

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libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsupported or without documentation will not be published.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

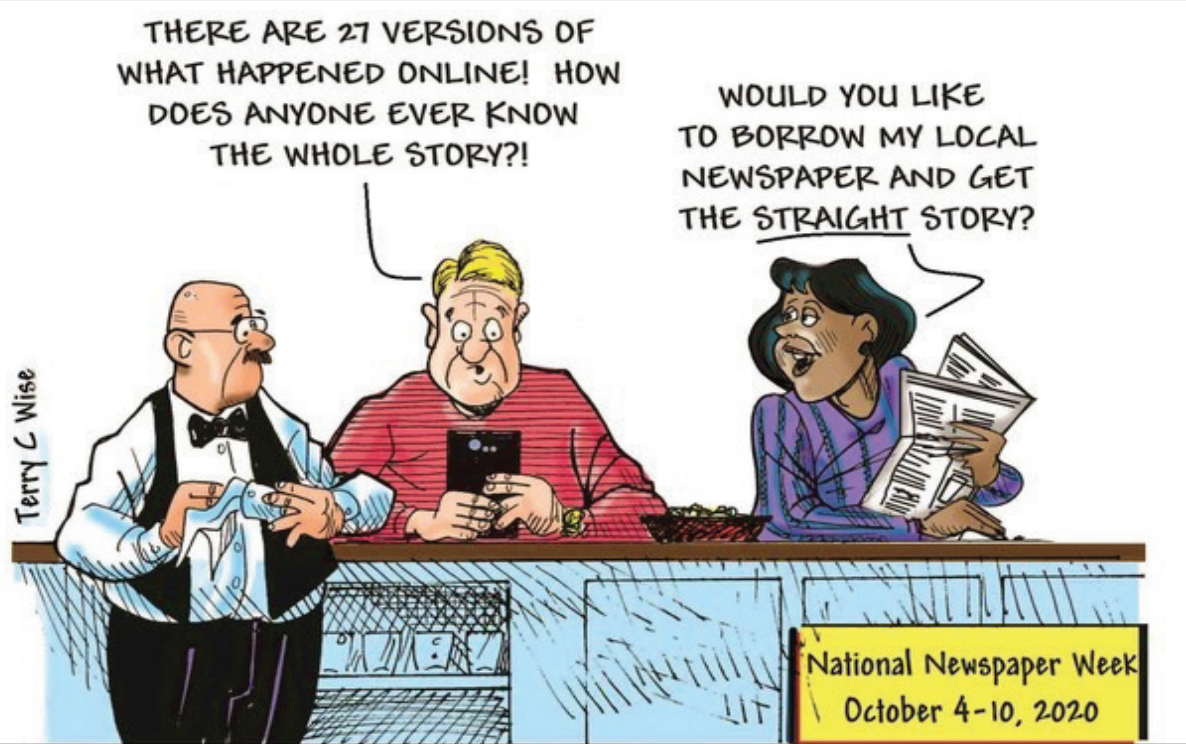
Letters must: 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather 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@cg sentinel.com



Celebrating National Newspaper Week



local community that would otherwise be overlooked without them," said Al Cross, director of the Institute for Rural Journalism at the University of Kentucky.

In fact, in 2019, the combined readership of those 6,500 non-daily newspapers

ant understanding that continues to define us as a community newspaper:

To our readers, we are not just the newspaper; we are their newspaper.

USC professor Judy Muller told the Stanford University Press that, while

er and those less fortunate have never been more important than now.

Each of our story meetings are underscored by the notion of "If not us, then who?"

As we head into National Newspaper Week (Oct. 6-12), we'd like to thank you, our readers, for supporting your local newspaper.

Not only with your subscription or that weekly trip to our office or store to buy your copy, but also for your participation and contributions — through letters, emails, phone calls and conversations in my office — that help make *The Sentinel* one of those 6,500 non-daily community newspapers that is continuing to grow during one of the most challenging times experienced within our community.

In the words of Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Col. Edward Carrington on Jan. 16, 1787:

"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

was almost 15 million more than that of daily newspapers, with non-dailies tallying 55.5 million subscribers — compared to 30.5 million daily-paper subscribers.

This is according to the National Newspaper Association (NNA), which also noted that 70 percent of those small non-dailies have a circulation of less than 15,000; *The Sentinel* is among that smaller group, with a circulation of just over 4,500.

When I became an editor in September 2016, I'd had the good fortune of working with three terrific editors over the past 20 years I've spent as a journalist here in Lane County.

And while each brought their own style and focus, there has been one import-

ant understanding that continues to define us as a community newspaper: To our readers, we are not just the newspaper; we are their newspaper. USC professor Judy Muller told the Stanford University Press that, while

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At least once a week, some 6,500 community newspapers — those with a circulation of less than 30,000 — land on porches, inside mailboxes or at local supermarkets and coffee counters across the United States.

According to a survey conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia, more than three-quarters of respondents said they read most or all of each edition of their local newspaper — with 94 percent of those people holding subscriptions.

Locally, on Thursday mornings, you can see the front page of *The Sentinel* suspended in front of faces around town as people inform themselves about what's happening in our community — from upcoming fundraisers and special reports, to recaps of the latest board meetings and local newsworthy events.

"Community papers provide news coverage about things that matter to their

A better plan is needed to prevent wildfires

As of Sunday, Oct. 4, several western Oregon wildfires, fanned by the strong east winds on Labor Day evening, are still burning out of control. These are the most widespread, deadly and destructive urban and forest wildfires in state history.

Subsequent fall rains have mostly stopped the spread of these Sept. 7-8 fires, but they have already covered more than one million acres, destroyed more than 4,000 homes and 1,400 other structures, caused the emergency evacuations of more than 40,000 people and deaths of at least 10 others, and killed millions of wild animals.

The long-term effects of severe regional air pollution for nearly two consecutive weeks on both people and wildlife remains to be measured.

These are just the latest in a series of large- and catastrophic-scale Western Oregon forest fires that began in 1987, starting with the 96,000-acre Silver Complex Fire that burned the Kalmiopsis Wilderness that year.

More than 90 percent of these subsequent events have taken place in federal forestlands, which only represent 50 percent of Oregon's forested areas. The reasons for this disparity have been discussed in detail for more than 30 years, with some blaming increasingly passive federal forest and rangeland management policies and others blaming climate change.

The larger question remains: What next steps should be taken to lessen the future number, severity, and extent of these recurring fires?

From 1952 until 1987, for example, there was only one forest fire greater than 10,000 acres in all of western Oregon: the 1966 43,000-acre Oxbow Fire in Lane County.

From 1987 until now there have

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Bob Zybach

PhD Environmental Sciences
 Program Manager,
 Cottage Grove

been more than 30 such events, with several being far greater than 100,000 acres in size.

What changed?

Lessons from the 1933-1951 "Six-Year Jinx" Tillamook Fires and the 1987-2018 Kalmiopsis Wilderness Fires are clear: unless removed, the dead trees resulting from these fires will most likely fuel greater and more severe future fires. Forests of dead trees are far more dangerous, flammable, and unsightly than those with living trees.

The best first-step solution is that 2020 fire-killed trees should be mapped, sold and harvested ASAP. Prices for Douglas fir logs are at a record high, there is a great need for good-paying rural jobs, and fire-killed trees have proven likely to burn again — and even hotter and more intensely than when they were living.

Rapid removal of hazardous fuels resolves two problems: reduced likeli-

hood of another fire in the near future, and local provision of needed reconstruction costs, jobs and materials.

But this leaves another problem in place:

How long will it be until another wildfire threatens these communities? And is there a way to keep that from happening?

Part of the problem with Western Oregon wildfires is that primary fuels often consist of contiguous forest canopies — mostly Douglas fir — whether five-years or 500-years old. This situation is due in part by the elimination of historical landscape-scale burning and grazing patterns being replaced by solid plantations of conifers; often due to legal requirements.

For thousands of years, ancestral Oregon Indian families kept ridge-line and riparian areas open for travel, hunting, fishing and harvesting purposes that were kept clear of ground fuels via constant firewood gathering and seasonal fires. This created a systematic series of firebreaks and "safe spaces" across the landscape

To effectively mimic these desired conditions, modern site preparation via scarification and prescribed burning would still be critical, but high-grade seedling stock of select species would be planted on the basis of "microsites" and desired densities/acre, rather than grids. And then regularly maintained via commercial harvesting, grazing, and prescribed burning — as proven successful in both ancient and historical times.

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Cottage Grove Sentinel

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 Call 541-942-3325 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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