

Wyden wins long struggle with NSA

We can have freedoms and defend against terrorists

The best hope for a nation is that it may grow smarter. Learning from the past — not making fatal errors — is essential.

Presidential campaigns often have carried a measure of demagoguery. This year's Republican candidates are setting a record. In the scramble to win the race to war against ISIS, Sen. Lindsay Graham of South Carolina hit a home run by promising to commit 20,000 ground troops to Syria. Sen. Graham has a short memory. The physical and financial cost of U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan was huge and yielded relatively little. So the senator thinks we ought to do that again.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

In the midst of such madness, it was refreshing to have news last week that the National Security Agency will cease its sweep of telephone records that began secretly in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks. The USA Freedom Act, which became law in June, forced the NSA to shut down the operation.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden played a leading role over 10 years to bring the NSA's secret operation into the open. In the wake of the NSA announcement last week, Sen. Wyden brought the recent terrorist attacks on Paris and Mali into the discussion. "After every such attack, politicians who would play to Americans' fears call for liberty to be sacrificed in the name of security. I reject those calls. And as long as Americans continue to demand that their government protect both their security and their liberty, I am confident that our country can deal with these threats without sacrificing our most cherished rights and values."

In standing up for the Constitution and exposing the NSA telephone records dragnet, Wyden emulated his legendary predecessor, Sen. Wayne Morse, who opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that led to escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Unlike Morse, Wyden has the collegiality to draw others to his cause. That is why the USA Freedom Act passed the Senate by a vote of 67-32.



Prison is no place to solve drug problem

By Al Bell
For The Chieftain

GUEST EDITORIAL

I just read The Chieftain's (Dec. 2) article on the opt-out option regarding legal sales of marijuana in Wallowa County. Prior to moving to Wallowa County 26 years ago, I spent 20 years working in San Quentin and Soledad prisons in California and was a parole and probation officer in Idaho and Oregon for 10 years after that. I drove the police car in Enterprise for two years and then was an elder abuse investigator for a year before I said "That's enough," and retired.

When I started work at San Quentin in 1963 I was pretty much amazed by what I saw. The levels of violence, thuggery, rape, sexual slavery and forced prostitution, killings, suicides — depravity of all kinds — were beyond my comprehension.

The prison staff had a 90 percent turnover rate each year. I needed a job, however, so I applied.

Twenty years later I was a lieutenant in charge of gang investigations at Soledad Prison.

I want to keep everyone from growing donkey ears here if I can. Do you

know that our drug laws have made many people very wealthy? There are citizens in Mexico who have perhaps a second-grade education level and are millionaires because they know how to get a Chevy across the U.S. border without a search two or three times a week.

Many narcotics officers and DEA agents in our large cities know that decriminalization is the only way to stop the drug trade.

I know because I've talked to and worked with them my entire career. Many have known for some time that the only way to stem the illicit trade is to decriminalize narcotics. Marijuana is a good starting place.

I hate to hear people talk about how much more potent today's marijuana is compared to that of the 1960s. I can say with certainty it's nowhere near as hurtful as taking an addiction-prone person and tossing them into prison for five or six years just because you don't like what they're doing. That's like taking all the

cigarette smokers and throwing them into prison just because you don't like smoking (which, by the way, is harmful to others as well as the smoker because of second-hand smoke).

The opt-out option that has everyone's attention is a big mistake. There is revenue to be made, for sure. Jobs to be made, certainly. But those are not my major concerns. Hauling someone into court (possibly one of your own family members) and sending them through a lengthy and expensive legal process — that we the taxpayers have to fund — and throwing them into a depraved and vicious University for Crime that sends them out the other end as a burglar, armed robber or worse is inhumane and not representative of who we are (or should be) as a society.

You know that the people currently selling marijuana in this county are hoping the county does indeed opt out. If so, those selling illegally won't see a pay cut, but the county will.

I'll be happy to attend any town hall meetings and explain in graphic terms how prison is not a good alternative to legalizing marijuana in our community. Al Bell resides in Joseph.

Grandparents hold a trump card over parents

By Barrie Qualle
For The Chieftain

Let's face it. When you become a parent you are in the amateur category. You are facing a whole new set of conditions and problems.

On the other hand, grandparents have been through parenting and are in the professional category. As a grandparent I now realize that if you can raise your kids without them making some irrevocable mistake, you are a success. Being a grandparent also affords you the opportunity to take revenge on your children by influencing their children to return some of the misery they inflicted on you.

My grandfather was a master at this. Since we lived in the same

ranch compound with him and my uncles, he had several suggestions as to what my rights as a child should be. Freedom was paramount in his eyes and he encouraged me to use my own judgment about a lot of things that were frowned upon by my archaic parents.

His concept for my family was that it should be a democracy and I should have an equal (though not superior) say in my conduct and decisions that affected it. My dad, however, leaned more toward the idea of a benevolent dictatorship.

Grandpa sympathized with my frustration of unreasonable parents and said that was what you had to expect from people who voted the way they did. I remember my mother flying off the handle and going into a full rant

when I began a sentence with, "Grandpa thinks ..." That was as far as I got before she interrupted and raged on about how she didn't care what Grandpa thought and if I wanted to get along and make my life easier, I had better do what she and Dad wanted instead of what Grandpa suggested.

Later, when I relayed this Grandpa said he admired me for having the strength to put up with them and their narrow attitudes. He really seemed to get a kick out of the reaction.

My own kids got into the normal amount of trouble but no big problems. They were, however, a fairly constant annoyance. My oldest son Jeff once complained that his 16-year-old daughter, who had been a perfect child, had gotten into trouble and that she was grounded and her car had been

taken away. I seized this as my opportunity for a little revenge. I texted my granddaughter and our conversation went like this:

Me: Heard you got into a little trouble. I was thinking maybe your parents are just being unreasonable.

Sophie: I couldn't agree more, maybe I should bring up all the things young Jeff used to do, hmmm?

Me: I can sell you a lot of ammunition on that subject. You can probably fool him but Mom is going to be tough to fool. They will soon tire of hauling you around and if you make it hard enough on them they will cave in and return the car.

Sophie: Oh, no worries. I have been set free. They probably couldn't handle me hanging around the house 24/7.



OPEN RANGE
Barrie Qualle

Me: I think you were in trouble for getting caught, not the deed itself. I used to tell your dad, if you aren't smart enough to get away with it, don't do it.

Sophie: I know Dad was disappointed but I have re-evaluated my ways and know just what I need to do to get back on track. I'll try not to get sloppy this time around.

Me: Uncle Kevin can help.

Sophie: Oh Please! This isn't amateur hour. I can almost hear my grandfather laughing and approving. Columnist Barrie Qualle is a working cowboy in Wallowa County.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Is this secession of a different flavor?

Patrick Dunroven
Enterprise

Hobby Lobby, the Sequel

Hobby Lobby opened the door to religious objection to providing specific contraceptives, including IUDs, in their health insurance. The religious objection narrowly centered on contraceptives that prevent embryo formation, thus equating "life" to the embryo. Leaving out that IUDs have little to do with embryo formation, Hobby Lobby actually didn't want to pay for this part of the Affordable Care Act, ostensibly for religious reasons. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear next year additional objections from nonprofit charities with religious affiliation to this health care provision. There are 3.5 million employees working for nonprofit charities. The core of the objection is that it violates the nonprofit's religious freedom and any compromise makes them "complicit" in abortion practices.

The Supreme Court in the Hobby Lobby decision clearly stated that the government may find other means or alternatives in providing this specific health coverage, which the government promptly did. However, since five of the nine justices are strong Catholics — those five who voted in the 5-4 Hobby Lobby decision — we can expect more of the same next year.

The curious part about this that sensible people have no trouble seeing is that if there is the rule of law, laws for everyone, but religious objection is permitted to the law(s), at what point can religious objection not nullify any law?

Rail-with-Trail meeting

The Joseph Branch Rail-with-Trail Concept Plan has been completed and the Plan and Atlas are available for review online at <http://tinyurl.com/htflub> and <http://tinyurl.com/prw4724>. Also available online are the documents on which the Summary Plan is based.

Printed copies of the Concept Plan are available for review at the public libraries and city halls in Elgin, Wallowa, Enterprise and Joseph. The plan also is available at the Eastern Oregon University Library.

The plan will be presented to the Wallowa Union Railroad Authority (WURA) at the Senior Center at 208 E. 2nd St. in Wallowa on Dec. 15.

The agenda will include presentations to the board by organizations and other members of the public addressing the question of whether WURA should enter into negotiations to authorize use of its right-of-way from Elgin to Joseph for a trail adjacent to the existing railroad (which will continue to operate) and, if so, on what terms and conditions. (The board is not expected to take action at the meeting.)

The Joseph Branch Trail Consortium plans to present a "next steps" proposal for the WURA board's consideration at the meeting. Our proposal is based on a belief that a trail constructed on the publically-owned railroad transportation corridor will improve our quality of life and be an economic asset and that the Concept Plan proves constructing a trail

is physically and financially feasible and is supported by a majority of residents in Union and Wallowa counties.

Terry Edvalson
Board Secretary, Joseph Branch Trail Consortium
La Grande

More on the lodge

We would like to clarify three things following Kathleen Ellyn's informative article about investing in Wallowa Lake Lodge.

First, since Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC was formed in early August, we have offered a total of 3500 shares — or "units" — at \$1,000 each. We have never offered shares in Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC for \$500.

Secondly, sale of the conservation easement may provide funds to Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC toward purchase of the lodge. A "conservation easement" reimburses us for the loss of development rights on the 9.2 acres. Whoever purchases this easement will not own the land and also won't manage the land around the lodge without the consent of the lodge owners (Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC).

Finally, donations of any amount to Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands Fund (the folks who run Wallowology) also may be designated for lodge purchase.

Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands fund will apply this money toward its purchase of lodge shares. These donations are fully tax-deductable.

Thanks to all for your interest and support for saving Wallowa Lake Lodge.

Ellen M Bishop
Outreach Coordinator,
Lake Wallowa Lodge LLC
Joseph

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Volume 133