

MY VOICE

How we exercise our rights is a choice

Independence Day — a time to celebrate the founding of our great nation and all that has passed to secure our freedoms. Our democracy. Our rights.

Perhaps our most important rights as Americans are the ones secured by the First Amendment. Maybe that’s why it’s the First. It is where I’m secured the right to write about being right, even if doing so isn’t right.



ROGER BARNES
LA GRANDE

This piece was originally a lengthy evisceration of the reasoning behind the recent news there would be no

charges filed in a certain case involving a certain church and their actions. The dissertation was flawless in logical trajectory and biting in satirical reductions to the ridiculous. It proved beyond any reasonable doubt that I am right, and there are few things I enjoy more than proving myself right.

But I tossed it out. A few words from someone I’ve come to respect reminded me of a few words from someone else I’ve come to respect. Sometimes you have to choose between being right and doing right.

While I know I’m right about what should have happened regarding that certain church and some certain laws, carrying that torch around any longer and inviting or inciting others to join me wouldn’t be right.

When choosing between being right and doing right also involves what someone may believe is their right, things can get even messier, right? I know, this is getting silly. I’ll stop soon.

Exercising a right isn’t always right.

You may have the right to not wear a mask as you’ve been asked to and to gather in numbers and ways that you’ve been asked not to. You may have these rights even though exercising them risks the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness for everyone around you and everyone who will be around them. By refusing to wear a mask you are making a statement, we all understand that. You should also be aware you are saying more than you might think. What you are really saying is you care more for your right to make a statement than you care about anyone else.

If you insist on exercising these rights, remember that I have the right to point this out to you and everyone around you. Oh, and if you have the right to not wear a mask, I have the right to not wear pants. Think about it.

For the sake of those you care for and those who care about you, the next time you plan to exercise a right consider how those who founded our nation and enumerated these rights for you would ask you to exercise those rights with due respect.

PS: If anyone from a certain church wishes to exercise their right of free speech and freedom to apologize, I’m certain The Observer would offer space in their publication.

About the Author

Roger Barnes has lived and worked and sometimes voiced his opinions in La Grande for 25 years. He welcomes your comments and criticisms.



Your views

Don’t take a chance with lethal virus

Please remind the youth of Union County that getting COVID-19 is a terrible, life-threatening thing. We know it attacks internal organs and blood. We don’t know how lethal it will be over the ensuing 10, 20 or 30 years. Nobody should want to take a chance on getting a virus that could kill us miserably in 20 years, though there are little or no symptoms now.

*Nicholas Smith
La Grande*

Time to show flexibility in keeping local businesses afloat

My reason for writing is two-fold: First to voice my disappointment in the recent La Grande Landmarks Commission’s vote to delay the opening of the bowling center, Brickyard Lanes, and second, to rally support for getting this community space open and available for family use as soon as possible.

As a lifetime resident of La Grande, I know full well the benefit of access to healthy, family-friendly activities, and I believe bowling is a great example. The many years I spent as a patron of Blue Mountain Lanes yielded many benefits: exercise, the opportunity to participate on a team, cherished memories and lifelong friends. My children participated in bowling leagues as well and share my regard for this positive family experience.

The Kiesecker family has invested deeply and worked tirelessly to bring the sport of bowling back to our community. Their renovations of the old Eagles building on Jefferson Avenue have been tasteful and conscientious with regard to the building’s inclusion in the Downtown Historic District. It saddens me that while we watch our city strive to provide a substantial range of activities for our families the Landmarks Commission has failed to find a suitable solution to avoid addi-

tional financial burden and construction delays to the completion of the bowling center.

With all due respect to the ideal of preserving the historic value of our sweet town of La Grande, I should hope those regulations would not become more important than the practical needs of our own residents. In this light, I encourage the commission members to reconsider their recent decision with the hopes of finding a less costly and more timely solution that will get Brickyard Lanes open for business.

No doubt our community is now facing its share of economic burdens as the result of COVID-19. Isn’t this the perfect time to show flexibility and support in keeping our local businesses afloat?

I have decided to donate \$500 to the Kieseckers to assist with their renovation costs. I would like to encourage others to make contributions as well. Communities by definition require people to work together for the benefit of all, and I believe this is a worthy cause.

Thank you, in advance, to the commission, for your consideration of this matter, and to the citizens of La Grande for your support of our businesses.

*Karen Van Blokland
La Grande*

Be aware of what your political party leaders are saying

As an unaffiliated voter, I often receive mail from political parties seeking my vote, my donation or both. Usually I merely read the entreaty and recycle it. However, recently I was struck by the language from a particular organization, referencing the “irrational hatred” of another party as well as accusing them of “propaganda campaigns,” “bogus witch hunts,” “vicious attacks” and “non-stop spewing.”

I was sufficiently disgusted to put this question out to affiliated voters:

Do you know what your party leaders are sending out in print? And do you understand that the words these organizational powers use implicate their members by association? These particular words were rude, inflammatory and manipulative. Are you choosing to be members of that club?

Each of us has the job of checking that the leaders of our chosen groups represent us in the way we want to be represented. Please take the time to ensure the messages of your chosen party align with how you want to present yourself in the world.

*Patrice Barreto
La Grande*

Beneath the protective equipment, keep dancing

You can dance, go ahead and carry on.

In a pandemic world consumed with survival we can hide from death by hiding from life, or so it seems. Drawing inward and hiding from life gives a sense of security and insulation, I suppose, but does it really and what kind of a life is that?

I don’t think we were meant to exist as an ostrich with tail feathers in the air and head in the sand, and it can’t possibly be good for the mind nor the soul. We were meant to lead a “Full Monty” life, and it’s up to each of us: We can either get after it or hide from life with all its crooked roads, detours and dangers.

During these hard times, no amount of pleading or begging can lure the apprehensive out of their cocoons, so to ease their troubled minds (those unwilling to leave the comforts of isolation), the Montys need to keep their distance and wear the appropriate protective equipment. But underneath it all, the Montys are doing the Hokey Pokey, trusting we will all turn ourselves around at some point to dance the dance.

And that’s what it’s all about.

*Mike Hayden
Cove*

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office:

221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

State Sen. William S. Hansell (29th District/Pendleton): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., S-423, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1729. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/hansell. Email: sen.billhansell@oregonlegislature.gov.

State Rep. Greg Barreto (58th District/ Cove): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-384, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1458. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto. Email: gregbarreto@oregonlegislature.gov.

State Rep. Greg Smith (57th District): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-482, Salem, OR, 97301; 503-986-1457. Heppner office: P.O. Box 219, Heppner,

OR 97836; 541-676-5154; Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithg. Email: rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

City of La Grande: Mayor Steve Clements, City Manager Robert Strobe; P.O. Box 670, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-1309; fax 541-963-3333.

Union County Commissioners: Donna Beverage, Matt Scarfo and Paul Anderes; 1106 K Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-963-1001; fax 541-963-1079.

Wallowa County Commissioners: John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts; 101 S. River St., Room 202, Enterprise, OR 97828; 541-426-4543, ext. 11; fax 541-426-0582.

Elgin City Councilors: Mayor Allan Duffy, 501 N 11th St., 541-437-1016, mayor@cityofelginor.org; Mary West, councilor3@cityofelginor.org; Kathy Warren, councilor6@cityofelginor.org; Risa Hallgarth, councilor2@cityofelginor.org; Rocky Burgess, councilor1@cityofelginor.org; David Reed, councilor4@cityofelginor.org; Ryan Martin, councilor5@cityofelginor.org.

La Grande City Council: Mayor Steve Clements, Gary Lillard, Nicole Howard, Corrine Dutto, Mary Ann Miesner, Jim Whitbeck, Justin Rock; through the city manager’s office, 541-962-1309.

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Phone:
541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon):
1-800-781-3214
Fax: 541-963-7804
Email:
news@lagrandeobserver.com
Website:
www.lagrandeobserver.com
Street address:
911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande

POSTMASTER

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STAFF

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