

FOURTHPERIOD

STAFFPOLICY

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MISSIONSTATEMENT

The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is committed to objectively and accurately representing the diverse talents, cultures and viewpoints of the Saratoga High School community.

LETTERS OF THE EDITOR

The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to tara.natarajan@saratogafalcon.org and kavya.patel@saratogafalcon.org. For ad information, email william.cao@saratogafalcon.org

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MVHS censorship incident underscores need for independent student journalism

Recently, Hanna Olson, a senior who is the editor-in-chief of Mountain View High School’s Oracle student newspaper, and its former adviser, Carla Gomez, have threatened to sue MVHS’s administration over alleged censorship of the publication and the removal of Gomez from her position.

According to a letter written by their lawyer, Jean-Paul Jassy, the administration pressured writers last spring to significantly alter an article documenting sexual assault among students, published May 8, with principal Kip Glazer allegedly telling the newspaper’s staff members that the article would reflect poorly on the school and there could be “catastrophic consequences” for the publication.

Student journalists serve a crucial role within communities.

Controversial topics like sexual misconduct, LGBTQ+ rights, child pornography and even vaccinations have all been subject to censorship by administrators in high schools across the nation.

This marks a dangerous trend: A student press is rendered defunct if it is subject to the whims of those we are meant to hold accountable.

Student journalists are held to the same ethical codes and legal guidelines as professional journalists, but across the nation, student journalists do not always share the same protections as their professional counterparts.

Over 60% of publications at 4-year public institutions have faced some form of censorship, which can range from defunding the publication to outright silencing journalists, as Glazer has

been accused of doing.

The First Amendment right to freedom of journalistic expression is subverted by administrators taking advantage of the 1988 Supreme Court’s Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier decision. The verdict, siding with the principal, stated, “Educators did not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the content of student speech so long as their actions were ‘reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.’”

The Hazelwood decision does not apply to California public schools.

Instead, student publications here are governed by the state’s educational code. Perhaps not knowing or not caring about the greater protections enjoyed by student journalists in California and a handful of other states, the principal allegedly sought to water down a story about sexual assault to maintain the school’s image.

Then the administration allegedly took it one step further by getting rid of the Introduction to Journalism class this year.

While the school may have been within their legal rights to remove this class under the excuse of low enrollment, it was a bad-faith decision that will severely impede the publication in the coming years as the pipeline of students in the program dries up.

Even when schools provide minimal funding for journalism programs, administrators can still interfere with the publication.

Student journalists should function as independent journalists under the direction of an adult adviser, but are often treated by administrators as an extension of the school’s public relations department — essentially, they’re told they can’t make the school look bad even if what



LEYNA CHAN

they write is the truth.

As journalists, students must learn to seek the truth and publish stories without fear or favor, pointing out the bad along with the good.

Glazer’s alleged suppression of The Oracle on multiple fronts speaks volumes to the prevalence of censorship in student journalism, even in liberal states like California.

Though eliminating the class may be within the school’s rights, pressuring writers to change the article and reassigning the adviser just to protect the school’s image undermines the ethos of good journalism and teaches the wrong lessons.

Student journalists serve a crucial role within communities and are the cornerstone of a free press.

Every school deserves to have real student journalism, and every student publication deserves

an environment where they aren’t punished for or threatened for doing their essential work of tackling tough, sometimes uncomfortable issues.

If the First Amendment’s protection of journalistic expression can discriminate between a classroom and a newsroom, it has failed to protect journalists everywhere.

“Just the premise of wanting to have so much influence over the publication of this article was, to me, a violation of the rights of the publication,” Olson recently told the Mountain View Voice.

The removal of Gomez and the Introduction to Journalism class was unacceptable.

The MVHS administration needs to bring back Gomez as The Oracle’s adviser and make a good-faith effort going forward to support independent student journalism. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 33-2 in favor of this article.

CA EV mandate does more harm than good

BY RichardFan & AlecGuan

In an attempt to combat the planet’s continuously rising carbon emissions, Gov. Gavin Newsom recently issued an executive order mandating the purchase of new gasoline-powered vehicles be halted by 2035. Although at first glance this order may seem beneficial in the fight against climate change, there are several issues — both financial and, ironically, environmental — rooted within the idealistic and unrealistic nature of Newsom’s new mandate.

One of the major issues with the mandate is the financial aspect of making expensive electric vehicles the sole option for residents.

According to an article in the Observer, the average cost of buying a gas vehicle is around \$44,000, while the average cost of an electric vehicle is around \$67,000.

And although some may argue that going electric will save consumers’ money in the long run because they’re not filling up their gas tank, other costs undermine this hopeful equation.

According to calculations that factor in a car’s original cost, the average annual cost to maintain a gas vehicle is \$8,691, while the cost of maintaining an electric vehicle is about \$10,360.

Newsom’s new mandate will not only place financial a burden on the consumers, but it will also prove crippling for the car companies.

First of all, the automaking industry makes up 3% of the global economy, and we’ve seen in the past that slowdowns in the auto industry also lead to problems in the global economy and supply chain.

For example, the automobile part shortage two years ago cost many people their jobs and \$210 billion in economic losses.

Slowdowns within the automaking industry will also lead to problems in the global supply chain.

Second, facing such a strict mandate, car makers might revolt and could just stop selling the necessary volume of vehicles here.

On the environmental side, EVs also have their downsides, namely, the overmining of rare earth metals like lithium in countries such as Venezuela and Brazil.

Mining a ton of lithium takes approximately 2.2 million liters of water and has a dangerous risk of polluting local water sources, according to the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustain-

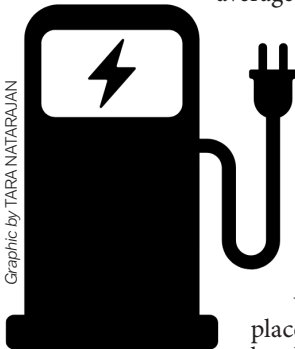
ability. Extracting these materials is extremely energy-intensive and massively degrades the land that the mining takes place on.

Although the mining of these minerals may not be as harmful to the whole environment as gas-powered cars, the initial environmental footprint of electric vehicles is worse at the beginning of the vehicle’s lifespan.

There are even some batteries that have a shorter lifespan than the time it takes to pay back the carbon footprint, which completely defeats the purpose of electric vehicles.

Scientists warn that we are reaching the point when climate change becomes irreversible, and this massive undertaking to convert the auto industry to electric might just be what completely tips the scale.

So far, most Californians have yet to consider the real-world implications of Newsom’s mandate. Taking smaller positive steps one at a time is much better than imposing such a drastic restriction on Californians. ♦



Graphic by TARA NATARAJAN