

Cottage Grove Sentinel

1498 E. Main St., STE 104

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)



As someone who lives in unincorporated Lane County, I’ve been a long-time advocate for internet connectivity in rural areas. Our beautiful Oregon landscape with hills, trees and bedrock features make it hard for those internet signals to reach much further outside city limits. We know that bringing affordable, stable internet to our entire region is now as basic a need as the electrification of America was almost a hundred years ago. The pandemic has helped to bring a national spotlight on the need for broadband internet access to all residents and businesses. During the last two years, Lane County internet service providers have received \$2.5M from the state for emergency broadband infrastructure expansion in our rural communities and many Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund areas within the region were awarded and moving forward with coverage plans.

There have also been grants awarded to the McKenzie River area for broadband connectivity rebuilding efforts, such as the \$300K grant being used for connectivity to the McKenzie River

released.

The state Broadband Office received funding from the July 2021 legislative session and is currently hiring new staff to prepare for the deployment of \$100M that will

com, which records internet speed tests down to the census block level to help show the on the ground truth for the current internet speeds being experienced by consumers. Lane County, in cooperation with community partners, have completed two Broadband Measurement Week marketing campaigns using the SpeedUpAmerica.com open-sourced platform.

Feel free to go to the website and test out your internet speed. When you see your results you can also zoom out on the map and see how you compare to the rest of the state and a few states surrounding us. This information is critical when advocating with our congressional and state awarding agencies to prioritize project areas left out of the digital era.

If you want to chat about this or any other subject feel free to contact me at Heather.Buch@LaneCountyOR.gov, call at 541-682-4203 or come by and see me at my Cottage Grove office hours on the third Monday of every month located at City Hall from 10 a.m. to early afternoon.

go towards improving internet access and infrastructure development. Additionally, the recently signed Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) includes significant investment in rural broadband. There will be strong competition for those funds.

Data collection is very important for helping to direct funding to areas that are unserved or underserved. The current FCC form 477 data used for federal funding has some problems that are currently being addressed and the new data mapping will likely roll out sometime in 2022.

There is a multi-state mapping effort website called SpeedUpAmerica.

From Your Commissioner’s Desk

Heather Buch

Lane County Commissioner

District 5

school district and local students living upriver.

Our regional internet service providers have done a lot of infrastructure expansion during the first two years of the pandemic, despite the supply chain delays that have caused some needed material like fiber or conduit being continually pushed out further and further for delivery. There are more funding options that will be coming down the pipeline within the next two years from the federal and state governments and Lane County, along with other local and regional partners who are working together to have shovel-worthy projects for when these funds are

LETTERS

CANCELED CLINIC

I am an RN who signed up to volunteer for the Lane County Public Health vaccine clinic at Harrison Elementary School which was scheduled for Nov. 16. That clinic was canceled due to protestors.

If you don’t want the vaccine, don’t get it. But why keep it from those who want it?

Grovers, can we please be more kind to each other?

—Christine Heritage
Cottage Grove

SLSD DISMISSAL OF EMPLOYEES

It is with sadness that I read the article “SLSD votes to dismiss staff over compliance” in the Nov. 11 issue. In a small town, these actions have serious repercussions for everyone involved, and the loss of the combined experience and knowledge of these five educators will be felt.

Despite that, I still support the South Lane School District decision because the primary duty of public servants (as a person who has worked in public service most of my adult life) is about the public – not just the healthy, insured, well-off public, but all of the public.

If the five SLSD employees cannot put the needs of their most vulnerable students and vulnerable family members first, then they should not hold jobs working with the public.

The staff cited in the article spoke at length about their rights but not about their responsibility to protect their students, and their students’ families. They do not wish to disclose their “vaccination status” but would force their immune-compromised students to suffer for their choices and put the elderly families of their students at risk.

This is not an outlook aligned with public service. Whatever their potential contribution to education, it is not worth the life of one student, or one parent or grandparent of a student. It is my hope that these employees will reconsider their choices and that should they do so, SLSD agrees to reinstate them.

As is common in a small town, these connections are also personal; one of the workers who testified is a long-time friend and someone for whom I have a deep respect and affection.

Despite my desire to see them happily employed doing a job for which they are truly talented, I have a greater desire to ensure our public schools are safe for all who attend.

—Duncan Newberry
Cottage Grove

SHOCK AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE VACCINE CLINIC

I’m writing this because I believe the way people acted at the free vaccine event last Saturday at the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce was unacceptable.

First, let me say I am not against peaceful protests. Everyone has every right to protest anything. This event had protestors who were against the vaccine. They had signs, blow horns, and masks.

The clinic was held to help both the Hispanic people and others in our community receive vaccines. It was lovely inside.

Outside, however was not as lovely — far from it. Having to walk through the protestors I was okay with. I didn’t hear anyone saying anything to me or my husband directly. We had already decided in our car that we were not going to engage. Just in and out.

While waiting the 15 minutes after receiving my booster, I noticed a man in a wheelchair asking if there was a back exit that he could leave through. I watched a lady walk him to the back exit. She then came around and asked us if we felt safe or needed the back entrance. We said we were okay.

Upon leaving the event, there was discussion between my husband, a prominent member of the community, and myself. I was shocked and disappointed at the exchange. The more my husband and I spoke about what happened regarding someone in that position, I knew this was not okay.

When engagements like this happen with even our most trusted members of the community, we know we have turned a corner.

Due to people feeling scared attending this past Saturday’s event, Lane County Public Health canceled the event at Harrison Elementary School on Tuesday, Nov. 16.

It seems to me and others I have spoken to that the protestors are getting more aggressive. I would like to say this to them: “We hear you. We know your feeling on the matter. We get it. We got it. Can we just be done? We agree to disagree, so can we please put the posters down, hang up the masks, and turn off the blowhorns?”

We need to stop all of this before it escalates anymore, and people start getting hurt. Cottage Grove is better than this. None of our fellow neighbors should feel fear, but they do. We need leaders to step up to the plate and be leaders. We need to stop scaring the children, and we need to end this crusade.

—Carmen Dowell
Cottage Grove

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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Subscription Mail Rates in Lane and Portions of Douglas Counties:

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One year	\$46.00
Senior 62+	\$35.00
e-Edition year	\$35.00

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