

# Local

## Shawn Cox speaks locally

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Cox brought with her a number of photographs of the Bundy ranch, including their small home in the middle of it.

“These are not rich people,” she said.

Cox explained that out of the 52 ranching families who operated in Clark County, Nevada in the 1950s, Cliven Bundy, age 70, is now the only rancher left operating in the county.

“Who are the good people?” she asked. “People who take care of the land.”

Bundy ran cattle on the Bunkerville Allotment, over 145,000 acres, beginning in the 1950s, with his ancestors running cattle in that same area as far back as 1877. The ranch itself is 160 acres.

In 1991 the US Fish and Wildlife Service called a wide swath of rangeland endangered tortoise habitat, and later asked the Bundys to sell the government their grazing rights, and sign an agreement stating such.

Cox pointed out that this is still America—no citizen can be forced to sign a contract against his will.

Bundy refused.

Cox also pointed out that if the Federal government made the offer to buy those rights, then how did they later figure they owned them in the first place?

Today, 97% of Nevada’s lands are managed by Federal entities. In 2014, that number was 84%. In 2010 that number was just under 70%.

Cox echoed some of the Constitutional arguments voiced frequently by Montana State Rep. Kerry White and Utah State Rep. Ken Ivory, who agree along with many others and a Supreme Court Ruling, that the Federal government only has the constitutional power to first manage and then dispose of those lands back to state-level government management.

This viewpoint, however, is also met with great opposition from other politicians and scholars.

Cox explained that LaVoy Finicum befriended Cliven Bundy, and began studying public grazing laws and federal land dispensation.

When Bundy refused to sign the new agreement, which would have leveraged down the number of cattle he could run to a level that couldn’t sustain ranch operations, the BLM stated that its rights superseded whatever rights Bundy had claimed prior. Bundy stated he had paid his dues to Clark County and the State of Nevada. The BLM disagreed and began imposing trespass fines for his cattle, which still grazed that allotment.

A number of legal battles went back and forth over the years, with the courts ruling that the Bundys couldn’t claim pre-emptive grazing rights.

Fines and more fees were levied by the government, soon exceeding more than \$1 million. Cox said Bundy had never received this bill prior to the BLM releasing it to media.

In spring of 2014, the BLM moved onto the ranch with helicopters, heavily armed BLM staff, and dozens of various unmarked vehicles. The

helicopters began hazing the cattle.

“These were dark, unmarked vehicles,” said Cox. “They did not say police.”

BLM used the helicopters to push the cattle into several pens—400 head. The BLM agents either shot and killed or ran to death at least 10 of those that day, including one full-grown bull.

Cox said the BLM separated the newborn calves from their mothers and left the slick calves behind.

She said one male member of the Bundy family, David, was tasered and beaten. Another family member, the elderly aunt of Ammon Bundy (who would later come more into the picture at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge), was taken and hip-tossed into the gravel. Ammon came to her defense and was tasered four times. Photos of all these incidents were provided, including showing the unarmed females on the Bundy ranch attempting to face down armed agents from an unidentified agency.

CNN reported that Federal agents had been assaulted, along with one police dog, with no specifics given.

From the ranch, Cox said they could see snipers on the ridges above them with red laser lights darting around the ranch. She provided photographers of the snipers positioned there.

She made some calls and hired an airplane to fly over the scene, showing some aerial views of what appeared to be a vast military operation surrounding several pens of cattle.

Cox relayed how several men on horseback carrying flags lined the ridge at Bunkerville as a show of peaceful support. “LaVoy was the first rider,” she pointed out in the photos.

Responding to a call for help, protestors began to arrive in droves, standing in front of a BLM backhoe and dumptruck. A statement from the BLM claimed that an ATV driven by a protestor was crashed into their dumptruck.

However, Cox stated that the ATV belonged to Ammon Bundy who had parked it in front of the dumptruck in order to stop it, and the driver had run over it.

The BLM released another statement that the heavy equipment was to be used in “restoring fields.”

Cox said they all looked into the bed of the dumptruck and saw that BLM staff had been tearing the waterlines out of the fields and carrying them out the truck—the back was full of Bundy ranch waterlines.

The BLM set up sections labeled, “First Amendment Areas” where protestors were supposedly allowed to speak their minds.

One protestor informed them, “The first amendment isn’t an area.”

Cox showed several photos of that signage marking those areas.

In the end, Federal charges were brought against 14 of the protestors who later arrived, resulting in mistrials, acquittals and convictions. Cliven Bundy faces trial this year.

Flash forward to 2016 and the Malheur Refuge standoff, which began when members of the Bundy family and their supporters traveled to

Harney County in support of ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond, ages 73 and 46 at the time.

Supporters from the Bundy camp and others viewed the Hammond situation as similar Federal overreach to what they had experienced.

Cox joined the 600 or so Hammond supporters who attended a rally in Burns for the Hammond family nearly by accident. Cox said she didn’t originally intend to attend, but someone needed to take video of the Sharp family who planned to go and sing Christian hymns, so at the last minute, she piled in the truck.

The Hammonds’ incarceration unleashed protests around Harney County, Oregon, and across the nation after the U.S. Department of Justice appealed the original sentence they had already served.

That first conviction came in 2012 for arson charges, which fell under the Federal Anti-terrorism Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, after the Hammonds burned approximately 130 acres of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-managed grazing land adjoining their own property.

Prosecutors argued during trial that the Hammonds had set one fire to cover up poaching, and offered testimony from a hunting guide and one member of the Hammond family described as having mental issues. Deer carcasses, which do not completely incinerate in wildfires, were never found after the fire and no poaching charges were ever brought.

The 9th Circuit Court granted the appeal in October 2015, and ordered the Hammonds to fulfill a five-year minimum sentence, which had been waived by the previous judge.

The penalties didn’t just come with what most feel is an excessive sentence.

The Hammonds, during the course of their legal battles, were also given a \$400,000 fine—they have paid over half so far—and have been ordered to give the BLM the right of first refusal should their financial situation force them to sell their family ranch. To date, the family has incurred over a million dollars in legal bills, and now, after the incarceration of their husbands, the Hammond wives carry the day-to-day operations of the family ranch.

The Hammonds turned themselves in to Federal authorities back in January of 2016 and were transported to prison in California.

Cox said that the Hammond family was aware that they were on their way to the rally in Burns, as Ammon and Cliven had spoken to them before they left.

Whether the Hammonds had any knowledge that several of the rally attendees would follow Ammon and Ryan Bundy to the refuge after the rally, was debatable—most attendees at the rally were not aware of any such plans.

Cox didn’t go into how the leap was made from rally to refuge in her presentation, but she did say that once they were there, the goal was to get word of their protest out—and attracting media attention

was how to do it.

She said while at the refuge, they spent time in prayer. Cox repeatedly said she felt divinely inspired to get the message of government overreach out to the public, and felt God had worked several miracles during the process. One example was a flock of geese circling the penned cattle so the Bundys knew where they were kept.

She spoke briefly about the hours surrounding the shooting of LaVoy Finicum, stating the group inside two vehicles had intended to locate Sheriff Glenn Palmer in John Day, approximately an hour’s drive from the refuge.

Inside Finicum’s white pickup were Cox, Ryan Payne, Victoria Sharp and Ryan Bundy.

She said at the first stop, they opened the windows and yelled to the men at the roadblock where they were going—which was to a sheriff. She said she didn’t see any identification and wasn’t sure to whom they were speaking. Military? Law enforcement? They drove off quickly.

Down the road they encountered what she called a kill zone, and said it was her thought that those in the vehicle were never intended to walk away from that location. She said that Finicum’s pickup hit the snow and became stuck, and that he exited the vehicle with his hands up, without shutting the engine off or taking it out of gear.

Cox said a “shower of bullets” hit them, and they could see the red dots from laser sites inside the rig. She then could see men in camouflage emerge from the trees around them—that was the first time she saw who was shooting, she said. As Cox testified in trial later, she repeated at the presentation Saturday—she didn’t know who the men were or what agency they were from.

Cox said she had broken her foot a year and half prior, and as the last person out of the pickup, was having trouble walking in the ice. When she stepped out, she said, “LaVoy was facing me, and I could see he was dead.”

Cox said she looked for blood on the snow and saw three bullet holes in Finicum. The tires on the pickup—still in gear and stuck—were spinning on packed ice and deep snow.

Cox said she saw Finicum’s loaded gun laying inside the truck.

Ryan Bundy had been shot in the shoulder.

She was instructed to walk up the hill, where Victoria Sharp, age 18 at the time, apologized. The men had asked her Cox’s name, and Sharp said she didn’t remember; however, she’d given them the approximate age of 30, which made her laugh.

Cox was held near a van at the edge of the scene, she said, for about three hours—told she was only being detained not arrested. She said she’s tried to puzzle out why there were no warrants or why none of their names were known. Thus far, over a dozen FBI informants have been identified, according to Cox, as having been among the refuge occupants, and a court order has instructed their names be redacted from records.

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## Fire on Ash Street

On September 18, Baker City Fire responded to a reported structure fire at 1917 Ash Street, owned by Carol Guttridge.

Crews arrived to a fire in the cellar entrance where the water heater and furnace are located.

The occupant had partially extinguished a small fire using a garden hose and bucket of water.

Fire crews used thermal imaging cameras to check for possible fire extension. Smoke cleared from residence using a high velocity fan. The fire is still under investigation.

\$1,500 worth of property and contents were lost in the fire, with \$118,500 saved.

## Bell arrested in Haines

On September 24 at approximately 11:55 p.m., the Baker County Consolidated Dispatch Center received a 911 call reporting a disturbance at 913 Cole Street in Haines.

Deputies from the Baker County Sheriff’s Office responded to the location and at the conclusion of the investigation arrested Laree K. Bell, charging her with Assault in the Fourth Degree and Interfering with Making a 911 call.

During the investigation, deputies learned Bell had been with her roommate, Darrel Day, at another location during the day, consuming alcohol. Upon arrival to the Cole Street residence, Bell became combative and began throwing items at Day, causing injury to his person, and breaking items in the home.

When Day called 911, Bell took the phone from him and threw it into the yard.

Prior to deputies arriving on scene, Bell had fled. Deputies searched the area, but did not locate Bell. When the deputies returned to the home, they observed a female run to the back of the residence. Bell was contacted inside the home and taken into custody without further incident.

## Hells Canyon Dam traffic to close Oct. 2-4

Traffic over Hells Canyon Dam will be restricted Monday and Tuesday next week and during the following week while crews use heavy equipment to remove stoplogs from the dam’s spill gates.

Oct. 2–4, the road will be closed to all traffic during the following times:

Oct. 2: Road closed 7:30-10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Oct. 3: Road closed 7:30 a.m.-noon and 1–5 p.m.

Oct. 4: Road closed 7:30–10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

If work is completed ahead of schedule, one-lane traffic could be restored on Oct. 4.


Stoplogs are long rectangular beams that are stacked in front of the dam’s spill gates to control water flow. Located 21 miles downstream of Oxbow Dam, Idaho Power’s Hells Canyon Dam began generating electricity in 1967 and has a nameplate generating capacity of 391,500 kilowatts.

## Distracted driving law changes

Oregon’s new distracted driving law goes into effect October 1. Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner says the public needs to be aware that “the exemption for farming or agricultural operations” has been removed.

Under this law, it is illegal to drive while holding or using an electronic device (e.g. cell phone, tablet, GPS, laptop). Exemptions apply for: When using hands-free or built-in devices, if 18 years of age or older; Use of a single touch or swipe to activate or deactivate the device or a function; While providing or summoning medical help and no one else is available to make the call; When parked safely, i.e., stopped at the side of the road or in a designated parking spot; It is NOT legal to use the device when stopped at a stop light, stop sign, in traffic, etc.; Truck or bus drivers following the federal rules for CDL holders; Using a two-way radio: CB users, school bus drivers, utility truck drivers in the scope of employment; Ambulance or emergency vehicle operators in the scope of employment; Police, fire, EMS providers in the scope of employment; HAM radio operators, age 18 years or older.

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