

Bundy takeover of wildlife refuge top Oregon story of 2016

By Steven Dubois
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — It was truly a story for all of 2016. Ammon Bundy and his followers seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on the day after New Year's and remained in the headlines through December. Unsurprisingly, the armed takeover and its aftermath was overwhelmingly selected Oregon's story of the year in the annual vote conducted by The Associated Press.

Every editor or news director who submitted a ballot of 10 top stories included the takeover on his or her ballot, and nearly everyone had it No. 1.

After that, it was a jumble. The gap between Bundy and the second-biggest story — the defeat of Measure 97 — was larger than the gap between the No. 2 story and the 10th-place finisher.

Here are 2016's top 10 stories:

1: Ranching standoff — Ammon Bundy, joined by his brother Ryan and a small band of followers, took a "hard stand" against federal control of Western lands and the imprisonment of two ranchers. They seized a wildlife refuge in Harney County and spent weeks in a slow-motion standoff with authorities.

The Bundys were eventually arrested in a Jan. 26

traffic stop that included the fatal shooting by police of occupation spokesman Robert "LaVoy" Finicum. Four holdouts remained at the refuge until February 11.

Eleven men pleaded guilty ahead of a fall trial that ended with the surprise acquittals of the Bundy brothers and five co-defendants. In an explosive ending, a team of federal marshals tackled defense lawyer Marcus Mumford as he yelled at the judge. Paperwork flew as Ammon Bundy's attorney writhed on the ground, screaming.

The year closed with some defendants trying to withdraw their guilty pleas and government prosecutors pressing ahead with a February 2017 trial for seven remaining defendants.

2: Measure 97 — Concerned about paying higher prices, voters rejected a measure that would have required corporations with at least \$25 million in Oregon sales to pay more in tax to help fund education and other services. Opponents and supporters of Measure 97 battled bitterly during the campaign. More than \$43 million was spent, making it the most expensive ballot measure fight in Oregon history.

3: Train derailment — A Union Pacific train moving crude oil derailed June 3 while traveling through the Columbia River Gorge.

The derailment in Mosier released 42,000 gallons of oil and sparked a massive fire that burned for 14 hours. Protesters and some government officials said the crash showed that transporting oil by train is dangerous, unnecessary and should be prohibited.

4: Higher minimum wage — Lawmakers boosted the minimum wage, agreeing to a tiered, geographical system that gained national attention. On July 1, Oregon's minimum wage increased to \$9.50 in rural counties and \$9.75 in urban counties. It was the first of several increases scheduled to take effect every July through 2022. In that final year, Portland's minimum will be set at \$14.75, smaller cities at \$13.50 and rural areas at \$12.50.

5: Marijuana legalization — The decision by Oregon voters to approve recreational marijuana was the No. 1 story of 2014 and putting it into practice ranked No. 3 last year. It hit the Top 5 again in 2016 as communities grappled with ordinances to regulate the hours of operation and the locations of producers, processors, wholesalers, as well as retailers and medical marijuana grow sites. Scores of communities approved local sales taxes on recreational marijuana sales. Some places that had opted out of allowing marijuana businesses

reversed course.

6: GOP victory — Dennis Richardson became the first Republican to win a statewide race in 14 years with his victory over Democrat Brad Avakian in the race for secretary of state. The last Republican secretary of state was Norma Paulus, who held the position in the 1980s.

7: Oracle settlement — The state's long-running legal battle against Oracle over the failed Cover Oregon health exchange reached a quiet conclusion. Oregon said the company defrauded the state by charging \$240 million for a health insurance website that didn't work. After seeking \$6 billion in damages, the state settled for \$25 million in cash plus software licensing agreements and technical support. Oracle also agreed to contribute \$10 million to a state technology education program.

8: No coal — In a victory for environmentalists, Oregon lawmakers approved a bill to eliminate coal from the state's energy supply by 2030 and provide half of customers' power

with renewable sources by 2040. The legislation made Oregon the first state to eliminate coal by legislative action, and placed it among a handful of other states with renewable energy standards 50 percent or higher.

9: Trump protests — Progressives in Portland were in the vanguard of protests following the presidential election that sent Donald Trump to the White House. Though most marchers remained peaceful, some blocked traffic, vandalized storefronts, sprayed graffiti and smashed car windows. More than 100 people were arrested during two weeks of demonstrations.

10: Duck dynasty collapses — In January 2015, Oregon played in the first College Football Playoff national championship game. This year, the Ducks won just two Pac-12 Conference games, capping their worst season since 1991 with a 10-point loss to, gulp, Oregon State. The swift collapse of a team known for its high-octane offenses and ever-changing uniforms led to the firing of coach Mark Helfrich.

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