Is push for a library district losing steam?

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

The idea to form a library district and tax residents for related services grew out of the white-hot backlash to Wallowa County's actions this past spring.

People packed hearing halls to protest the county's plan to close county library service to balance its budget. For weeks, it was all anyone talked about.

Fast forward to Monday night when three people showed up for the first of the public meetings to explain the district were held in Enterprise. No pitchforks. No tar and feathers. No burning Susan Roberts in effigy this time around.

The plan took a serious broadside recently when Enterprise announced it may not approve the city being included in the library district boundary. Some of the reasons given were legitimate, some smacked of provincialism at its worst.

The unfortunate timing of the fire that destroyed city hall has Enterprise leaders rightly concerned about whether taxing for a library district might mean insufficient funds to rebuild city hall and provide a home for millions of dollars in fire equipment.

Under state law, the city can only tax to a specific level before Salem essentially takes over municipal government finances. Fears of Enterprise having to "fix" a failed library district are nonsense.

A library district without Enterprise's participation appears to many to be unworkable, although there are ways to work through the challenges. The leadership of the quest to form the library district must find a way to generate the same interest shown after the county announcement. Without that, there is little hope a library district will fly.

No one should have been duped into believing that asking to dip into the wallets of county residents for libraries — or anything else — would be an easy sell. The push needs to involve more than the people who serve on the Wallowa Valley Library Foundation, as laudable as their efforts have been.

Most people who would have liked to volunteer and become part of the push were told essentially "we will call you if we need you."

Hopefully after Monday night's meeting, the call is going out in earnest.

If there isn't a Herculean effort to rally the cause in the coming weeks, the library district will die aborning and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be missed.

That would be unfortunate.

Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the "Opinion" menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).

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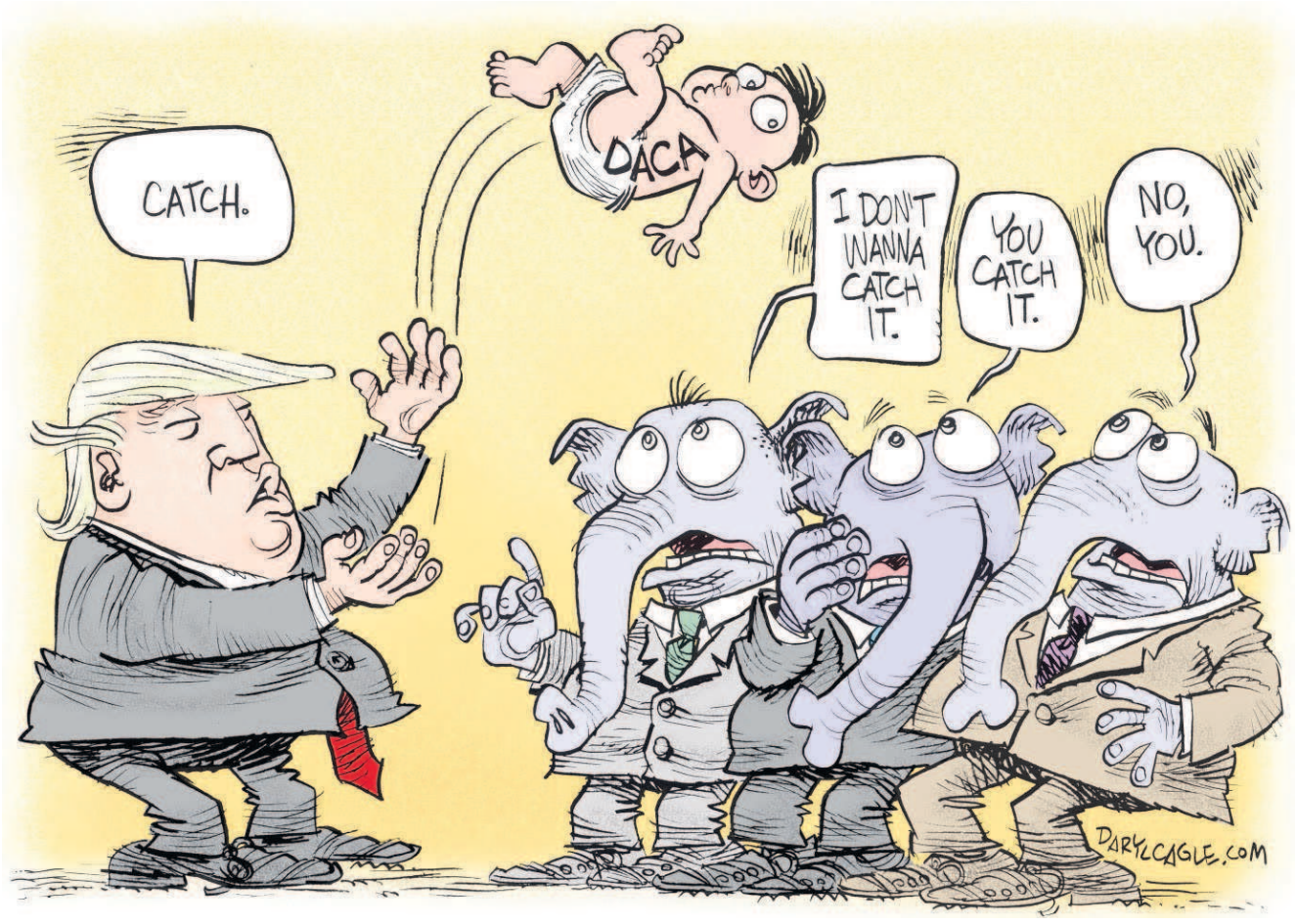

Politics is all messed up

OPEN RANGE
Barrie Qualle

Over the past several years, I have become fairly jaded where it comes to politics. It seems that the only way anything gets done in Washington is when a president signs an executive action for one of his pet projects.

Congress is totally constipated and issues no decent legislation, always voting along party lines. I have come to the point I hate Republicans and Democrats and how they operate. We have mid-term elections next year in November, and I have come to the point I think that if voting really mattered, they wouldn't let you do it.

Several years ago, I had a long conversation with my congressman, Gary Condit. I had known Gary since he was the 18-year-old mayor of Ceres, Calif. From there, he was elected to the county board then to state legislature and then to Congress.

He was of the opinion that at the local level, you could make a difference as a mayor or on the county board. It became more difficult at the state level and almost impossible at the federal level.

He was a conservative Democrat and voted against more Clinton legislation than any other Democrat. He was a member of what they called the "gang of five" who were five democrats that tried, by making deals with Republicans, to unseat Willie Brown as speaker of the house in California.

We like to think we have a representative in Washington that represents us, his constituents. I have come to believe we have about 10 party bosses in each party that actually run the whole deal.

Before a congressman is elected and arrives in Washington, he is told how it will be. He will vote the way the party bosses tell him. If he balks, they see to it he gets none of the PAC money billions they have collected from lobbyists and special interests.

This guarantees he will only serve one term and they will see to it in the next primaries he loses to someone that will fall in line. He also knows that any legislation he might introduce to benefit his constituents is doomed.

I once had a discussion with a lobbyist and asked how things worked. I asked if they discussed with a congressman or senator the legislation they wanted and asked the legislator to write a bill to get what they wanted?

He replied, "Oh no, you can't let them write the bill, they would have it all fouled up. We write the bill and they give it to their staff who dot a few I's and cross a few T's and that is what is turned into law. Of course it helps if a substantial donation is made to their campaign."

I believe one of the reasons government is so wasteful is that large contributors demand something in return that benefits them, and if it benefits the taxpayer, that is purely incidental. Here's how you get things like the billion dollar bridge to nowhere. A large contribution is made by a large firm. In return they receive a contract to build the project and make millions while costing the tax payers billions.

I think we need to limit contributions and take a look at PAC money. These things contribute to the condition where special interests run the country instead of the people. I fully expect the current administration to forgive Puerto Rico's debt not to help the people on the island but to bail out the wall street firms that loaned them the money.

An integrity test for all politicians should be mandatory and passing the test a condition to run for election. This might slow down the spending of over a million dollars for charter flights to basically vacation or watch the solar eclipse.

On the bright side, I have total confidence in all our local elected officials. My next rant will probably be about something that won't be fixed either.

Have a nice autumn.

Barrie Quallie is a Wallowa County-based columnist for the Chieftain.

Mistakes are seldom intentional

WAHL TO WALL
Paul Wahl

I would like to say the Chieftain never makes a mistake. That would be fake news, of course.

There are two avenues of thought in newspaper editing. Either cover as little as possible in order to minimize mistakes or cover everything and do the best you can humanly to be sure everything is correct.

Carolyn Lochert, half of the duo Jezebel's Mother, called me last week to let us know about an omission in the preview story we did on Saturday's Tunesmith event, sponsored by the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance.

Working from a perfect news release submitted by Lochert's co-performer, Janis Carper, I included a few descriptive lines about Janis and then completely skipped over the same info regarding Carolyn.

No particular reason other than "haste makes waste."

Carolyn was beginning to wonder whether we had taken a disliking to her since her name was also omitted in recent coverage of the Local Yokels group, of which she is also a member.

I assured her that was not the case and promised to make amends.

Here is the portion of the release that was omitted:

"Jezebel's Mother features songwriter Carolyn Lochert, whose career has taken her from singing lead in rock, country and funk bands to playing in the "horn" sections of jazz ensembles. Studying composition at OSU started her on the path to writing her own music. Her first album, "She's Lookin' Back," features Lochert's smooth, sultry sound ..."

Apologies all around. If you enjoy good music, downtown Joseph is the place to be Saturday night.

FISHTRAP KICKED off its fifth season of Fishtrap Fireside Friday with readings from Lauren MacDonald, Jon Rombach and Evelyn Swart.

Despite football games and other competing events, the Fishtrap House was packed to overflowing. And no one went away disappointed.

From Evelyn's whimsical memories of camping as a child to Jon's off-beat humor to MacDonald's avant garde poetry, it was pure entertainment.

Now I know there are some of you out there whose eyes roll back in their heads and your stomachs begin to churn whenever someone mentions a "reading," but this is totally different. It's not stuffy or pretentious.

If you have never attended, mark your calendar today for 7 p.m. Nov. 3. Wine and snacks are included.

A SURE sign of autumn: My wife baked an apple crisp last week. It was delicious.

We're going through a bit of fresh apple withdrawal missing out on the season in Minnesota.

Minnesota-grown apples? You bet. Ever heard of the Honey Crisp?

It was developed at the University of Minnesota.

If you wanted tart or sweet, eating or baking, there was a variety just for you. The Zestar! is considered by many to be the premiere apple in the country and yes, it has Minnesota roots.

We've found a few varieties of Washington and Oregon apples that are quite tasty and will be eating our share of them in the weeks to come.

I am not aware of any Wallowa County-grown apples. If they exist, please let me know.

Column inspires fond memories of Joseph

LETTERS to the EDITOR

I so enjoyed the The Sept. 27 edition of the Chieftain, particularly the "Political Philosophy" column by John McColgan.

I haven't lived in Joseph since 1960 after having moved there from Walla Walla in 1945, but I have so many great memories.

I attended the Joseph school system from fourth grade through my senior year of high school. After graduating, I attended Whitman College (incentivized by Supt. Bill Williams and Coach Don Golden who both had attended Whitman.)

I paid for all my expenses at Whitman by working 5 summers at Ed Halloran and Son's Logging Co., as I just wanted to show my folks, Eunice and Ted Newton, "I could do it myself."

I was so appreciative that Mike Holloran had a job for me those five summers, and had fun bragging that I was the "head hooker" for a logging company.

While I have been a subscriber for some time, the column contained comments on so many names that I identified. I was in Seventh Heaven.

We lived on Main 1945-52 right next to the son (and his wife) of the senior Frank McCully.

Frank Jr. carried on the leadership of his father in politics and Joseph business. I used to play with Frank Jr.'s sons Frankie and Ronnie for several years.

Malcom Dawson lived in the house mentioned in the column when we lived "a block down (and crossed) main street," and he was my Boy Scout leader those many years ago.

He truly was a people's person, and I thought a great scout Leader. When Marlene and I visited my mom (who taught the second grade in Joseph for many years, probably in excess of 30 years) about 10 years ago, Malcom was walking in through the front door of the restaurant at the head of the lake as we were leaving, and immediately recognized me, and said, "Eddie, what are you doing here?"

What a day-brightener. We shared a lot of fun stories .

My wife also got a chuckle as I hadn't been called Eddie since I graduated from Joseph High.

I was saddened hear of Malcom's passing; he was one of many greats from Joseph and Wallowa County that helped me to get to adulthood.

With the passing of my sister, Shirley Newton Jennings, in April, and my mom and mad years ago, I may not get back to Joseph, but articles like John's and others in the Chieftain help to keep those memories alive for me.

Ed Newton
Folsom (not the prison), Calif.