

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)



What will things look like when the smoke clears?

(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.)

I am feeling confined, re-strained while fires rage all around us. I can't see clearly and cabin fever has set in from protecting my lungs from smoke — and before that, my immune system from COVID-19.

When will I be whole again?
When will *we* be whole again?
What does the future hold for me, for us and for our country?
I can't help but wonder what the landscape will look like when all the smoke clears — and how long until it does. Will it go into the winter after November, smoldering and waiting to erupt unexpectedly in various places?

My lungs are shrinking. I'm trying to protect myself from the smoke. I long to be heard but feel like no one sees — no one is listening. We all want security

but we define it differently.

Some of our houses have burnt down and we are floating, looking for something to hang on to or for some place to land.

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Caroline Harben
Cottage Grove resident

Some of us are counting our blessings knowing that we could easily be walking in each others' shoes.

How can we come back to "I'm ok; you're ok?"

There is so much unrest all around. How do we contain the edges of the violence we are seeing, which are like small fires jumping from one group to another, with some combining with others to become larger.

Some deny climate change but what about the political climate we are facing, heating up with factions breaking off like

icebergs.

Could one human reach out to another? One family recognize another? Can goodwill outshine the shadows we cast?

Will blue reach out to red or red to blue in a time of need?

Disasters are the great equalizers; nature-made or man-made, the sky has gone from red to orange to grey. I long for a pinkish-purple sunset — purple, a combination of blue and red.

Why must we focus on primary colors? Let's experiment with the palette. We cannot fight the blazes alone; we need to band together from different places to extinguish all threats.

Firefighters do not ignite and push flames towards each other. They work, as teams, sometimes approaching from opposite sides — containing the edges — to eventually converge in the middle where a resolution can be found.

Local elections just as important as national vote

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With a presidential election in process, it is hard for a local council election to attract much notice. This is unfortunate because, as Speaker Tip O'Neill emphasized "All politics is local."

Local challenges really are largely identical with those of the nation. Particular problems are unemployment, affordable housing, adequate health care and education.

So the relevant question is how competent is a candidate for election to address those overall challenges through the achievement of relevant and feasible local projects?

Unfortunately in Cottage Grove, only two candidates have to prove they can do the job because other council positions have incumbents. Only the current Mayor and the At-Large Councilor Kenneth Roberts face challenges.

A voter can only make a sensible decision with adequate knowledge of the performance of an incumbent candidate

and the qualifications of any candidate.

Basic "Vote-for-Me" signs provide no information other than whether a candidate is an incumbent and that raises more questions than answers.

Hopefully the combined

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Alan Jackson
Cottage Grove

local media of print, radio and TV will provide both information and discussion forums before the election so voters can best select competent representatives.

Given the seriousness of the problems we face it is not enough to support a likeable candidate or one who claims achievements of little significance for what is needed.

A relevant question is whether the system encourages any council member to make adequately considered contributions. That depends on how city priorities are determined, decisions made and then executed.

In the case of Cottage Grove — and probably in most other small cities — it is easier to

measure the quality of administration (excellent in Cottage Grove) than the process of decisionmaking, which can be obscure to those who do not pay attention.

That restricts how well the community can monitor performance and apply pressure for action.

Fortunately, in 2008, Cottage Grove created a vision for its future with broad community participation. Strategic priorities were determined and organizations identified who would help fulfill them and procedures set up to achieve objectives and monitor performance.

It is now 2020 and strategic priorities are largely the same.

This election provides an opportunity not only to review council performance but also identify current priorities.

Successful candidates will have to collaborate with incumbents to achieve results. Strategic objectives for council action were formalized in the community's 2008 Vision for the future.

Voters can therefore make themselves familiar with what councilors are required to do.

It will be an ongoing process.

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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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