

'Patriots' — please enlist and help us win this war



ANDREW CLARK
A SLICE OF LIFE

I have a friend from my Peace Corps days in the 1960s named Francis Koster, and we've retained a friendship from those days. He now lives in North Carolina after a career in pediatric health care administration.

He has two websites about his work — one is "Pollution Detectives" that deals with finding pollution health threats to children like lead in school drinking-fountain water, and the other is "America's Optimistic Futurist."

This column is one of his writings in the latter and is used with his permission. It deals with a situation where he lives that is very like our own here in Eastern Oregon.

Sometimes I will be in some large gathering of thousands of people, and the speaker will ask all veterans to rise and be recognized for their patriotic service. And then

they say, "Let's applaud our Patriots." The audience always applauds. When I stand, people will come up later and say, "I appreciate your service."

Since our nation's founding 245 years ago, 646,500 members of our military have died defending America. It sounds terrible, but so does the fact that over the past one year 667,000 Americans have died from COVID. The disease has killed one in 500 Americans — more than all those who died defending American independence over 245 years — including both sides of the Civil War.

When I enlisted in the Army upon graduation from high school in 1960, all young men were required to register for the draft or be prosecuted and fined of up to \$250,000 and/or jail time of up to five years.

The law creating the draft was passed because Congress felt that in times of war the needs of the nation were more important than the desires of individual citizens. You did what you were told, including leave home for an unknown amount of time to fight, get shot at, and maybe die to protect your fellow Americans. If you did not regis-

ter for the draft, your family was ashamed and you were punished.

I am confused. We are at war with COVID, but people calling themselves "Patriots" will not wear masks or get vaccinated. Back in the day, they would be called "cowards" or "draft dodgers" and they would flee to Canada. Rowan County, North Carolina, where I live, has 122,000 residents over 12 who are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. As of Sept. 15, just over half who should have stepped up to be vaccinated did so. Of Rowan County's total population, 24,000 have caught COVID, 364 have died and about 8,400 survivors will have expensive health care problems for life.

The virus has evolved into the more contagious and deadly delta form. Our hospitals are drowning in sick people. Nationally, over the past four months, 98% of those infected and hospitalized had not been vaccinated. Those people that did not get vaccinated have incurred medical bills averaging around \$25,000 and in most cases will need to have those bills paid for by the government, raising taxes for the rest

of us. Yea "Patriots."

I am a former pediatric health care administrator. I have seen parents cry after they held their child's hand for the last time. You do not forget things like that — it bruises your soul.

As folks with strong opinions about "freedom" debate how to get kids back to school with no masks, during the first week in September almost a quarter of a million kids got infected with COVID-19 — just about one-third of all newly reported cases.

Is your definition of "Patriot" someone who sacrifices to protect others, or does it mean "you can't tell me what to do?"

Are we now a country where practicing selfishness that harms other people has become something we ask people to rise and be applauded for?

Where has our sense of community responsibility gone? And, can it be recovered?

Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.

BLM has opportunity to reimagine the Owyhee Canyonlands



MICHAEL O'CASEY
OTHER VIEWS

For many Oregonians, hunting, public lands and family go together. Every year, parents take their children out to bag their first buck, catch their first trout or take aim at their first covey of chukar.

Generation upon generation of hunters pass on the family tradition of waking up early, heading out to our state's gorgeous public lands, and heading home (hopefully) with protein to feed the family. As we approach hunting season, it's worth reflecting on how we use our public lands and how we can protect access to hunting, fishing and our wild public lands for our children.

This year, the Bureau of Land Management, which manages some of the best hunting and fishing areas in Southeast Oregon, is celebrating its 75th anniversary. The theme of this milestone is to "Reimagine our Public Lands," which include places

like the Owyhee Canyonlands and the Trout Creek Mountains. This anniversary comes right as the BLM's Vale District is conducting a public process to amend its Resource Management Plan — a once in a generation opportunity to guide management on these lands for the next 20 years.

Known for its dark skies where one can view the stunning spread of the Milky Way, find increasingly rare solitude and build memories of backcountry adventures, the Owyhee is one of the most remote and beloved expanses in the Lower 48. For decades, folks have been trying to preserve this unique area through various pathways including legislation, national monument designation and through administrative planning, such as the RMP.

While the BLM is asking the public to reimagine our public lands, hunters and anglers are asking them to make changes to its preferred alternative within the draft Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan, the amendment that was published in 2019. In the BLM's preferred alternative, it chose not to manage even a single additional acre for its conservation values.

The kicker is the agency itself identified

more than 1.2 million acres as containing wilderness characteristics, meaning these lands are wild, undeveloped, backcountry lands and many of these acres deserve to be managed to ensure they remain that way.

Oregonians deserve a plan that protects our access and enjoyment of these shared public lands and one that will conserve habitat for iconic species such as the sage-grouse and our state's renowned big game that have been declining for decades.

This RMP will guide the management across millions of acres of public land for decades to come. Through this amendment process, there is an opportunity for the BLM to conserve this wild and remote area by limiting unnecessary development. Following the BLM's stated vision of reimaging the shared treasure of our public lands, this is a golden opportunity to truly reimagine this plan.

The BLM is reviewing more than 4,000 public comments that were submitted about the draft plan. The bulk of those comments asked the BLM to make changes to their proposal and to conserve this backcountry escape. With the recent shift in the administration, the BLM has a great opportunity

to make changes between the 2019 draft plan and the soon-to-be released, proposed final plan. These changes should incorporate additional conservation measures that would protect hundreds of thousands of acres of remote, backcountry landscapes.

The solitude and the quiet in these remote, high desert canyons and sagebrush plateaus are some of the finest values any place can offer. As the BLM celebrates 75 years, we should make sure our public lands are protected for the next 75, starting with this hidden Oregon gem. Please make your voice heard and speak up by joining the Owyhee Sportsmen's Coalition and/or contacting your senators today.

Updating the Southeast Oregon RMP to include conservation measures will make sure we are always able to share this place with the next generation of hunters and anglers and we continue to have robust game species to pursue this uniquely American heritage.

Michael O'Casey lives in Bend and is the Oregon/Washington field representative for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

The fight for state's future is here: Make sure your voice is heard



ANGELA BAILEY
OTHER VIEWS

Earlier this month, the Oregon Legislature released its proposals for redistricting in the state, and the

stakes have never been higher. This redistricting process follows on the heels of the 2020 census and will be completed in a special session later this month.

While Oregon agriculture has strong friends in the Legislature on both sides of the aisle, the past several years of rule under the Democrat supermajority has taken its toll on our farm and ranch families. Without the proper checks in the system, dozens of policies have passed that have increased costs for Oregon's producers, with policies that benefit producers becoming increasingly more rare in Salem.

As a nonpartisan organization, the Oregon Farm Bureau works with both parties in Salem to achieve the best policy outcomes we can for Oregon producers.

The 2021 redistricting process has the potential to make that job exponentially harder. Rural voices were already diluted in the 2010 redistricting process. We cannot afford to allow partisanship to further reduce our voice in the Legislature. Countless farm and ranch families are barely hanging on. Adopting new districts that will disenfranchise farmers and ranchers and further encourage policies that only harm rural communities will be the last straw for many ag and rural families.

Each party has released its own proposals for redistricting.

To put it plainly, the proposals put forward by the Democrat majority represent gerrymandering by every metric. Across the state, the Democrat proposal seeks to cement their supermajority by

ensuring that many rural parts of the state are likely to be represented by urban Democrats, diluting the voice of rural Oregon in shaping policy.

The Legislature is under a court-ordered deadline to complete redistricting by Monday, Sept. 27, or the task will fall to Secretary of State Shemia Fagan.

The 2020 census data has shown

Oregon is entitled to a sixth Congressional seat, and Oregon's House and Senate boundaries will also need to be adjusted as Oregon's population has shifted. The stakes have never been higher.

Oregonians across the state expect maps to be drawn fairly and in a compact manner, with communities of common interest such as school districts and neighborhoods left intact.

We must ensure that farm and ranch families are kept in districts where their voices are collectively strong and represented, not more dispersed by drawing them into districts with higher population density and different needs and perspectives.

The Oregon Farm Bureau was part of a broad coalition to run a ballot measure last year to ensure the Oregon had a truly independent redistricting commission. With COVID-19 restrictions, that measure did not make it on the ballot, but we will continue to push for meaningful reform of Oregon's redistricting process.

Who represents you in Salem has never been more important for the future of agriculture in Oregon.

If you do anything this week, please find a way to make your voice heard and stand up for the rights of rural Oregon.

Visit OregonFB.org/advocacy to take action on redistricting today.

Angela Bailey is president of the Oregon Farm Bureau and a fourth-generation farmer operating a nursery in Gresham that specializes in Japanese maples.



Housing is one of city's major goals



JOHN TURNER
OTHER VIEWS

Citizens of Pendleton participated in formal housing studies in 2011 and 2021. These studies clearly showed a need for more and better housing at all income levels. This lack of suitable housing is one of the reasons why we have so many open jobs in Pendleton.

In 2017, the city council established a goal of 50 new housing units, including apartments and duplexes, each year. The city began reaching out to land owners and developers to see what might incentivize them to build housing units in Pendleton.

A "housing summit" was held at the Pendleton Convention Center in the summer of 2018 to acquaint builders with some local opportunities.

By 2019, we started seeing increased interest by developers but the economic challenges of 2020, spurred largely by the COVID-19 pandemic, slowed down progress. Despite these challenges, we achieved our goal of an average of 50 new units each year.

2021 is shaping up to be a very encouraging year for housing. As of Sept. 1, the city has issued permits to build 159 new housing units, with another 90-plus units under review. Just as important, we issued permits for 80 new units of affordable housing, which is much needed and difficult to build.

The affordable housing complex called "Wildflower" is next to Olney Cemetery and is being produced by Chrisman Development out of Enterprise and is made possible by millions of dollars in relief money that came from the Legislature as the result of the February 2020 Umatilla River flooding.

The Horizon Project has received financing for another 70 units of affordable housing and it expects to break ground in 2022 on land donated by the city in eastern Pendleton near the Oregon Youth Authority facility.

Dusty Pace is about to build out the Sunridge Addition and is working on developing about 25 lots near Southwest 18th Street for more expensive, "executive level" homes.

So far in 2021, the value of site-built housing units is about \$18.6 million, which is double the value of housing built in 2020.

The Pendleton Development Commission is working with homeowners inside the Urban Renewal District to improve blighted homes through the "Love Your Home" program.

This program involves loans of up to \$30,000 for outside improvements and the loans are partially forgiven over a period of five years. The remainder of the loan doesn't have to be paid back until the home is eventually sold.

If you think you are interested in fixing up a property within the URD using the "Love Your Home" process, call Charles Denight at city hall at 541-966-1233.

John Turner is the mayor of Pendleton.