

he/they have been “co-opted” (read: forced) into their current lifestyle. Oh, my. His ultimate (and only) solution? Bring “Section 8” type housing into the ritzy, uppercrust neighborhoods. For what purpose?

To assuage the guilt that Rooke-Ley says out-of-touch liberals should *not* have? Does he seriously believe the classes will magically mix because they’re suddenly brought into some sort of closer proximity? Does he seriously believe the NIMBY giant won’t rear its head and quash any such notion flatter than a pancake?

Here’s an idea for Rooke-Ley. How about creating affordable housing developments that don’t require government aid to be able to obtain? But no, it’s more of the same tossing of crumbs (compassionately done, of course) that liberals love to accuse conservatives of doing. Just keep them on the dole and they’ll be happy and vote Democratic when needed. That’s where liberals are out of touch, and one reason why the disaster called Trump has better than a dog’s chance of prevailing in November.

Karl Stout
Eugene

BERNER CONFESSION

I confess to being enamored of Bernie Sanders, having “felt the Bern” since last year. At first, I was attracted by his Brooklyn accent: I hail from the same neighborhood, having been born and reared where “the tree grows.”

But then, over time, my attention became riveted by his policies, and I felt a surge of optimism, dreaming of a different and more fair United States. His sense of decency and his incorruptible personal and political history cemented my belief in him. I changed my long coveted “independent” voting status to “Democrat” so that I could cast my primary vote for him.

Now that Bernie is no longer in the running, the choice between voting for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump has left me depressed and in a dilemma. Endless criticism has been written about the deficits of these two remaining contenders; I don’t have to replay them. Suffice it to say that I cannot in good conscience cast my ballot for either Secretary Clinton or Mr. Trump. Even as Bernie endorses Hillary Clinton, I cannot do it.

So here I am: I have never not voted. I

cherish my right to vote. When I suggested to a friend that I just couldn’t do it this time, he said, “Do you love your country?” That’s precisely the problem. I do love my country.

Joyce Curtis
Eugene

RURAL FIRE

Many of your readers live in the county, beyond the city limits, in the various Lane fire districts. It seems many friends and neighbors are not familiar with the fire restriction and rules. The rules, evaluated annually, are developed by the Oregon Department of Forestry and apply in most rural areas.

There are thousands of stands of forests in Lane County, public and private. Right now, Lane County is on alert for “moderate” fire danger. It is dry “out here” beyond the city line, in spite of a little summer rain.

This year there are many changes to the usual list of regulations and restrictions. For instance, now any gas-powered machine (ATVs, mowers, tractors, etc.) cannot be used from 10 am to 8 pm because of lack of moisture or the dew-point available during the summer days. Users must have shovel and water available.

And an one-hour minimum “fire watch” is the new normal. Hand tools are making a comeback in our neighborhood. The “industrial forestry” activities are regulated and have stricter standards, including fire-fighting equipment on board such as large tanks of water and hose, and much longer fire watches after logging, loading or debarking, etc. Of course, this also means no off-roading, open fires, fireworks, smoking, etc.

With the amount of drought-stressed and dead trees increasing, low creek flows, we need to conserve the ground water, including shared aquifers of our wells and springs during yet another droughty summer. We need to stretch the ground water as wisely as possible for household uses, orchards, gardens, and potentially fire-fighting.

Let’s not drain our aquifers as we look to the lovely, sunny days of summer to come. Help preserve our countryside, fields and meadows and forests by careful and informed use. Together we can make a difference. Check out the Oregon Department of Forestry’s website for more details.

Maureen and Harrick Hudson
Spencer Creek Valley

VIEWPOINT BY ANN KNEELAND

Meddling with the People’s Rights

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY WANT TO KEEP THE PEOPLE AT BAY

The Lane County Commission is considering a proposed ordinance that would give five elected officials a stranglehold over the people’s local initiative power.

Let’s be clear: The initiative and referendum power belongs to the people free from government interference, as recognized by the Oregon Constitution. The people’s right to circulate petitions is core political speech protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The commissioners’ proposed meddling with the people’s initiative rights is patently unconstitutional.

Why, then, has the Lane County Commission taken a sudden interest in interfering with the people’s law-making powers?

Because Lane County residents have secured permission to circulate three initiatives to protect Lane County residents’ health, safety and welfare by banning industrial harms and recognizing our legal authority to make these decisions in our own community. With enough qualifying signatures, these initiatives will appear on county ballots next year for the people’s votes.

Two of the initiatives ban corporations from engaging in industrial activities that harm local residents and the environment. One bans the aerial spraying of herbicides, and the other bans the use of GMOs in agriculture while recognizing residents’ rights to be free from these corporate harms.

The third initiative recognizes the people’s broader authority to write and pass local laws that would recognize residents’ rights to health, safety and welfare, ban industrial harms and prevent corporations from throwing out the people’s laws. In

a failed effort to stop this initiative, a farm and forest industry group recently lost a legal challenge in the Lane County Circuit Court (Case No. 16CV28768) that asked the court to find that the initiative was not “of county concern.”

The court ruled that the question of whether or not an initiative addresses a “matter of county concern” cannot be decided pre-election, only post-enactment. This same rule applies to the Lane County Commission.

But did the commissioners take note of this? No. Undeterred, the County Commission has directed County Counsel, paid by the taxpayers, to revise a proposed ordinance submitted to the commissioners by a forest industry executive.

Jay Bozievich continues to profess concerns about county funds wasted to advance initiatives that are not “of county concern.” This is a transparent pandering to a rational concern of voters about fiscal responsibility. The additional cost of adding an initiative to an existing ballot cycle is marginal. But adding another level of legal review — an appeal that initiative proponents could file to challenge a commission’s decision about whether an initiative is “of county concern” — could be costly to taxpayers. Either way, the value of the people’s constitutional rights at stake — recognized and protected by the Oregon and U.S. constitutions — is far greater than any false promise of cost-savings.

In addition, Bozievich’s concern about initiatives he believes are not “of county concern” or “clearly” unconstitutional ignores Oregon’s established history of challenging existing laws. Oregon has passed legislation legalizing death with dignity, which is

illegal at the federal level. Oregon has legalized medical marijuana, which is illegal at the federal level. Oregon denied marriage equality to residents, which has since been found to have been unconstitutional.

As Oregon voters, we may or may not agree with each of these laws, but we cannot deny that they are the seeds of social change and government reform. And this is the beauty, power and obligation of our country’s core democratic ideals.

Therefore, take note, when We the People of Lane County claim our inherent authority to protect our rights above harmful corporate practices and profits, our own local government is willing to take aggressive action to limit the people’s law-making rights at the behest of corporate interests.

Behold: This is an in-your-face reminder that corporate power and money operates at all levels of government.

Brace yourself — We the People must be vigilant to protect these constitutional rights from our local government’s efforts to erode them.

Take action and support local efforts to protect and engage our local initiative process. Check out CommunityRightsLaneCounty.org and join the monthly Community Rights Action meetings on the third Monday of each month from 6 to 8 pm at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street.

And join me at City Club on Friday, July 29, to discuss this pressing community issue.

Ann Kneeland is a Eugene-based attorney who has defended the initiative rights of citizen groups in six Oregon counties where residents seek to stop fossil fuel infrastructure development, GMO agriculture and the aerial spraying of herbicides/pesticides, and recognize their right to local community self-government. She is a member of Community Rights Lane County.