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INITIATIVE PETITION 13

Controversial Animal rights proposal won't make ballot

By ALEX WITTWER
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — A controversial proposal on animal cruelty laws appears to be off the table, for now, but proponents of the initiative say their campaign isn't over yet.

"We just submitted the initiative for 2024 and are waiting for confirmation from the state," an organizer with the Yes on IP13 campaign said. "At this point, it does not look like we will gather enough for 2022. I believe the plan is to shift gears to the newly numbered initiative as soon as we have it."

Initiative Petition 13, otherwise known as the Abuse, Neglect and Assault Exemption Modification and Improvement Act, would remove exemptions to the Oregon animal abuse laws that protect hunters, farmers and anglers from abuse violations. That means hunters could possibly be prosecuted for killing and harvesting wild animals, as could farmers who send their livestock to slaughterhouses.

David Michelson, the author of the initiative and the lead organizer for the campaign, acknowledged the proposal's long road, and said that like other social justice reforms throughout history, it will take time.

"This is asking for quite a shift from the norm, and I think, like with any social change, it's controversial," he said. "But every social justice movement in history has been met with controversy, unfortunately."

Michelson noted a petition to allow women to vote in Oregon faced similar political headwinds in the early 20th century, but the story of how women fought for suffrage in Oregon has been inspirational to the Portland-based activist, who said he would "like to see this (initiative) as being part of that history of progressive ballot measures that push us forward."

But even if the initiative fails to muster the signatures necessary to reach the ballot this November, Michelson has his eyes set on 2024.

"We are planning, as we have always planned, to submit our initiative for 2024 with the anticipation that even if we qualify for 2022, it is unlikely that it'll pass on the first attempt," Michelson said. "Speaking back to the initiative that gave women the right to vote, it was voted on in six consecutive election cycles before it finally passed. It was voted down five times. If our initiative does not pass this November, we want to make sure it's on the ballot again in 2024."

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Photos by Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Shooting enthusiast and Black Hammer Tacti-cool business owner Gentry Thorpe poses Wednesday, March 16, 2022, with service dog Blu, and his wife, Dierdra, surrounded by the couple's children: Jada, 21, Gemri, 9, Kyla, 12, and Dedrick, 16, on the porch of their home in Milton-Freewater.

Shooting for his life



Gentry Thorpe documents the action at a February 2022 rimfire shooting event at the East End Rod & Gun Club range in Milton-Freewater.



Brandon Cadwell works with his son, Jimmy, 6, at a shooting event in February 2022 at the East End Rod & Gun Club in Milton-Freewater.



Dozens participate at a Black Hammer rimfire shooting event in February 2022 at the East End Rod & Gun Club range in Milton-Freewater.

Brutally assaulted Washington State Penitentiary sergeant uses 'ballistic therapy' to overcome trauma

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — In his younger life, Gentry Thorpe easily could have been on the other side of the bars on the day he was knocked senseless in 2019.

The Milton-Freewater man and Washington State Penitentiary sergeant was one of two officers pummeled, punched and rendered unconscious by a large, angry and mentally ill inmate that August day as they worked inside the prison's mental health unit.

Since then, Thorpe has lived with the physical and emotional results of the brutal attack. He said the best medicine he's found, after his family's support and love, is through his joy of and involvement with precision target shooting.

Such is his passion for the sport and for sharing it with others, that last year, Thorpe established a company, Black Hammer Tacti-cool LLC, which hosts precision shooting matches for others who enjoy the competitive hobby.

Shooting a .22 rifle helps everything, settling anxiety and restoring calm, Thorpe said.

"I call it ballistic therapy," he said.

Life preservers

At one time, firearms stood a good chance of becoming a serious negative in Thorpe's life.

Thorpe said in his hometown of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, he grew up running the streets, despite his grandmother's efforts as she raised him and his siblings for much of their childhood.

"I'm from a Black neighborhood, I'm from the inner city," he said, adding his mom and dad had their own challenges rising from the environment around them.

Joining the military right after high school meant rescue from the land mines ahead he could clearly see, including gang affiliation, Thorpe said.

After serving seven years in the U.S. Army, he returned to Fort Lauderdale and, to his own dismay, the street life.

There is every likelihood Thorpe would

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