAJORITY GOT IT WRONG WITH WOOTEN

On June 18, the South Lane County Fire and Rescue Board of Directors voted 3-to-2 to reinstate Fire Chief John Wooten, without discipline, after placing him on leave for posting an incendiary and divisive statement on Facebook.

The board majority should be ashamed of themselves.

Among the majority, Directors Munroe and Duffy characterized Chief Wooten's statement as "a mistake."

It was not a mistake; it was a deliberate act demonstrating very poor judgement in violation of the district's own Standard Operating Guidelines.

Director Duffy characterized Chief Wooten's leave as "pretty good discipline" when, in fact, it was no discipline at all; it was a non-disciplinary *paid* leave.

Essentially, the board majority approved what amounted to a paid vacation.

In addressing the matter, the board majority created a false dichotomy, making it appear as if there were only two options: 1) Reinstatement without discipline, or 2) termination.

The board was surely aware of the range of disciplinary measures at its disposal, everything from a letter of reprimand, to suspension without pay, etc.

Instead, they rejected any form of discipline whatsoever, even opting against a proverbial "slap on the wrist." His opinions were made public, so where is his public apology?

Chief Wooten must feel encouraged if not emboldened.

Director Shannon referred to Chief Wooten's integrity.

In my eyes, the chief's integrity level is now less than it was a

month ago, as is that of directors Munroe, Duffy and Shannon.

They have lost the trust and confidence of many in our community and are an embarrassment. There will be no "return to normalcy" as Director Shannon hoped for.

In comparison, Board President Higdon and Vice President Radcliffe certainly have my respect and appreciation.

In addressing the matter of Chief Wooten's conduct, they were principled, responsible, competent and well-reasoned in their statements on the record. I commend them for their efforts.

Jennifer Radcliffe's resignation is a great loss. Also, my gratitude to *The Sentinel* for the best and most comprehensive coverage of this matter anywhere.

— Duane Raley  
 Cottage Grove

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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.

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