

Opinion

— GUEST OPINION —

PILT and SRS: my thoughts

By Dennis Linthicum
Special to The Baker County Press

Federal Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payment schemes are not in the best long-term interests of Oregon's citizens. I have attended countless budget meetings where hard-working folks strive to manage their limited resources. However, the hard-truth is that relying on these monies will only place us on the same street corner next year, with the same cardboard sign, asking once again, "Please, Sir, More ..."

All of these federal disbursement models are outdated, whimsically amended, and hobbled by bureaucratic ineptitude. They are built on a mishmash of legislative actions from self-interested parties that are forged deep within the marbled halls of our nation's distant capital. Worse yet, most federal actions are rank with either executive or legislative over-reach or pregnant with deplorable raids on the US Treasury.

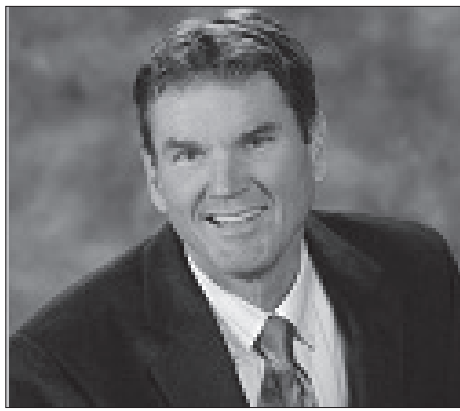
- Executive Over-reach #1 – Between 1904 and 1906, President Roosevelt went tearing through Oregon maps creating ten new forest reserves: 1904 – Baker City; 1905 – Chesnimnus, Maury Mountain, Wallowa and Wenaha; 1906 – Blue Mountains, Fremont, Goose Lake, Heppner and Siskiyou.

- Defensive Response – In 1907, Oregon's U.S. senator Charles W. Fulton introduced an amendment to eliminate the president's authority to establish national forests in Oregon. This amendment appropriately gave responsibility back to Congress and changed the name from forest re-serves to national forests in order to make it clear that the forests were to be used, not preserved.

- Executive Over-reach #2 – In 1907, the night before signing Sen. Fulton's bill, Roosevelt grabbed another 16 million acres, deridingly known as the "Midnight Reserves." Opponents were furious, but five new national forests were proclaimed in Oregon: Blue Mountains National Forest (added to the older Maury Mountain Forest Reserve), Coquille National Forest, Imnaha National Forest (created from the older Wallowa and Chesnimnus Forest Reserves), Tillamook National Forest, and Umpqua National Forest (Coast Range).

- Congressional Pandering—The next year, 1908, Congress invented the 25 percent annualized receipts sharing plan to placate states and counties whose land assets were completely nationalized through Roosevelt's takings.

- Whimsically bureaucratic—Since counties first impaled themselves in this economic death trap, Congress has never repealed federal misdoings but have only amended or modified the original acts with cheery acronyms like, "Payment in Lieu of Taxes," "Safety Net Payments," "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act," "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act," "Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act," "The Emergency Economic



Submitted Photo

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Stabilization Act" and the "American Taxpayer Relief Act."

This ought to remind everyone of the Obamacare debacle. It's cleverly named the "Affordable Care Act" but there's little that's affordable or caring about it. What was sold as a well-intentioned new idea has turned into a wasteful, ineffective nightmare. We should know better than to believe the cleverly named bad policies from Washington, D.C.

Look at the 1976 Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA). This is where PILT was birthed. This is also where Congress declared a fundamental transformation of its Public Land goals. Up until this single event the federal government had a legislative mandate for disposing of public lands. After FLPMA the focus became one of land retention.

Land retention is the skunk in the woodpile. This is exactly why PILT and SRS exist. These monies are aimed at buying your complacency through the bankrupt budget and monetary policies of our federal government. Don't mistake their offer for a mere 25 percent of the revenue as the answer to your county's difficulties

Instead of talking about PILT, SRS and O&C monies, it is time to start talking about the Transfer of Public Lands to states, counties and private enterprises. Dismantling federal land jurisdiction would give local communities control and management over their own natural resources.

It's time for us, as loggers, ranchers, entrepreneurs and elected officials to believe in our own future. Do not allow the Politburo in Washington D.C. to plan your life for you. Focusing on government handouts is never the right answer.

I know local families, businesses and communities are hurting. I know county services will face constraints but Congress needs to admit that it has promised more than it can deliver. The feds have over-spent your hard-earned money by throwing \$18.2 trillion down the proverbial rat-hole while your commissioners are scrounging the pavement looking for Road Fund nickels and dimes.

Instead of being placated by the empty words of career politicians we should place our faith in local control and open markets as the best means of restoring and preserving our water, fish, game, timber, and mineral resources. This is the road we must be willing to travel to secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

1-63 hides candidates' beliefs

To the Editor:
I believe measure 1-63 is based on nothing more than a straw man: one who is set up as a cover or front man for a questionable enterprise.

The idea that only Republicans can vote for County Commission positions is that straw man. The real story is the Baker County Democrats didn't put forth a single candidate for the Commission. I believe the Democrat party did this on purpose so that they could set up this straw man.

In reality, a small percentage of Democrats turned their backs on their "firmly held" beliefs and changed their party registration so as to try to influence the primary vote. I guess the county Republican voter registration numbers took a nose dive after election day.

Now we get to the real charade: 1-63. Nonpartisan positions result in candidates that don't want the voters to know what their ultimate goals are, once elected. The electorate gets a homogenized group of candidates who have not figured out where they want to go or how to get there. Or, the candidate who won't tell you their goals and aims because this is a nonpartisan post and, "I will do my best after study and introspection on a case-by-case basis." Read: "There is no way I will ever tell the electorate who I am or what I am."

I happen to like knowing a person's beliefs, past actions and possible future actions, by knowing their affiliation with like-minded people. The R, D, L, I, etc. is a good place to start.

At least that's how it looks from the back of the turnip wagon.

Al Aschenbrenner
Baker City

1-63 tries to fix a system that isn't broken

To the Editor:
I would like to share my thoughts pertaining to the measure 1-63 making the county commissioners positions nonpartisan. I have read several arguments in favor of this measure.

I feel like I am being asked to vote for some fantastic candidate who has not been identified. This person represents everyone equally and is able to fix all of our problems with just a quick swipe of their pen. In my experience this person does not exist. If there were one person capable of single-handedly fixing all the issues affecting our county, I am sure they would wear a cape.

I had the opportunity recently to read a letter to the editor written by Kate Rohner. Although I disagree with Mrs. Rohner on measure 1-63, she mentioned her volunteering on the county budget committee. I appreciate her contribution to the county and I would argue that the county's past success can be attributed to the talented people on the various committees rather than the achievement of one person.

In fact, an accurate cross-section of the views of the county can only be achieved through committee. One committee that comes to mind is the central committee of each political party. These are one of the few committees with elected members rather than appointees. Do you know who the PCP representing your party is in your precinct? If so have you talked to this person about current issues? Has your party formed a central committee? If you answered no to any of these questions maybe the system isn't broke it just needs more involvement.

The candidate that comes to mind to receive support from all parties was Fred Warner. When he changed his party affiliation, most felt he was being deceptive. I don't know if Fred got some bad advice or what, but the system didn't fail. It was trying to manipulate the system and political maneuvering that affected his ability to stay in office the most negatively.

I passionately advocate for local

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control and keeping all decisions local. I feel we need to covet our ability to disagree. Once we allow decisions to be made elsewhere, be it Salem or Washington DC, our opinions will have no effect on the outcome.

I feel this measure champions having no opinion and does little or nothing to protect our ability to make decisions as a community. I urge you to vote no on measure 1-63.

Kody Justus
Baker City

1-63 promotes Democrat movement

To the Editor:
It looks like we will be voting on a ballot measure 1-63 in May, making voting for a Baker County Commissioner non partisan.

This means they don't have to let you know what kind of values they possess, or the core beliefs that drives them.

This ballot measure is the brain child of the Democrats. We already know what the Democrat values are from what is going on in the Democrat controlled state legislature.

Raising the price of gas with a carbon tax that goes to enrich the alcohol producers at our expense, as well as a business having to pay sick leave if they have over five employees. Democrats are sponsoring five different bills that would raise the minimum wage up to \$15 dollars an hour. They are also shutting down all mining in Oregon unless you want to pay through the nose for the privilege. Oh and by the way they are grabbing your kicker refund too. And on and on.

Last November Baker County rejected the nonpartisan state ballot measure, but that didn't deter them, oh no. Democrats are trying again to slip this through the back door in Baker County by having you vote for non partisan County Commissioners.

I don't know about you but I kind of like to know what the candidates running for office believe, we darn sure know what the Democrats believe and where they want to take our state and county. Stand with me and vote no on measure 63.

Chuck Chase
Baker City

Vote no on 1-63

To the Editor:
The concept of Non-Partisan County Commissioners is being advanced by those who possess beliefs contrary to the conservative principals of the majority of people in Baker County. The current office holders have been elected by the people to represent them.

All individuals, including Non-Affiliated with any party, have the opportunity to vote if they want to vote in the general election.

Currently under Oregon statute there are three (3) types of County Government structure:

- 1) General Law – County Courts;
- 2) General Law – County Commissioner (currently Baker County form);
- 3) Home Rule Counties.

I view the non-partisan initiative as an attack on the current party system promoting a move toward a single party political system

Under our current form of government if someone resigns, or is deceased, the replacement process allows for representation from all over the county to participate in the selection of nominees for appointment to the vacant position, which is true local representation.

Don't forget this issue was voted down in a similar state-wide measure last November with the State initiative, and both Democrats and Republicans agreed this was a bad idea.

Maintain local control and keep core beliefs of candidates part of the selection process.

Vote no on Measure 1-63.

Peggie Longwell
Baker City

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