

# Opinion / Politics

— EDITORIAL —

## Merry Christmas!

With this issue, *The Baker County Press* has been bringing the news to Baker County for two full years!

During last year's year-end editorial, we mentioned many of the things we'd learned during our first 12 months. This year we've been reminded that the learning doesn't end—and we've been reminded that the only thing that never changes is change.

Right now we're also thinking about loss and gain.

Over the past few months, we've grieved, from a distance, the loss of a handful of subscribers who passed away—most, unexpectedly.

In one instance, a gentleman sent in a renewal with a note that made us smile when we read it. Two weeks later we received an email notice from OSP that he'd been killed in a vehicle crash outside Baker City. His note, with black ink, blocky handwriting, and all, was still sitting on the desk in the editorial office ...

This week, we learned that the man who lived at the final stop on delivery route #2 had passed. He had, over the past two years, developed the habit of

calling from time to time to chat, and we'll miss it. We didn't realize until we heard from his family about the struggle to make arrangements for his last wishes, how tight finances had been for him, or exactly what it meant for him when he said he wanted to support our little family business. We are humbled. And thankful.

While we're not family members or even close friends, and while we recognize we're still only on the periphery of these people's lives, the losses makes us pause and take a moment of silence for those who actually were closest. It makes us think. It makes us take another look at the people around us.

The universe has a designed balance, though, and so we've also felt the gain of others around us this year.

We've had people come into our lives that we don't know how we ever did without. We know they know who they are!

We've had businesses and subscribers come out and support us with kind words in the community, advertisements, and an email of thanks here and there. They send in tips and ideas for things they'd like to see in our paper. For these folks, we're especially grateful.

And as always, we thank our reporters, ad sales folks, delivery assistants, friends and family. We are blessed. Once again, we're celebrating the chance to serve you all, to bring you the Baker County news, in 2016.

—*The Baker County Press Editorial Board*

— GUEST OPINION —

## Automatic voter registration coming Jan. 1

By Cindy Carpenter and Jeanne P. Atkins

Starting January 1, 2016 Oregon's new voter registration law, Oregon Motor Voter, will take effect. This law was created by House Bill 2177, passed by the Legislature in the 2015 Session, and signed into law by Governor Kate Brown last spring. As your County Clerk and Secretary of State we want to make sure you know how this program will work for Oregonians.

Oregon Motor Voter will modernize voter registration in Oregon and provide a secure, simple, and convenient way for more Oregonians to become registered voters. This innovative program is the most major change in voting since statewide vote by mail was implemented in the year 2000. We are already seeing other states follow our lead on this pioneering program.

Here's how it will work:

Starting January 1st, automatic voter registration is available if you are eligible to register to vote and you apply for your original, renewal, or replacement license, permit, or ID card at the DMV. To be eligible to register to vote in Oregon you must be an Oregon resident, a U.S. citizen, and at least 17 years-old.

Once you have engaged the Oregon Motor Voter process by visiting the DMV, you will receive a card and a pre-paid postage return envelope from the Oregon State Elections Office. With this card, you have three options:

- Do nothing. You will be registered



Submitted Photo

Jeanne P. Atkins (not pictured) is Oregon's 25th Secretary of State. Cindy Carpenter (above) is the Baker County Clerk.

to vote as a nonaffiliated voter (not a member of a political party).

- Choose a political party by returning the card. Joining a political party will allow you to vote in its primary elections.
- Use the card to opt-out and decline to register to vote.

Once registered, you will receive a ballot and voting instructions in the mail about two weeks prior to Election Day. When you vote, your ballot is secret and your choices cannot be matched up with your name. Oregon has a proud tradition of trailblazing. It's in our state's DNA. In addition to the simple registration methods already available to Oregonians—like online voter registration—Oregon Motor Voter will help expand access to voting and help us put a ballot in the hand of nearly every eligible voter in the state.

As we work toward making voter registration more secure and accessible, we are setting an example for civic engagement that can become the model for the nation.

For more information contact us at your County Clerk's office or visit [www.oregonmotorvoter.gov](http://www.oregonmotorvoter.gov).

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### A letter to Santa

To the Editor:

Today was not a good day; for that matter the past few weeks nothing has seemed to go right. Hours cut at work at the beginning of the month, bills piling up, the wolves howling at my door. The weight of the world seemed to be on my shoulders and it was dragging my mood down.

I have never been a fan of the Christmas holiday; always finding it to be commercialized and about what presents you buy others directly relates to their happiness. I haven't believed in Santa for many years but try to keep the belief alive in my children.

My son who is twelve still believes in the spirit of Mr. Claus. This year though I was having a really hard time getting into getting into the holiday spirit; more so than usual. I was getting hung up on my inability to get cool presents for my kids even though both of my kids kept telling me that they didn't need anything this year. They are great kids but this just drove my mood down farther. How could I deserve such great kids when I was struggling just to keep a roof over their heads?

My wonderful wife, who is a rock and so much better than I deserve, has been with me through thick and thin and kept telling me that we will get through this. I still kept myself awake at night worrying. So when today rolled around and we were going to the DHS foster parent Christ-

mas party I was hesitant to go but knew I needed to for my family.

All the kids were looking forward to seeing Baker County's own Santa Claus. I have known this man for years and he has watched my kids grow. He is the reason that my son still believes in Santa. I believe in my heart that he is the best Santa in the world because he truly lives what the spirit of Christmas is supposed to be. After all the kids at the party got to sit with Santa I decided to go over and say hello.

When I walked up, a heartwarming smile crossed his face and he gave me a big hug. In my ear he whispered, "You are loved, brother, and you will have peace and happiness." These few words hit me like a sledgehammer. He didn't know what had been going on in my life lately. Then great weight seemed to lift from my shoulders and tears came to my eyes. He didn't fix my problems, but put them in prospective. I am a lucky man. I have great kids, an awesome wife, and good friends who are there to pick up my spirits when they are low. All it took for me to realize this was a little of Santa's magic and the kind heart of a good man.

You are loved, Rick Forester, and I hope you continue to be Santa Claus for many more years. I want to thank you for making me believe in the spirit of Christmas once more.

Wade Foersterling  
Baker City

## Bentz announces team

State Representative Cliff Bentz has chosen these people to help represent District 60's (Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur and a part of Lake County) interests during the upcoming 2016 Legislative Session, which will convene Monday, February 1, 2016.

Andrea Dominguez, of Ontario, Oregon, is Rep. Bentz's District Director. She will provide assistance in operations from the District Office in Ontario. A member of Rep. Bentz's staff since 2009, Dominguez holds a Bachelor's degree in Media Arts with a concentration in Journalism from Eastern Oregon University, and an Associates' degree from Treasure Valley Community College. Dominguez staffs Rep. Bentz's Eastern Oregon office, works on research projects, assists in responding to constituent concerns, drafts press releases, etc.

David Rocker, from Portland, Oregon, joins Rep. Bentz's staff as Legislative Director. Mr. Rocker earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of Oregon School of Law, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and International Studies also from the University of Oregon. He currently is a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP, a law firm

in Portland. Mr. Rocker will manage the Salem Capitol office, provide policy analysis, and oversee bill research, hearing backup, task force participation, and social media messaging.

Emily Marchant, from Coos Bay, will staff the Representative's front office in the Capitol. Marchant holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Integrated Media from Stephens College in Missouri. She previously worked as an Intern in the Missouri House of Representatives. Marchant will maintain the Representative's calendar, organize email correspondence, and direct the flow of visitors, lobbyists and legislators through the Salem Capitol Office.

Brian Trick, from Corvallis, will serve as a volunteer Legislative Intern for Rep. Bentz's team during the 2016 Session. Brian is currently working on his Masters of Forestry Degree at Oregon State University, and will graduate in March 2016. Mr. Trick holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Economics from the University of Utah, as well as a Graduate Certificate in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota. He also previously worked as a Communications Staffer for the Office of the Governor

in Minnesota, as well as a rangeland firefighter in Eastern Oregon.

Kylie Cairo, from Lebanon, will also be a volunteer Legislative Intern in Rep. Bentz's Capitol Office. Kylie is a sophomore at Oregon State University, majoring in Political Science and will graduate in 2017.

The Legislature has allocated \$4,666 to each legislator to pay for staff and office supplies for the one month, "even year" 2016 Legislative Session. Two FTE (Full Time Equivalents) are paid for from this fund. Since Rep. Bentz maintains his legislative office in Eastern Oregon year-round, he uses contributions from his campaign fund to pay for the District Office in Ontario.

Bentz is currently Vice-Chair of the Revenue Committee, and a member of the Energy & Environment Committee, the Transportation & Economic Development Committee, the Joint Tax Credits Committee, and the Legislative Counsel Committee. He is also Co-Chair of the Public Infrastructure Commission, a member of the Governor's Transportation Vision Panel, and Assistant Minority Leader to the House Republican Caucus.

— CONTACT US —

### The Baker County Press

PO Box 567  
Baker City, Ore. 97814

Open Monday-Thursday for calls  
9 AM - 4 PM  
Open 24/7 for emails  
Office location: TBA

Phone: 541.519.0572

[TheBakerCountyPress.com](http://TheBakerCountyPress.com)

Kerry McQuisten, Publisher  
[Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com](mailto:Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com)

Wendee Morrissey, Advertising and Sales  
[Wendee@TheBakerCountyPress.com](mailto:Wendee@TheBakerCountyPress.com)

David Conn, Advertising and Sales  
[David@TheBakerCountyPress.com](mailto:David@TheBakerCountyPress.com)

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### YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

#### President Barack Obama

202.456.1414

202.456.2461 fax

[Whitehouse.gov/contact](http://Whitehouse.gov/contact)

#### US Sen. Jeff Merkley

503.326.3386

503.326.2900 fax

[Merkley.Senate.gov](http://Merkley.Senate.gov)

#### US Sen. Ron Wyden

541.962.7691

[Wyden.Senate.gov](http://Wyden.Senate.gov)

#### US Rep. Greg Walden

541.624.2400

541.624.2402 fax

[Walden.House.gov](http://Walden.House.gov)

#### Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

503.378.3111

[Governor.Oregon.gov](http://Governor.Oregon.gov)

#### State Rep. Cliff Bentz

503.986.1460

#### State Sen. Ted Ferrioli

541.490.6528

#### Baker County Commissioners Bill Harvey; Mark Bennett; Tim Kerns

541.523.8200

541.523.8201

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