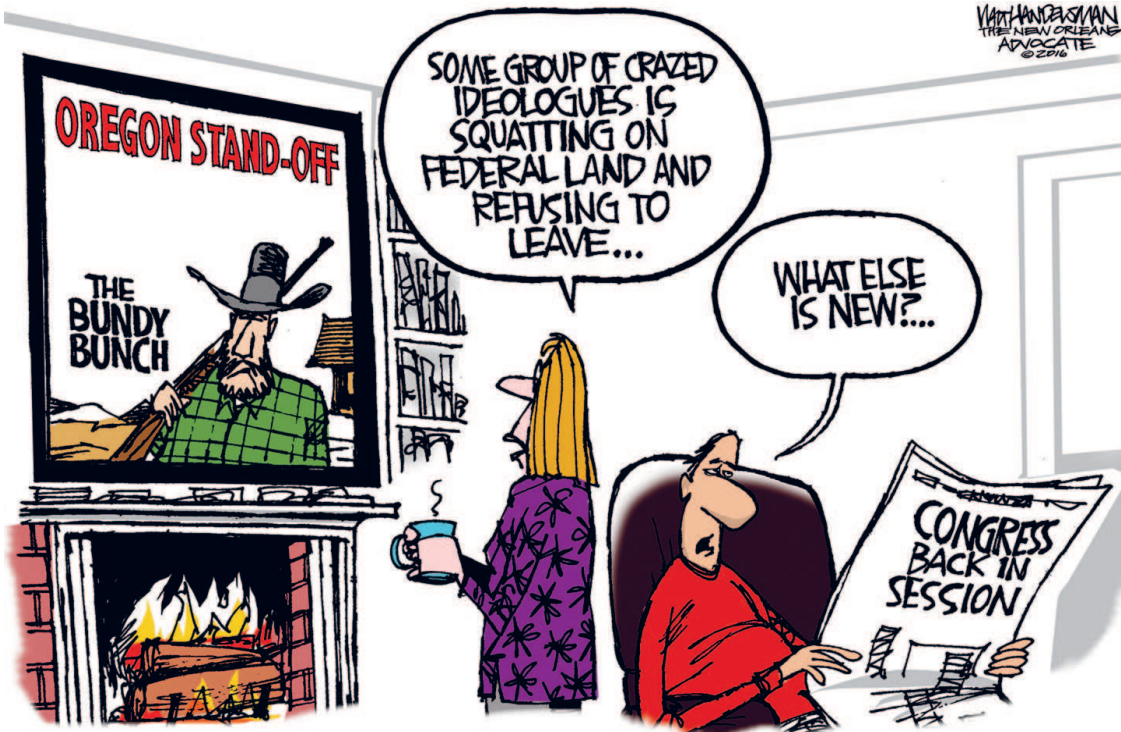


O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Armed bandits do not bring legitimacy to a cause. It doesn't work that way in our country.

These vandals fashion themselves as patriots, riding horseback while waving a large American flag, wearing cowboy hats, and presenting an image that tugs at the heartstrings of many Americans.

We're being played; plain and simple. There is some marketing genius in the illegal take-over of Malheur Wildlife Refuge and the more armed militants who arrive on the scene the greater the risk for a peaceful outcome. Ammon Bundy, by the way, is not a cowboy. He's a mechanic.

Perhaps he laments the loss of a lifestyle that isn't economically viable anymore. Many do. Fishermen on both coasts who over-fished their fisheries do. Workers whose jobs have been automated do. Things change. None of that, however, has anything to do with a wildlife refuge that has been legally created. In a remarkable effort to bring together all interested parties, hundreds of hours of

collaborative effort went into the current operating plan for the Malheur Refuge. The community of Burns fully participated. Bundy wasn't present for this process, but now feels inclined to make his own declaration for the right use of the land.

Likewise, the issue of sentencing for the Hammonds also is a nonsensical segue to the occupation of the refuge. The Hammonds are being held to the law which stipulates mandatory minimum sentencing. This is a harsh law and one of the reasons our prisons are so full. Making a stand at the refuge, cutting down fences, bringing in more and more armed extremists, doesn't address how this law could be changed.

The tactics of the Bundy Band of Bullies are abhorrent to the values of democracy. More harm than good is being done to the plight of law-abiding public-land ranchers who pay grazing fees and abide by regulations.

Bundy's trumped-up cause is not valid.

See **LETTERS** on page 23

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Rain/snow 42/27	Rain/snow 37/27	Mostly cloudy 40/30	Rain 40/29	Chance rain/snow 40/28	Mostly cloudy 39/na

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Member

Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Nugget Newspaper,
P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.
Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.

Publisher - Editor: Kiki Dolson

News Editor: Jim Cornelius

Production Manager: Leith Williver

Classifieds & Circulation: Teresa Mahnken

Graphic Design: Jess Draper

Proofreader: Pete Rathbun

Accounting: Erin Bordonaro

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area. Third-class postage: one year, \$45; six months (or less), \$25. First-class postage: one year, \$85; six months, \$55.

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Rachel Marsden

American Voices

There's been much hand-wringing over U.S. President Barack Obama's announcement of gun-related executive actions. Few issues spark as much passion in America as gun control, and it's almost impossible to have a rational conversation about firearms these days without some people freaking out about having their guns taken away.

Nervous gun owners should take a deep breath, since tighter gun control would require government to suddenly become efficient at something.

Despite being mugged in Paris a few years ago, I don't feel naked or vulnerable because I don't carry a gun. Firearms aren't readily available in France, and there isn't much of a gun culture there. There were no guns involved in my incident.

Having grown up in Canada, where there is no gun culture, my first thought during the mugging did not run automatically to "gun." Sure, some bad guys in France obtain guns, but it's tough to find them when there aren't many available.

That's not the case in the U.S., and it simply never will be.

Mutually assured destruction is at the very foundation of the U.S. Constitution and American culture. It's an interesting paradox: The U.S. has for decades sought to prevent hostile nations from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, yet many Americans find it perfectly acceptable for any nutcase to be able to legally pack heat — even though a rogue state poses far less danger to the average American than a rogue citizen. America hasn't been nuked, but a great many people have died in gun incidents.

I don't think that Obama's new firearms measures constitute a nefarious plot to disarm America any more than I think advocating healthy eating is a plot to rip the Coke cans out of people's hands. However, it's hard to believe that the best plan this administration can come up with to combat gun violence is one that essentially dumps more cash into the pockets of government agencies.

According to the White

House statement announcing the new measures, the Federal Bureau of Investigation "will hire more than 230 additional examiners and other staff" to process background checks. The Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms will get another 200 enforcement agents. As if additional personnel will make an already-bloated bureaucracy more efficient.

The departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security get to "conduct or sponsor research into gun safety technology."

Why not offer huge tax incentives for firearms manufacturers to do this? Why does every new idea have to cost the taxpayer money?

An extra \$500 million of proposed funding will go toward increasing access to mental health care. Maybe mental health care would already be accessible and affordable if Americans didn't have sky-high health-care premiums as a result of the healthcare lobby being in cahoots with the Washington establishment.

A new rule will require background checks for the purchase of weapons at gun shows or through a trust or corporation. Yet one of the most critical elements of the whole plan is being dumped into the laps of the individual states. According to the White House statement, "Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch has sent a letter to states highlighting the importance of receiving complete criminal history records and criminal dispositions, information on persons disqualified because of a mental illness, and qualifying crimes of domestic violence."

The federal government will be able to line the pockets of its agencies under the guise of hiring, outreach, customer service and technological innovation — things that the government is generally pretty awful at doing.

So, American gun owners, you can sit back, clean your firearms and relax, knowing that the government is too awash in bureaucracy and ineptitude to get to you any time soon.

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