

We're taking steps to offer more conservative voices for our readers

By Sandra Duerr

sduerr@thetribunenews.com

February 18, 2017 02:39 PM

Updated February 19, 2017 11:59 AM

In recent months, readers have expressed interest in reading more conservative voices on our Opinion pages. Some have accused The Tribune of bias, noting that liberal columns and letters far outnumber conservative ones.

We have long strived to present a variety of views — liberal, conservative and moderate. President Donald Trump's administration has made this more challenging, as conservative-leaning columnists, such as [Kathleen Parker](#), and to a lesser degree [Charles Krauthammer](#), have written pieces highly critical of Trump.

To better ensure that conservative views are represented, we have recently taken three key steps.

Most notably, we are adding a strong local Republican voice — former U.S. Representative [Andrea Seastrand](#) — to our regular columnist lineup. She starts next month.

In addition, two weeks ago we added staunch conservative syndicated columnist [Victor Davis Hanson](#). We also expanded our commentary section online at sanluisobispo.com, which will allow us to run more Viewpoints from local residents.

Here's a closer look at these changes:

Andrea Seastrand

Seastrand, who began her career as a teacher on the Central Coast, was a member of Congress from 1995-97 and a member of the California State Assembly from 1990-94, serving as assistant minority leader.

After leaving Congress, she became deeply involved in aerospace and the Air Force. She was named executive director of the California Space and Technology Alliance, which under her leadership evolved into the [California](#)

[Space Authority](#), working with commercial, civil and national security space enterprises. She oversaw the development of the nation's first statewide, collaborative space enterprise strategic plan in 1998.

On the state level, Seastrand was appointed to the Aerospace Advisory Committee and was among 20 members of the governor's statewide Council on Base Support and Retention.

On the national level, Seastrand served as an Air Force advocate under the Air Force chief of staff's Civic Leader Program. In 2011, she was given the U.S. Air Force Distinguished Public Service Award, the highest civilian honor awarded by the U.S. Air Force.

In addition, Seastrand has served with other organizations, including Women in Aerospace, the Navy League and the Air Force Association, and she was a member of Cal Poly's College of Engineering Dean's Advisory Council.

Although now retired, the Grover Beach resident is president of the [Central Coast Taxpayers Association](#) and remains active in grassroots politics and campaigns. In March, she will replace Matthew Hoy, who [changed his party registration to "no party preference"](#) when Trump was named the GOP presidential nominee. We will alternate her column on Sundays with liberal columnist Tom Fulks, who is very active in local Democratic politics.

"While focusing on local issues, Seastrand will — as Fulks and Hoy have done — occasionally touch on state and national politics," according to Opinion Editor Stephanie Finucane.

Victor Davis Hanson

Two weeks ago we added [Victor Davis Hanson](#) to our regular rotation. His column will generally appear on Mondays.

Hanson, a senior fellow at the [Hoover Institution at Stanford University](#), focuses on classics and military history. He has written hundreds of articles, book reviews and commentaries on Greek, agrarian and military history, as well as contemporary culture.

Not everyone will agree with Hanson; [one reader already wrote in that he is a hatermonger](#), "with a fascist-like spiel."

To be sure, however, we also hear complaints that other columnists, such as Leonard Pitts and Paul Krugman, are too liberal.

Viewpoints, Letters to the Editor

We just added a [new Viewpoints section](#) on our website, sanluisobispo.com, allowing us to publish a greater number and variety of local commentaries.

This will be especially useful because we have limited space for longer pieces in our print edition. Keep in mind that our online readership is high — and growing. And it's easy to share your opinion with others through email and social media.

If you want to submit a commentary longer than a 200-word letter to the editor, send us a Viewpoint that we can post online.

“If you want to tell us why President Trump is not getting a fair shake, this is your chance,” Finucane said. “If you're upset that a city council did — or did not — approve a particular development, share your outrage.”

If you're interested in writing a Viewpoint, please contact Finucane at [805-781-7933](tel:805-781-7933) or email her at sfinucane@thetribunenews.com.

We require authors of Viewpoints to submit a recent photograph and a brief biography. It's helpful to include any educational background, career or life experience that relates to the subject of your Viewpoint. Also, if you are using source materials, such as studies or news articles, please provide computer links. We recommend keeping your commentary to 600 to 700 words; shorter is good, too.

As for letters to the editor, we've been flooded with letters from writers who oppose Trump — so many that we have not been able to publish all of them, according to Finucane.

In contrast, we receive far fewer letters from Trump supporters.

“If you want to do something about that, get on your keyboard,” Finucane urged.

Email letters to letters@thetribunenews.com. Or mail them to us: Letters to the Editor, The Tribune, P.O. Box 112, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406-0112. Remember: The best letters are pithy.

For the record: We don't pay for any local political commentary or Viewpoints. And nearly all of our national columnists are included in the wire service content that we buy from the New York Times News Service, the Tribune News Service, The Associated Press, The Washington Post News Service and others. A few columns, such as Hanson's, are purchased separately.

Our intent through our Opinion pages in print and online is to offer readers a marketplace of ideas across the political spectrum — a place where local issues can be debated intelligently, and where questions can be raised.

Do you have a question about the newspaper, our website or our coverage? If so, please write me c/o The Tribune, P.O. Box 112, San Luis Obispo, California 93406-0112, or email me at sduerr@thetribunenews.com. Follow me on Twitter [@SandraDuerr](https://twitter.com/SandraDuerr).

Andrea Seastrand
ahseastrand@aol.com