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OUR VIEW

Grant County group marginalized for good reason

A surprise document, a confused local government, and a team handpicked by the sheriff trying to pull a fast one. That’s the story in Grant County right now.

As reported by the *East Oregonian* earlier this week, Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer deputized 11 residents to write their own natural resource plan, which they presented unbidden and unannounced to the county court on Sept. 30.

State law is muddy on the matter of Palmer’s right to deputize residents to create a forest plan. Oregon statute 204.635 reads in part: “The sheriff of any county may appoint deputies in the county for the purpose only, and with authority only, to receive and serve summons and civil process in any suit or action.”

We don’t think the sheriff followed the letter of the law and the “deputized” group’s plan should not be given consideration, nor the coordination status they demand.

But even if the legal gray area were more black-and-white, the group — and the sheriff — went about it the wrong way.

“No other citizen of Grant County has seen this document at all,” Commissioner Chris Labhart decried. “Those (deputies) are the only people who had access to this

before it was presented to the court, out of the blue.”

In fact, the secretive creation and surprise revelation of this document is everything the group usually rails against: cabals making decisions behind closed doors, without public involvement, without diversity of opinion or dissenting views.

Can you imagine the outrage if the Forest Service had surreptitiously dropped a forest plan in the way this group did?

And it’s additionally infuriating that Sheriff Palmer refuses to comment on the plan, which goes to show just how much he cares about keeping the good citizens of Grant County apprised on forest management issues.

The fact is that the small group of people who came up with this plan — many of whom are related to each other — feel marginalized and disenfranchised when it comes to managing public forests. And rightfully so. They are a marginal and outside-the-mainstream group that does not speak for a majority of Grant County residents, nor Blue Mountain forest users, nor Americans who own our national forest lands.

It’s disappointing that Sheriff Palmer gave them a bullhorn, but that doesn’t mean we have to listen.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Obama’s Roseburg response was needed, appreciated

The (Medford) Mail-Tribune

President Barack Obama set just the right tone on Friday in brief remarks after meeting with the families of those killed in the Umpqua Community College shooting. We wish we could say the same of those who declared the president unwelcome in their town.

Many in the Roseburg area were angered by Obama’s statement on the day of the shootings when he said he would be accused of politicizing the incident to call for stricter gun laws.

“Well, this is something we should politicize,” he said on Oct. 1. “It is relevant to our common life together, to the body politic.”

Obama had already scheduled a four-day trip to the West Coast when the shootings occurred. It was an obvious choice to add a stop in Roseburg to meet privately with the families of the victims, an appropriate gesture by the president of the United States in response to a tragedy of this magnitude.

As soon as the president’s visit was announced, some Roseburg-area residents, among them the publisher of a conservative weekly newspaper, declared he was not welcome. The publisher said Obama was coming to “stand on the corpses of our loved ones.”

That’s not just inappropriate. It’s offensive.

In response, Roseburg’s mayor, City Council and county commissioners issued a statement welcoming Obama and pledging to “extend him every courtesy.” That they felt compelled to do that is, frankly, embarrassing.

Obama arrived on Friday as planned, where he was met by demonstrators, some carrying firearms.

Peaceful demonstrations of political opinion are an American tradition, and demonstrators are common during presidential visits. When President George W. Bush visited Medford during his 2004 re-election campaign, he was

greeted by demonstrators, too. But we don’t recall anyone announcing in advance that he was not welcome here.

On Friday, Obama held no public event and delivered no speech. He made no pronouncements about gun control.

“I want to thank the entire community and the entire state of Oregon for coming together at this terrible time to support the families,” Obama said in brief remarks after meeting with the victims’ families. “Obviously, in moments like these, words aren’t going to bring their loved ones back. But the one thing that they shared is how much they appreciate the entire UCC community coming together, how much they appreciate all their neighbors, all their friends and people all across the country who offered to help, who sent their thoughts and their prayers.”

And he said this:

“I’ve got some very strong feelings about this, because when you talk to these families you’re reminded that this could be happening to your child, or your mom, or your dad, or your relative or your friend,” Obama said. “We’re going to have to come together as a country to see how we can prevent these issues from taking place, but today it’s about the families and their grief and the love we feel for them.”

That doesn’t sound like grandstanding or exploiting a tragedy.

Demonstrators, however, spoke of their belief that Obama wants to confiscate guns from law-abiding citizens — something he has never advocated — one saying he had come to Roseburg with a “gun-grabbing agenda.”

The protesters are certainly free to exercise their First Amendment rights, which they did. It would have been nice if they had exercised some respect and dignity in a somber moment, but they didn’t.

Obama didn’t use his visit to politicize the shootings. The protesters did.



Clinton stands her ground

I never doubted that Hillary Clinton had many talents.

I just didn’t know that seamstress was among them.

There were moments in the first Democratic presidential debate Tuesday night when she threaded the needle as delicately and perfectly as a politician could.

The debate’s moderator, Anderson Cooper, noted that she had told some audiences that she was a progressive but extolled her moderation in front of others. Wasn’t she just a chameleon, flashing whatever colors suited her at a given moment?

“I’m a progressive, but I’m a progressive who likes to get things done,” she said strongly but not stridently. “I know how to find common ground, and I know how to stand my ground.” It was a practiced line — so practiced that she used it, somewhat awkwardly, a second time an hour later. But it was also a well-crafted line.

Like her main rival onstage, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, she had complaints about our country. Unlike Sanders, she communicated an unshakable pride in it nonetheless.

Sanders said America should look to Denmark. Clinton countered: “We are not Denmark. I love Denmark. We are the United States of America.”

Even when she was confronted anew by her vote in the Senate long ago to authorize the invasion of Iraq, she was neither defiant nor apologetic, steering a smooth midcourse by recalling that at debates in 2008, Barack Obama had attacked her for that. “After the election,” she pointed out, “he asked me to become secretary of state. He valued my judgment.”

The subject of Iraq caused her less grief than Sanders suffered on gun control, when not only Clinton but also Martin O’Malley, the former Maryland governor, rejected his explanation of votes in the Senate against various bills and his insistence that he was representing rural areas with gun cultures, not a nationwide electorate. It was clumsy, because he presents himself as a creature of pure principle, immune to political convenience.

But on Tuesday night an odd sort of role reversal occurred. For much of the debate, Sanders somehow came across as the embattled incumbent, targeted by the other four candidates, while Clinton came across as the energetic upstart.

He seemed bowed, irascible. She seemed buoyant, effervescent. It was as poised a performance as she has finessed in a long time, and while I’ve just about given up making predictions about this confounding election — I never thought Donald Trump would last so long, and I never saw Ben

Carson coming — I think Clinton benefited more from Tuesday’s stage than Sanders did.

She mixed confidence and moments of passion with instances of humor, and her manner was less didactic and robotic than it can often be. From Cooper and from the four men bookending her at the lecterns, she had everything thrown at her: Iraq, Benghazi, her coziness with Wall Street, her personal wealth.

But she was seldom rattled, although the discussion of her use of a home-brewed server for her emails as secretary of state did prompt a visible stiffening of her posture, a conspicuous strain in her smile. Will she ever, ever find language that takes full ownership of her mistake and that puts real flesh on her continued claim that she is being as transparent as possible?

It was possibly her worst moment.

It was perhaps Sanders’ best. Surprisingly, he called for an end to talk about the emails, saying there were more important issues to focus on. High-mindedness met unusual campaign-trail generosity and gallantry. Clinton laughed and beamed. They shook hands, and I half expected a hug.

The debate isn’t going to change the fortunes of Lincoln Chafee and Jim Webb, who were at the edges of the stage and will remain on the edges of the race. O’Malley might benefit an iota and grew bolder as the night progressed.

Sanders grew redundant, returning with questionable frequency to a single issue — greed and income inequality — that made him sound like a one-note candidate. He is 100 percent right to question corporations and trumpet the plight of the middle class. But he does so as more of a firebrand, calling for a “political revolution,” than as someone who can be trusted to make meaningful progress.

Clinton had her own redundancies, saying twice if not thrice as often as was necessary that she would be the first female president. She has gone from sidestepping her gender in 2008 to roaring about it now.

Apart from that, she was mum when silence served her best and fiery when that was the right call — for instance, when she vowed to “take the fight to the Republicans.”

And she benefited from the visual contrast when she stood side by side on TV next to Sanders, with his slight hunch, his somewhat garbled style of speech, and a moment when he cupped his hand behind his ear, signaling that he hadn’t heard the question.

He evoked yesterday. Despite many decades in the political trenches, she didn’t. It was a nifty trick. Turns out she’s a bit of a sorceress as well.

■

Frank Bruni joined the New York Times in 1995.



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

For much of the debate, Sanders somehow came across as the embattled incumbent and Clinton as the energetic upstart.

YOUR VIEWS

‘Illegal alien’ is a descriptive, helpful legal term

In his Oct. 9 opinion piece “Let’s retire illegal alien,” criticizing that helpfully descriptive term, Antonio Sierra quoted Atlantic Monthly writer Garrett Epps regarding “one of the earliest uses” of such language, in a Stanford Law Review article. Good find.

But what Sierra omitted is that Epps had identified an even earlier appearance, writing “[T]he earliest use [of the term] I can find is in 1950, when a federal appeals court used it to describe a Polish-born Mexican citizen whom Immigration and Naturalization Service officers had arrested.”

Fancy that: A federal appeals court! Judges at that level generally are sticklers for precise language. So we shouldn’t be surprised that “illegal alien” appears in fundamental U.S. law. One example is Title 8, Section 1365 of the United States Code, entitled “Reimbursement of States for costs of incarcerating illegal aliens and certain Cuban nationals.” (The text of that section also employs the term.)

On the other hand, Sierra’s favored language, “undocumented immigrant,” is clearly intended to make it sound as if what’s at issue is a mere paperwork snafu of negligible importance, rather than the serious lawbreaking inherent in illegal immigration.

People who obscure what’s at stake by

beating their drums for euphemisms like “undocumented immigrant” bring to mind George Orwell’s great essay, “Politics and the English Language.” A highlight: “Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

Paul Nachman
Bozeman, Montana

Join together to use nickels for Pendleton street upgrades

Do you know about the nickels project? Hold a nickel in your hand. What’s it worth? Not much. Just a nickel. That’s all. Suppose you put your nickel with a hundred thousand other nickels. Worth something more? You bet. It’s called putting nickels together to fix our streets.

Streets of gold? No. Streets of nickels. And what’s your investment in the street you live on? Probably no more than a soda pop can full of nickels. Well, maybe two cans. And your return? Thousands of dollars invested to restore your street.

There are no losers in this project, only winners. C’mon, join the project. Be a winner. Vote yes. Save the streets. Get the nickels out. Let’s do something really big for a change.

’Nuff talk. Fix the damn streets. Have a nice day.

Larry O’Rourke
Pendleton