

# Opinion



Photo Courtesy of Phillip Wirth.

L-R: Keith Jones (editorial board), Jim Thurber, Marvin Wirth, Kerry McQuisten (editor), Jack Hoffman, Suzan Ellis Jones, Vivien McQuisten, Todd Hoffman, Andy Spinks. Off camera: Phillip, Jared and William Wirth, Georgia Hoffman.

## — EDITORIAL —

### ‘Gold Rush’ a golden opportunity

We’ve had, over the past week, the opportunity to first talk with several members of the public relations and production teams at the Discovery Channel, and then meet with some of the cast of the upcoming season of “Gold Rush,” which will be filmed in Baker County, starting very soon.

We have to say that this is the first breath of real county-wide economic development we’ve seen in our area in quite some time—and that’s exciting!

With the production will come dozens of job opportunities, and an additional influx—up to millions of dollars—into our community. On top of that, the tourism opportunities are limited only by entrepreneurial imagination.

Through this process, we’ve come up against legalese and nondisclosure clauses as well as a lot of information with which we were entrusted to keep “off the record” for now. We know exactly why the public relations and legal department lions at the gate are so careful.

Already in our primarily conservative neck of the woods, we’ve heard a few complaints about the

arrival of this show.

Some have contended that special consideration and perhaps lax standards were applied to the permit process for their mining operations. This is not the case. The Hoffman clan’s operations will fall under the auspices of the current mine owner, who went through what can only be described as an onerous process with the State.

We’ve heard complaints questioning why the gold has to be mined in the first place, and why the land is allowed to be “harmed.”

First off, if anyone knows the mining areas in southern Baker County, they’ll know they’re remote, covered with sagebrush and juniper—not to mention old mining tailings—and simple to reclaim, as far as reclamation goes. Hoffman’s crew has won awards in reclamation, by the way.

Additionally, what good does gold—this valuable natural resource—do for anyone if it remains buried in the ground?

Thankfully, it’s been our experience so far that the vast majority of our county is excited and welcoming of these miners and their production coming our way.

We view it as a blessing not only for us, but for their families. As Oregonians and conservative Christians, these laidback folks will be right at home anywhere they go in these parts. Already they’re reaching out to the community and agreeing to local event appearances.

Let’s do everything we can for them, and reach back.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

## — LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### Halfway rally was a success

To the Editor:

What a great February 6th rally in Halfway. I applaud its organizers, the community, and the leadership displayed by Commissioners Harvey and Bennett as well as from candidates Justus and Hoopes. This was the spirit of what makes this country great: freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and the Bill of Rights.

I’m disappointed in Mrs. Miller’s suggestion that the gathering was done in support of criminal activity. Anytime Americans are killed, it’s a tragedy. Had law enforcement been harmed or killed during the past few months in our area, we would have dedicated that rally to them as well. Thinking otherwise about this rally displays ignorance and short-sightedness.

I’m aware of several folks who visited the refuge during January in an effort to understand why fellow Americans would have taken such drastic measures. At the time, none of the “occupiers” had been charged with any criminal activity. Period.

I’m not advocating their now indicted actions, but had law enforcement sat down with them in an attempt to understand

their plight, I think reason may have dictated the day and no one would have died. Law enforcement never once tried to reason from what I observed; they merely just kept asking them to leave without addressing the root of the problem.

As a rancher, as a longtime local, and as a candidate running for office, Kody Justus’s courage in at least attempting to understand both sides throughout by a personal visitation is something to be commended.

Lastly, I’m shocked and saddened that Sheriff Ash not only didn’t support this rally, but that he called the main organizer and acted contrary to how a Constitutional sheriff should have acted worthy of my vote. His conduct appeared belittling and threatening. His and the BLM’s apparent overreaction to a non-event at the Interpretive Center is rather telling as well.

I believe in following law and order, and I love that we live in a nation of laws. But when did the Constitution become such a reviled document to be treated with disdain by so many Americans? I’m glad we have an election soon.

**Jake Brown**  
Halfway

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## — GUEST OPINION —

### Oregon constitution inconvenient?

By Sen. Doug Whitsett

Apparently, the Oregon Constitution has become little more than an inconvenience for our state’s majority party.

Last week, Senate Bill 1511, relating to cannabis, was brought to the Senate floor for a vote.

Section 17 of that bill clearly regulates the collection of state taxes on marijuana. The bill also has an emergency clause, making it effective immediately, upon the signature of Governor Brown.

The Oregon Constitution states, in Article IX, Section 1a, that no law can be enacted with an emergency clause that regulates collection of taxes.

For that reason, I asked for a parliamentary ruling regarding how the Oregon Senate could be voting on a bill that is clearly unconstitutional.

After conferring with Counsel, the Senate President stated that although the law created by the bill, as currently written, would be unconstitutional, voting on the unconstitutional bill was not an unconstitutional act.

He reasoned that a bill does not become a law until it is passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as being signed into law by the Governor.

It was explained the House of Representatives could amend the bill in committee before a vote of the full House. Further, the bill is not yet a law until the bill is signed by the Governor Brown, and she does have the authority to remove the offending emergency clause by line-item veto.

Finally, the courts could strike down the language that makes the new law unconstitutional, while preserving the parts that are within constitutional authority.

Therefore, technically, the act of voting on a bill that as currently written certainly will result in an unconstitutional law is not an unconstitutional action, because the bill is not yet an unconstitutional law.

My motion to refer the bill back to committee to remove the unconstitutional emergency clause was defeated on a party-line vote. Notwithstanding the Senate President’s Orwellian ruling, the bill passed then out of the Oregon Senate, on a party line vote, with all Democrats voting in favor, and all Republicans voting in opposition.

When we take office, we all voluntarily swear to uphold the Constitutions of both Oregon and of the United States of America. In my opinion, this kind of twisting of the law makes the meaning of those oaths hollow, at best.

Article XI, Section 6 of the Oregon Constitution prohibits the State from owning stocks in companies, associations and corporations, except under limited circumstances.

House Joint Resolution 203 proposes



Submitted Photo

Senator Doug Whitsett represents Senate District 28.

to amend the Oregon Constitution to provide that public universities are not constitutionally prohibited from owning stocks in companies, associations and corporations. It refers the proposed amendment to the people for their approval or rejection at the next regular general election.

That proposed constitutional amendment has merit. However, its companion bill is extremely misleading.

HB 4092-A specifies the ballot title, summary and explanatory statement for HJR 203. It asserts that the exact language in the statements shall be included in the voters’ pamphlet and on the ballot.

It further specifically prohibits review of the appropriateness of the language by the Attorney General and the Oregon Supreme Court.

The ballot title reads: AMENDS CONSTITUTION, ALLOWS INVESTMENTS IN EQUITIES BY PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES TO REDUCE FINANCIAL RISK AND INCREASE INVESTMENTS TO BENEFIT STUDENTS.

That phrase must have been extremely popular and persuasive in polling and among focus groups. It is repeated word-for-word in the result of a “yes” vote and the summary statements.

While investment in equities may result in greater investment returns, it may also result in significant losses. To allege that investment in equities reduces financial risk is beyond misleading. It is simply false.

The further statement that additional investment income could benefit students by minimizing tuition increases and enhancing student programs is equally specious. Not mentioned is that investment losses would have the exact opposite effect such as harming students, increasing tuition and depleting student programs.

Unfortunately, the Oregon Legislative Assembly has a long history of writing such misleading ballot titles. How better to trick Oregon voters to adopt amendments that the legislature has neither the political will nor the votes to enact.

The purpose of review by the Attorney General and the Supreme Court is to keep those ballot titles and statements honest and accurate. Once again, the legislative majority is willing to bypass those protections to ensure the election outcome they covet.

Please remember—if we do not stand up for rural Oregon, no one will.

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