

Editorial

Division in County Heightened by Election

By Gina Perkins

Baker County is deeply divided politically. While many may agree on the perceived problems, far fewer agree on the solutions. 2016 events in Harney County and a rally held outside of Halfway in February seem to underscore the division. As the election ramps up, one only needs to take a glance at the different candidates in the Sheriff and County Commission races to see the opposing stances.

Robert Crawford of Halfway wrote a lengthy piece which appeared in the *Hells Canyon Journal* regarding the rally that was held on Feb. 6 outside of Halfway. He also addressed a letter which was written by Jake Brown local Oath Keeper and strong supporter of Kody Justus, candidate for Baker County Commissioner and John Hoopes, sheriff candidate, who is part of the 'Constitutional Sheriff' movement. Crawford expresses his opinion as to why many locals had negative perceptions about the rally in Halfway that weren't just out of "ignorance and shortsightedness."

"Both the timing and the tone of the rally seemed geared toward bringing to Halfway the very sort of mess that was still going on in Burns," wrote Crawford.

"Like many people, I first became aware of the planned rally on Jan. 28, when a flyer advertising it was posted on the Facebook page 'There Really Is a Place Called Halfway, Oregon,'" Crawford wrote. "At that point, the occupation of the Malheur Refuge headquarters by an armed group of squatters had been going on for most of a month, and strong opinions about that occupation were deeply entrenched," Crawford continued. LaVoy Finicum had also been shot and killed by the OSP after fleeing a roadblock.

Crawford said the timing and tone of the Halfway rally caused concern for many citizens writing, ".....under the stern image of a martial-looking drummer boy in Colonial garb, appeared the words, 'DEDICATED TO THE HAMMONDS and TO THE MEMORY OF LAVOY FINICUM and JACK YANTIS.'" (I cannot for the life of me figure out what Jack Yantis had to do with any of this except as an emotional ploy, but there he was.) After that, the planned agenda: 'Peaceful Protest Main Street March'—as in Burns, a month before. After that, the target: "FEDERAL OVERREACH." Hey! Same as in Burns! After that, an invitation to 'Come a day early if you want—RV spots available.' RV spots? As in 'out of towners' like the ones who descended on Burns? Strangers with guns?"

"As for Sheriff Ash...." Crawford wrote: "Travis Ash is one of the finest men I know, a man I am proud to have taught in school and proud to see as Baker County Sheriff."

"I absolutely cannot find it in myself to blame our sheriff, sworn to serve and protect the citizens of this county, for declining to support or attend an event apparently drummed up out of the explosive emotions of the moment....or for trying to discourage an event that showed real potential to become a public safety issue."

"If he [Ash] failed to support this rally, however that may shock and sadden its sponsors, it may be that he does not share the organizers' interpretation of either the Constitution or his duties."

"As far as I'm aware, neither Sheriff Ash nor anyone else was being asked there to present an opposing viewpoint or debate anyone—the rally wasn't advertised as a forum to discuss whether there really is a problem with federal overreach, what to do about it....Instead, the stated agenda seemed to suggest that those issues were already decided, and the imperative now was to get fired up over a pre-conceived strategy for rooting out the feds. Aside from any concerns the Sheriff might have had as a police officer, responsible for maintaining public order and safety, I cannot imagine why anyone should expect him as a citizen to have supported or attended an event that espoused opinions he might oppose."

"As for his being a 'Constitutional' sheriff, I very much hope that people concerned about this will clarify what they mean. The word 'sheriff' appears nowhere in the Constitution of the United States, so I am left to wonder whether the word 'Constitutional' is being used here as it is in the literature of any number of somewhat shadowy groups who adhere to their own particular notions of what the Constitution means....."

In other words, the understanding most of us have of how the rule of law operates in this country and how our founding document should be interpreted are brushed aside and replaced with the interpretations of self-appointed 'experts.' Is this what is meant by a 'Constitutional' sheriff?

Other such groups call on the sheriff to block federal agents from operating within their counties—even to arrest agents attempting to serve federal warrants—or to refuse enforcement of laws they consider unconstitutional. When we examine this view closely, we see clearly what's at stake..... and why rational citizenship requires us to yield to that Court's decisions even when we disagree with them. A national patchwork of semi-sovereign counties, some hewing to the Constitution as we know it and some choosing to interpret the founding law by their own lights, would be a Balkanized mess in which people could merrily commit crimes in one county and flee to the protection of the next to avoid punishment."

"It's not too great a leap to imagine armed standoffs between deputies at the county line, and gross levels of abuse and corruption would be virtually guaranteed. 'Equal protection' would become a joke as this county or that one decided that laws protecting the rights of minorities were best left to 'local control.'

"Is this the construct Sheriff Ash should support?" "Other groups declare that the States are sovereign—never mind that both the Constitution and President Washington's letter of introduction specifically say otherwise, and that this question should have been settled to anyone's satisfaction at Appomattox Courthouse in 1865. Is this what we're asking of our sheriff?"

"I'd very much appreciate clarification of what 'Constitutional' means here. If it means lawlessness, a great country torn asunder, attempts to root out the federal presence without any coherent plan to replace it, and so forth, I'm afraid I'm not interested, and hope our sheriff is not interested either..." said Crawford.

Op - Ed

Need For Transmission Project is Still Strong

Idaho Power looks forward to reaching some major milestones for the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project in 2016. The federal permitting process is in the home stretch, with a final Environmental Impact Statement expected from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) this year, and potentially a Record of Decision, too. Idaho Power will finalize its application for Oregon's facility siting process after the momentous BLM events.

It has been a long, productive road to get to this point. Idaho Power's 2015 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), a long-term resource planning study, recently reaffirmed that B2H is essential to serving future growth in customer demand. Previous IRPs also have identified the need for this transmission project, going back to the 2006 IRP.

The need for B2H is still strong. When finished, the project will help provide low-cost energy to Idaho Power's customers in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon. The project also will interconnect with existing transmission facilities owned by our project partners PacifiCorp and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), allowing greater amounts of electricity to move throughout the Pacific Northwest. This helps meet a regional need and provides benefits to the entire area, much of which is served, directly or indirectly, by those two providers. In addition, the project allows Idaho Power to serve its growing load without building a carbon-emitting resource.

We thank all of the communities along the B2H route for their past input and continued engagement with the project. That public involvement began in 2010 with the year-long Community Advisory Process and continues today. The hundreds of hours spent by numerous folks, from landowners to public officials, to help find the best route for the project have been invaluable. We look forward to continuing to work with you as permitting of B2H continues, and through the construction of this project that benefits the entire region.

About the Author: Mitch Colburn is the leader of Idaho Power's 500-kV projects group.



Submitted photo
Mitch Colburn

Guest Opinion

What's New at the Chamber?

I'm happy to say that in my first 60 days at the Chamber, I've worked with our Board of Directors and Office Manager, Cassie Petrucci to bring about many changes.

Internally, we've adjusted staff and office efficiency, reviewed our programs and events to make positive changes, and enhanced the benefits of membership. We have increased our outreach into the community through the press and revamped many of our communication pieces to focus on members. Our team is stronger than ever and always here to assist our members.

I always want to hear our member's concerns and what they need from us. As a membership organization, I know I am here to serve our members. Given that, we have restructured to focus on our member's needs and are working with legislators to hear their voice. Our focus for the future is jobs, growth and a pro-business agenda.

The economic partner of the Chamber, Baker County Economic Development, strives to bring new businesses, and therefore jobs, to our community. It is through their efforts that we have seen continued interest in our great area. Visitors from out of the area amazed by the high quality of life and low cost of living we enjoy. Travelers are mesmerized by the beauty of this community and are thrilled with the activities and sites Baker County has to offer.

Going forward, we will continue to actively develop our relationship with the Transient and Lodging Committee in order to cultivate a robust tourism experience that supports area businesses. The weeks and months ahead will be an important time for our community and the Chamber. We will continue to strive to be one of the best Chambers in the state and stand behind our members to make their businesses flourish.

We hope you join us and enjoy the many benefits of a membership with the Baker County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau.

Shelly Cutler,
Executive Director
Baker County Chamber of
Commerce and Visitor's
Bureau
490 Campbell Street,
Baker City
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shelly.cutler@visitbaker.com
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Haines United Methodist Church
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TREE SCHOOL EAST

**Saturday, April 23
Baker High School**
A one-day mini-college for family forestland owners, foresters, farmers, contractors, loggers, arborists, teachers, and the general public

25 Education classes, including:

- Post-Fire Forest Restoration
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- Understanding & Protecting Real Property Rights
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Plus vendors, exhibits and demonstrations.

**\$50 per person, includes snacks & lunch.
Register by April 15 by calling 541-523-6418
or online at extension.oregonstate.edu/baker**

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North Powder Girls' Volleyball/Basketball

14th Annual Alaskan Halibut Fundraiser
April 23, 2016

Powder Valley Gymnasium
4 sessions 1:00 to 2:00 P.M.
2:00 to 4:00 P.M.
4:00 to 6:00 P.M.
6:00 to 8:00 P.M.

\$20 per plate
(Please make checks to PV Girls' VB/BB Teams)
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541-898-2244 ext 8847 (school)