

# FORMER BUNDY ATTORNEY TALKS TO TEA PARTIERS ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION

Local attorney Michael Arnold was the guest speaker at the monthly 9-12 Project Lane County meeting discussing constitutional law Aug. 9.

Arnold is known for his high-profile cases such as defending mixed martial artist Gerald Strebendt in his murder trial and briefly becoming Ammon Bundy's attorney after traveling to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge during its occupation earlier this year.

9-12 is a conservative chapter of a national group founded by Glenn Beck in 2009. The 9-12 Project is a Tea Party group that focuses on "building and uniting our communities back to the place we were on 9/12/2001, united as Americans, standing together to protect the greatest nation ever created." The local chapters still meet regularly on the second Tuesday of the month at Izzy's Pizza & Buffet in Eugene.

The meeting of about 20 people began with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance while a projector played a slideshow alternating between anti-liberal cartoons and quotes from historical figures such as Karl Marx and Andrew Jackson mostly speaking about national security.

After the prayer and pledge, members were encouraged to stand up and share their thoughts about the past month. Most of the two dozen people in the room who spoke talked about the Democratic National Convention, questioning why "illegal aliens are allowed to speak at a national convention" and "inviting the mothers of criminals to speak."

Once everyone had spoken, Arnold talked for nearly two hours about constitutional law. He focused on the Bundy's occupation of the refuge near Burns. Arnold's talk mainly educated 9-12 members about constitutional law and answered questions about the government's rights and motives.

According to an email sent out notifying 9-12 members of the talk, "Michael is a supporter of the U.S. Constitution in it's [sic] original intent."

The Malheur protest's long-term goal was to transfer federal lands to private ownership or local government control. The U.S. government owns 47 percent of all land in the West and a majority of the land in Oregon, according to *The New York Times*.

Arnold spoke about the enclave clause of the Constitution that states, "All Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings."

The Bundys argued that the federal government's ownership of the Malheur refuge is a violation of the Constitution. The 26 defendants in the case are set to face trial in September. One of the ringleaders, Jon Ritzheimer, pled guilty to conspiring with Ammon Bundy and others to prevent Interior Department employees from doing their jobs at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

As Arnold spoke, 9-12 members asked questions on topics ranging from 2nd Amendment rights to border security. When one member asked why logging rights are being prohibited, Arnold outlined the difference between the laws in National Forests and those on land owned by the Bureau of Land Management.

Arnold discussed the constitutional rights of each situation posed by the members and laid out the reasons why the federal government does or doesn't have authority in certain situations.

He usually came to the conclusion that the federal government is overstepping its bounds.

"You don't have to bow down to our government slavemasters," Arnold said. ■



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