

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Property tax increases unfair

As inhabitants of Meadow Creek Village, a 55-plus senior citizen community in Dallas, we have just received a letter from the Polk County Tax Assessors Office stating a 56 percent tax increase for personal property. Is it legal for the tax assessor to arbitrarily raise the personal property taxes by 56 percent in one 55-plus manufactured home community?

Manufactured homes lose value over the years, they do not increase in value. I did not realize that the value of a home would increase just because in this inflated society, people sell at higher prices and sometimes get what they ask.

We bought our home a year ago in July, a 20-year-old home. We paid \$46,500 for it, and a year later, the Polk County Tax Assessor decides our home is worth \$56,000. This is ridiculous. We certainly couldn't sell it for that much, even the appliances are 20 years old. Ten percent would be bad enough, but 56 percent is ridiculous, and I understand some will have to pay even higher than 56 percent.

My wife has ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) and many of the other seniors in this community have serious health issues. Surely the tax assessor should take this into consideration. A nearly double tax bill will hit us and many others very hard.

We are a community of senior citizens, living on fixed incomes. We were told retired people were appreciated in this area; I think not.

A nearly double tax bill will hit us and many others very hard. We feel this is discrimination against us as a community and as senior citizens.

Someone needs to look into this discrimination.

*David and Katherine Hall
Dallas*

Carelessness caused fire

In the early evening of Aug. 24, a fire broke out at the Delbert Hunter Arboretum. Over 2,500 square feet of creek-bank space was devastated by the blaze.

Firstly, a huge thank you



and well done is due the Dallas Volunteer Fire Department for its very quick response. Its timely and expert reaction prevented more extensive damage. Our across-the-creek neighbors who called to report the fire also deserve thanks and a pat on the back.

Several trees and shrubs were damaged, as well as grasses. The grass is already coming back in a display of nature's resilience. The area will be left as it is as: an example of what can happen as a result of human carelessness and as a showcase of how nature deals with setbacks.

The entire arboretum is designated as a "no-smoking" area. We hope to have signs to emphasize that fact in the very near future.

We encourage interested parties to visit the arboretum to see the burned area, as well as the rest of our display of plants native to Oregon. Visitors with mobility problems can arrange a golf-cart tour by calling Paul Mannen at 503-623-4845.

*Paul Mannen
Dallas*

Mental health needs boost

The recent tragedy at Umpqua Community College reveals that the perpetrator did not have a history of crime. He did not have a documented history of mental illness. His guns and ammo were all bought legally. What law could we possibly pass to stop future massacres?

The gun debate has again risen to a national priority. We point fingers at the NRA, the hunters, the collectors, and the manufacturers.

It takes the willingness of a human operator to make a gun deadly. They do not work independently of one another.

Chicago, Illinois and Washington, D.C., have the strictest gun laws in the country and the highest incident of gun violence.

Criminals target gun-free zones such as schools and theaters. They provide an unarmed prey base for violent criminals.

Addressing mental health in this country is certainly one of the main concerns. We have lived without availability for 30 years now. People cannot afford \$100 to \$200 an hour for a psychiatrist. Mental health needs to be available and affordable. But it's not. Who is talking about it?

Who do you know right now that has a creepy kid living in their basement that has a fascination with violence? Parents beware and be aware.

Violent entertainment has become a mainstay, from movies to video games.

Are we allowing our youth to become desensitized to violence? Some would say, "Absolutely."

We don't want to get involved. We turn a blind eye. Parents no longer want to parent.

Chris Mercer, James Holmes both kept journals with clear evidence of their

intentions to do harm.

Who's to blame? We are. Take a look around. Get involved. Risk not being popular to your kid. Tell someone. Read his journal. Read her diary. It's our responsibility to know what is going on in their lives.

*Cindy Birko
Dallas*

Teachers deserve fair contract

I am currently a senior at Central High School. I have been a student in the Central School District since Kindergarten. My teachers have always been extremely dedicated, caring, and committed to their profession. I am aware how hard teachers work and the many hours they put in beyond their paid eight hours a day. My knowledge comes not only from personal observations, but also because I am from a family of teachers and educators. In addition, my aunt was the assistant superintendent for this district.

I am pleading with you to put our teachers first. They have been without a contract for quite a while. They deserve much more than we possibly could pay than. I have observed my teachers coming to work early and leaving late consistently. We must remember these teachers correct papers and do lesson plans late into the evening after they have put their own families to bed.

I wouldn't be the student and person I am without the teachers who have influenced

me through the years. They have helped me and walked beside me while I have faced many challenges academically and personally. Again I urge you to honor their request for a new contract.

*Alexis Buckholz
Monmouth*

How do we stop the presumptions?

Recently, I had the sad honor to visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. It is an exceptional telling of one of the greatest crimes in world history. Having read a lot of 20th century history, not much of the tale is new to me, but the presentation was stunning. It is impossible to come out of the exhibit not wondering how a culture could do such a thing.

But, in listening to translations of speeches by Hitler, etc., I felt I had heard this tenor of language before. I made the connection later in the day when I bought a Washington Post newspaper and found a reminder that Donald Trump says all Latino immigrants are drug runners, murderers or thieves. Later, I was reminded of the comment by Gov. Chris Christie that the head of the National Education Association should be, "Smashed in the mouth." His comment is soon followed by Dr. Ben Carson saying that a Muslim cannot be President of the United States.

And so it goes. The GOP has no valid positions on the issues that challenge America so their campaign strategy is, "Be afraid; be very afraid; those others are coming to get us. We must stop them."

Republicans hate government, but they want it to have extraordinary powers to control certain peoples and tell them what to do and how to live. This strategy applies to non-whites, immigrants, gay people, Muslims and other religions, women and so forth.

People ask, "How can the mass shootings keep happening in America?"

Perhaps we should start by taking a hard look at the discourse of some of our so-called political leaders for the answer.

*Fred Brown
Dallas*

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PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the Itemizer-ObsERVER via fax (503-623-2395) or email (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7

- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.
- **Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.
- **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

THURSDAY, OCT. 8

- **Polk County Fire District No. 1 Board** — 6 p.m., Central Station 90, 1800 Monmouth St., Independence. 503-838-1510.
- **Luckiamute Watershed Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-837-0237.
- **Falls City City Council** — 7:30 p.m., Falls City Community Center, 320 N. Main St., Falls City. 503-787-3631.

MONDAY, OCT. 12

- **Southwest Polk Fire** — 7 p.m., Rickreall Fire Station, Independence. 503-838-1212.

TUESDAY, OCT. 13

- **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.
- **Independence City Council** — 7:30 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

EDITORIALS

We are encouraged to see local agencies and school districts preparing for an active shooter event like the one that so tragically took the lives of nine people at Umpqua Community College on Thursday.

Getting ready for an emergency like that, if you can ever truly be ready, takes partnerships in the community.

As your local newspaper, we would like to be one of those partners.

We hope to never have to report on an event similar to what Roseburg is recovering from now, but if we must, we want to help.

Your local reporters would be able to do that better if you included us in your

planning for such emergencies.

We can put out information the community needs to know that you may not have the time to — and with the care you would expect from people who live in the communities affected.

We know it takes time to confirm facts, especially in a situation like this, where lives are at stake.

But the confusion about the age and identity of the shooter and the number of people killed and injured in Roseburg is a prime example of what we can help prevent as the local news source.

In today's world of the 24-hour news cycle and social media, rumors and outright falsehoods will emerge al-

most immediately when people want information.

Like what was witnessed in Roseburg last week, local, national and international media organizations will descend on our community. All with a job to do informing readers and viewers about what has happened in their world and lives.

It is our responsibility as writers of the first draft of history to name the suspect, without glorifying his actions. It's our responsibility to try to reveal his motives and answer the all important question of why something like this could happen.

Instead of treating us like a nuisance or necessary evil, why not use our skills and time for the better?

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