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**OUR VIEW**

# Rowan for re-election

Two men are running for Umatilla County sheriff: Incumbent Terry Rowan and challenger Ryan Lehnert.

Rowan is finishing his first term, and served as undersheriff for more than a decade before that. Lehnert is a corporal with the Pendleton Police Department and began his law enforcement career with the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's job can make for a strange election — it's a nonpartisan, supervisory law enforcement role, and while the budget is managed by the office, the purse strings are controlled by the county commissioners. The sheriff must competently manage five divisions — patrol, civil, parole, jail and dispatch — and is ultimately responsible for their successes and failures.

Rowan's campaign has detailed a list of his accomplishments from his first four years in charge. It ranges from the big (doubled the patrol force from 7 to 14 deputies) to the small (participated in the "Little Sheriff for a Day" program) to the vague (Continue to be RESOLUTE in protecting every citizen's Constitutional Rights).

Among the most praiseworthy is Rowan's work to hold more inmates in the county jail until they can stand before a judge. It keeps offenders accountable to know they won't be back home before the ink is dry on their police report. It was a definite problem, and Rowan found a definite solution.

As for the increased patrol presence, Rowan has benefited from three county commissioners who moved money from elsewhere to bolster his office. Though a good manager does effectively make his case to those who write the checks.

His management ability may best be reflected in the endorsements from his staff — both the union employees and administrative staff — and the county commissioners.

On the other hand, local law enforcement leaders have put their support behind Lehnert, which doesn't speak well for Rowan's relationship with law enforcement colleagues. While he's the only law enforcement boss elected by voters, it's critical he work closely with the other agencies

and would hopefully have earned their trust in his first term.

That troubled relationship led to bumps when folding multiple city departments into the county dispatch system, but that complicated work is done and law enforcement response times will improve because of it.

Response time is the other big black mark on Rowan's reputation. While many have come forward to vouch for his character, others have complained he lets too many things slide. Calls from citizens go unreturned, requests for comment go unanswered. Rowan has been far more visible in his year of campaigning than in the previous three of holding electing office.

We hope that, if re-elected, he continues to be available for informal chats with constituents and demands that his office prioritize customer service. It's the direction most of

the county government has gone in recent years, and the sheriff's office must follow.

Both men turned over their personnel files to the *East Oregonian*, which surely was more difficult for Lehnert. It revealed a previous promotion to a leadership position within the Pendleton Police Department didn't go well, and he was quickly demoted to an officer. It also showed in the years since he has gained back the trust of his supervisors and is a highly regarded leader on the force.

His passion for collaborating with other agencies on mental health issues is inspiring, and he clearly speaks from a personal knowledge of the challenge which we consider to be one of the most pressing for law enforcement.

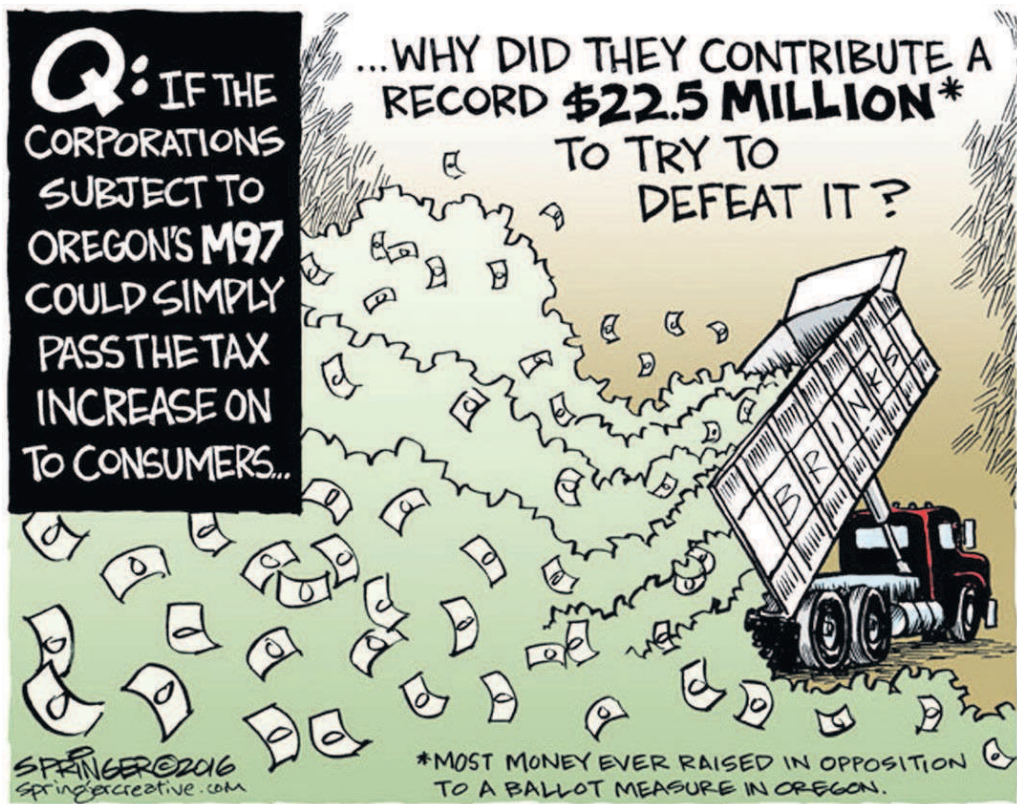
We believe Lehnert is a leader, proven by his time both here in Umatilla County and in the U.S. Army. He has the opportunity to one day be an excellent sheriff, but more administration experience will only make him better. It takes a lot of guts to run against an incumbent, and we admire that.

But for now, because of his steady hand and support of the county, we recommend re-electing Terry Rowan while demanding continued improvement from the county sheriff's office.



Rowan

**His management ability may best be reflected in the endorsements from his staff and the county commissioners.**



**OTHER VIEWS**

## Getting over the 'taboo' in a gun rights conversation

Last year, several residents of Missoula, Montana, asked Bryan von Lossberg, a first-term city councilman, to introduce an ordinance requiring background checks on most gun sales and transfers within the city limits. Von Lossberg immediately felt nervous.

The councilman, who keeps a rifle in his home and enjoys Montana's long hunting seasons, knows that gun rights are fiercely defended in the state, which ranks sixth in gun ownership nation-wide. "The topic is so taboo in Montana," he says, even though Missoula is a university town with a reputation for being the state's most liberal community.

"It was surprising to me to have conversation after conversation where I would hear a variant of, 'Ya know, I support what you're trying to do here, but I'm not so sure I'd been willing to stand up and express support for it.'"

Despite his misgivings, von Lossberg couldn't stop thinking about the data he'd received from local members of Moms Demand Action, comparing states that have passed gun safety measures to those that have not.

In the eight states that require background checks on all gun transfers, there were 38 percent fewer deaths of women shot by intimate partners, as well as lower rates of gun suicides and aggravated assaults with firearms. By contrast, Montana ranks fifth in gun deaths per capita and received an "F" from the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 2015. To make matters worse, seven of the 11 Western states also earned failing grades, including all four of Montana's neighbors.

These figures led von Lossberg to another important number: His daughter had recently turned 4 years old.

"Hunting and guns are really important parts of Montana culture, and I want my daughter to pursue hunting, but I also want to set a good example for her on gun transactions," he says. "The research shows when communities use this tool, it benefits the community. I want her to follow that example."

Von Lossberg introduced an ordinance a year ago this September. A month later, over 300 people attended a hearing on the measure. Testimony lasted five hours and was interrupted several times by disruptive behavior, including one speaker who passionately accused council members of treason. And yet the majority of speakers supported the measure. It was as if a "pressure valve" had been opened, according to von Lossberg. "The number of people who want this topic discussed and addressed — it was overwhelming."



GABRIEL FURSHONG  
Comment

**"It's hard to have courage about something when you can't even talk about it within your community."**

— Bryan von Lossberg, Missoula city councilor

The councilman was encouraged by the support, but he also listened to his opponents. He worked with Councilwoman Marilyn Marler, a co-sponsor and fellow gun owner, to revise the original ordinance. They agreed to include language exempting concealed-carry permit holders, because they already go through a background check. The change earned praise from some skeptics, and the gap between supporters and opponents began to shrink.

"Most dialogue on this topic gets boiled down to where you're pro-Second Amendment or you aren't," von Lossberg says. "Over the course of the year, our community wrestled with that dichotomy, and we realized that it's just not reality."

Eventually, the council was rewarded for pushing the difficult topic into the open. This Sept. 26, a second hearing was held, nearly one year after the first. Another large crowd turned out and

the ordinance passed on an 8-4 vote, making Missoula the first city in the Northern Rockies to require background checks on gun sales and transfers.

Now, the question is whether the ordinance will survive legal challenges. Opponents, including the Montana Shooting Sports Association, claim it violates both state law and the Second Amendment. But volunteers with Moms Demand Action are confident in the city attorney's opinion, which states that a "local government unit ... has power to prevent and suppress ... the possession of firearms by convicted felons, adjudicated mental incompetents, illegal aliens and minors."

Volunteers are now considering how to export the ordinance to other Western communities. In von Lossberg's view, the linchpin of that effort will be civil dialogue, similar, he says, to what we strive for within our families.

"My wife and I are raising a little girl," he explains, "and every moment we're together seems like an opportunity for a teachable moment — talking about our feelings, our fears, our hopes." He's convinced that this simple recipe for open communication is part of the answer for communities hoping to curb gun violence.

"It's hard to have courage about something when you can't even talk about it within your community," he says. "Regardless of your position or passion, it's critical to hear all the voices that are touched by this issue."

Gabriel Furshong is a contributor to *Writers on the Range*, the opinion service of *High Country News*. He writes in Missoula, Montana.

**OTHER VIEWS**

## Death penalty deserves honest discussion, not just delays

The Bend Bulletin, Oct. 23

For almost five years now, Oregon's death penalty has been on hold. Gov. Kate Brown announced recently that will continue until at least the end of the year. If she is re-elected, it will continue through her term until 2018.

It would be better if the governor led Oregonians beyond the waiting game. We need to have an honest discussion about the death penalty and whether it continues to be the punishment a majority of voters favor for those who commit the most heinous crimes in this state.

Oregon's death penalty was adopted in 1864, rescinded in 1914, adopted again in 1920,

rescinded in 1964, adopted in 1978, declared unconstitutional in 1981 and reinstated in 1984. With the exception of the 1981 court ruling, it was voters who decided to make the changes.

When then-Gov. John Kitzhaber put a moratorium on executions in 2011, he did so in part because he believed the penalty to be morally wrong. But he did more than simply slap a moratorium in place. Kitzhaber called for a "long overdue debate" among the state's residents and lawmakers about the death penalty.

That hasn't happened. It should. Brown should see that it does. There should be a vote of the people to decide what happens with the death penalty in Oregon.

**LETTERS POLICY**

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