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)*

LETTERS

Where was the ink?

I am saddened to know our small-town newspaper is nothing more than a "Fake INK."

Just a few weeks ago, we had a Main Street Business disgracing our American Flag. Not one word came from the *Cottage Grove Sentinel* but it was on TV.

I always thought a local newspaper let people know what was going on in their town. I realize some people connected to the ink paper might be heavyduty liberal customers at that local watering hole, where the disrespect went on. But a newspaper should not take sides and should just report the facts. I'm guessing the paper didn't want it to reflect badly on the business.

Some people were upset and had to fly the American Flag around Main Street to show their support for our country. There are some people that wondered why the paper held back.

As our local paper, it should have had some ink on this. Even our Mayor Jeff Gowing, a member of The American Legion and a U.S. Army veteran, went belly-up and decided to fill in the hole for the flag in front of the business so it won't happen again.

Each month on the 11th, the American Legion outlines Main Street with the American flag.

For some of you who are not aware: Cottage Grove has been awarded the All-American City by the National Civic League.

Twice.

Well, I guess we won't get that honor again.

—Cheryl Mulhall
Cottage Grove

Choosing empowerment over imprisonment

(**Editor's Note:** *Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.*)

Substance abuse is a problem nationwide and solving this issue has proven to be complicated. Many states have made changes in policies to assist in finding a solution to the drug epidemic, and Oregon has recently unveiled its plan.

The Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act is an initiative being elected on Nov. 3 across the state of Oregon. It aims to provide statewide addiction recovery services that are funded by marijuana taxes and state prison savings.

It also reclassifies possession penalties for specific drugs. This new proposal has become controversial because it provides something the state desperately needs while establishing a new precedent that many are unsure of.

No one will argue that the state can benefit from more drug and alcohol treatment services, but there is a definite apprehension when it comes to changing laws the govern drug possession. This may be because the decriminalization of drugs is a widely misunderstood idea.

Many assume that it aims to make all drugs legal, which is not the case. Legalization and decriminalization are two different things. The goal of decriminalizing certain drugs is to prevent the influx of low-level drug offenders with substance abuse issues from overpopulating the state's costly prison system.

Guest Viewpoint

By Cory Buck
Health Care professional
Contributor to Addicted.com

Though it may make some people uneasy, it is undeniable that keeping individuals out of prison can save the state money.

According to a research article, Lifetime Benefits and Costs of Diverting Substance-Abusing Offenders From State Prison, if 10 percent of drug-addicted offenders received drug rehabilitation instead of jail time, the criminal justice system would save $4.8 billion.

This number increases with the percentage of people diverted away from the state's costly prison system. And while saving taxpayer's money is always good, there is an even more significant benefit. Those receiving treatment will be getting support services that could prevent further substance issues and other issues that could negatively affect the community.

Furthermore, avoiding the cyclical justice system is extremely important for many who seek to better their lives.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, at least 1 in 4 of individuals arrested are subsequently arrested again within the same year. Of those rearrested, substance abuse is observed at a high rate. The above statistic illustrates the cyclical nature of drug arrests and penalties.

So, under the current system, many individuals are getting a criminal record instead of drug treatment. And these arrests appear to perpetuate the problem.

Anything from gainful employment to social services can be denied due to past illegal activity. So, once an individual is arrested and labeled a criminal, they are facing a life sentence of circumstances that prevent them from receiving specific opportunities.

It's not to say some individuals are not responsible for these repercussions, but there is a whole population lost to the system that had the potential to avoid this fate. Decriminalization of certain drugs could help give them a chance to become empowered instead of imprisoned.

After all, isn't that the goal of laws? A safer and healthier world.

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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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