

Walla Walla debates future of Whitman statue

Whitman started mission nearly 200 years ago west of what is now Walla Walla

By **EMRY DINMAN**

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — More than a dozen members of the Walla Walla community and others spoke in support or in opposition to the removal of a statue of pioneer Marcus Whitman during a recent meeting of the city arts commission.

The statue of Whitman, the physician and missionary who established a mission nearly 200 years ago just west of what is now the city of Walla Walla, stands on the campus of Whitman College, which bears the figure's name.

Whitman has come under renewed scrutiny in recent years for his role in the colonization of the region, helping to establish the Oregon Trail and the introduction of a measles outbreak that killed Native peoples. In 2019, a vandal defaced the statue with

spray paint, misspelling the word "genocide" on its base.

Still, other members of the community oppose removing the statue, arguing doing so erases the legacy of a founding father of the region who sought to heal the sick.

The arts commission meeting Wednesday, Jan. 19, came in response to a request to remove the statue of Whitman that was started by Emily Tillotson, a professor at Walla Walla University.

In 2020, a local team of art researchers proposed removing the statue of Whitman and relocating it to Fort Walla Walla Museum.

"The statue tells us a lot, and it has a rich and fascinating history, but again, that history is not the history of Marcus Whitman, it is not the history of the Walla Walla Valley, and it's not the history of Whitman



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File

The Marcus Whitman statue stands at the corner of East Main Street and Boyer Avenue in Walla Walla in September 2020.

College," Libby Miller, director of Whitman College's Maxey Museum and art history professor, said during a September 2020

Walla Walla Arts Commission meeting.

The statue, Miller and her team argued, does not represent the histor-

ical figure, a medical missionary from the 1800s. While Miller noted in an interview that she has since learned Whitman did on at least one occasion wear buckskins, it was not his typical style of dress, but appeared to be chosen by the artist to honor a symbolic representation of "frontier mythology."

Arguments against the statue

During the arts commission meeting, Whitman College professor Stan Thayne, speaking on his own behalf, compared this depiction to the fictional monument of Jebediah Springfield on The Simpsons.

"My point here is that the coonskin cap frontiersman is a generic form of monumental-ization of every-town America," Thayne said. "Every town has their coonskin cap frontiersman, violent killer who went and did the dirty work of the town to kind of clear the way so that white

settlers could come settle there."

Tillotson, speaking also on her own behalf Jan. 19, spoke in favor of removing the statue and potentially placing it in a museum.

Joy Garcia, a licensed clinical social worker serving as a therapist at Yellowhawk Tribal Center for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, argued the statue's continued presence prolongs historic trauma against the region's Indigenous peoples.

The CTUIR's website states Whitman was killed in 1847 by a band of Cayuse, along with some of their Umatilla and Nez Perce allies, for a number of reasons, including for the stealing of Native property, encouraging the increase of immigration and the belief that Whitman, a doctor, had poisoned Native peoples.

The arts commission will meet again in March to consider its recommendation. The Walla Walla City Council has the final say over the fate of the statue.

Campaign cash isn't tied to rule on bid for governor

By **GARY A. WARNER**

Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Nicholas Kristof's campaign for governor has raised \$2.54 million as of Friday, Jan. 14, even as the Oregon Supreme Court considers whether he can run at all.

If the answer is no, Kristof will be able to keep the cash in his state campaign finance fund for use on a future race or to dole out to other candidates.

Kristof quit his job as a columnist for the New York Times to run for governor of Oregon. A native of Yamhill County, he now lives on a farm in the area.

He formed a campaign finance committee in October 2021, listing himself as a Oregonian and his occupation as "Journalist, Author, Farmer."

The Oregon constitution says a candidate for governor must have resided in the state for three years prior to running. The definition of what constitutes residency is largely unspecified.

Kristof has argued that he has always considered himself an Oregon resident and offered hundreds of pages of comments, writings and other material to back up the claim.

But Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan announced Jan. 6 that a review of voting and tax documents led her to decide Kristof was a New York resident for much of the past three years and therefore did not qualify to run for governor.

"The rules are the rules and they apply equally to all candidates for office in Oregon," Fagan said in a statement.

Kristof appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court, saying the Democratic establishment in the state was trying to keep voters from deciding if they wanted him in the state's top job.

Two top Democrats from Portland had already announced plans to run: House Speaker Tina Kotek and Treasurer Tobias Read. Fagan was a Democratic state senator from Portland prior to election as secretary of state in 2020.

"A failing political establishment in Oregon has chosen to protect itself, rather than give voters a choice," Kristof said.

Fagan supported having the jurists make the final decision.

While the legal road-

block has stymied Kristof for the time being, he's continued to campaign and raise funds. The money will stay with his campaign operation, no matter what the court rules.

"At no point is he required to stop raising money nor is there a requirement to return any contributions," said Molly Woon, Fagan's spokesperson. The Secretary of State Elections Division regulates state political contributions.

Kristof has declined to discuss the "what ifs" of losing his appeal, including what he would do with the campaign funds.

"Having presented a strong legal case, Nick is actively campaigning and expects to be on the ballot, as do the thousands of Oregonians in 35 of 36 counties who support him," said Melissa Navis, spokesperson for the "Nick for Oregon" campaign committee.

There's relatively little to regulate. Oregon has one of the most liberal campaign finance laws in the nation, due to court rulings that determined limits are a violation of the freedom of speech guaranteed in the state constitution.

Any person, company, group or other entity can give an unlimited amount of money, as long as it is reported. Nike founder Phil Knight contributed over \$2 million to the unsuccessful 2018 governor's campaign of former Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend.

While Kristof's legal limbo could stretch to the end of the month, his fund-raising hasn't skipped a beat. He's logged 52 reported contributions since Jan. 1, totaling just over \$134,000.

Kristof has touted receiving contributions from thousands of Oregon voters all over the state. The amounts are small enough that the individuals often do not have to be identified in state campaign finance reports.

But the biggest spenders on Kristof's effort continue to be from outside of Oregon.

Since the beginning of 2022, the campaign has received \$50,000 from LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman of Menlo Park, California, and former Disney Co. chair Robert A. Iger, who lives in Albany, New York.

Another \$10,000 was given by New York investor Dennis Mehiel. Other contributions include \$5,000 from Colorado

philanthropist and environmental activist Jill Soffer.

Of the 14 contributions of \$1,000 or more, only one came from an Oregon resident: \$1,000 from Portland attorney Robert Schlachter.

Kristof has been ramping up his campaign spending as well, with nearly \$65,000 in reported expenditures since the beginning of the year, including \$10,000 for Scottsdale, Arizona-based Brainstorm Consulting.

Berger Hirschberg Strategies consultants in Washington, D.C., received \$19,300.86, while \$6,250 was spent with Washington, D.C.-based advertising firm GMMB.

Bully Pulpit Interactive, a San Francisco communications company, received \$10,000. Authentic Campaigns, a consultant firm based in Richmond, Virginia, received payments totaling \$9,500.

Kristof still has \$1.9 million in the bank, a campaign fund second only to the \$2.9 million raised by former Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, who is mounting an unaffiliated campaign for governor.

As an independent candidate, Johnson would skip the primary and plans to submit about 24,000 verified signatures to the secretary of state by the end of August. If she meets the number, she would go on the November ballot to face the winner of the Democratic and Republican primaries.

Elections officials nix school choice measure

By **ALEX BAUMHARDT**

Oregon Capital Chronicle

SALEM — Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan rejected a petition Wednesday, Jan. 19, to get a school choice measure on the November 2024 ballot because it was not specific to one issue.

The proposed measure included changes to the Oregon constitution that would allow parents to choose any school for their child and provide state funding for students

homeschooling or in private schools, including those providing religious education.

The petition came from Education Freedom for Oregon, a nonprofit based out of Tualatin, and Marc Thielman, superintendent of the Alsea School District. Thielman, who lives in Cottage Grove, is also a Republican candidate for governor.

Thielman filed the petition Sept. 29, 2021, with 1,776 signatures along with written statements of sup-

port from three people.

Reed Scott-Schwalbach, president of the Oregon Education Association, and Jim Green, executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association, submitted remarks through an attorney opposing the measure.

Fagan said in a statement that she rejected the measure because it violated the state's "single subject rule," which requires ballot initiatives to address a single subject, topic or issue.



Kristof

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