

Border:

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making it possible for people to civilly voice their frustration. Darrow explained that when people believe they are disenfranchised they can react either violently or peacefully. Measure 31-101 and similar initiatives are providing people an opportunity to do the latter.

"These are pressure valves that allow people to react in a positive manner," he said.

Darrow collected more than 700 signatures of registered voters to get Measure 31-101 on the ballot in Union County.

"I could not believe it when we got on the ballot," he said.

Darrow said based on what people told him, most everyone who signed the Union County petition supports Greater Idaho, but he knows of several who did not.

"One woman signed it because she wanted to see it get on the ballot so that she could vote against it," Darrow said.

Such responses did not bother Darrow, who said his ultimate objective is to give the people a chance to decide about Greater Idaho.

"That is what citizen government is all about," he said. "It is about dialogue."

Darrow said that while he was collecting signatures for Measure 31-101 he told people, "I am not here to argue or convince you. I am here to give you a chance to vote."

A plea to legislators

Since the passage of Measure 31-101 Darrow has been urging the Union County Board of Commissioners to request in writing that state Rep. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, and state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, work to get Oregon legislators to discuss Greater Idaho.

Darrow said he is not requesting that formal discussions about Greater



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Grant Darrow, a retired chimney sweep and Cove resident, poses for a photo outside his home on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022. Darrow has been leading local efforts in the campaign to change the Oregon-Idaho border and allow Eastern Oregon to become part of Greater Idaho.

Idaho begin at that state Capitol. Darrow said it could be something as simple as the formation of a committee to try to determine why interest in Greater Idaho is growing.

"Getting people at the state level to talk about it is the next step," he said. "We need to get more dialogue, to get everybody talking about it. We have to get it out there."

Darrow said he has a firsthand understanding of the growing sense of frustration people in Northeastern Oregon have about the state's urban-rural divide because he worked as a chimney sweep in Union, Wallowa and Baker counties for 44 years before retiring in September 2021.

"I would work in 12 to 15 homes a week," he said.

The chimney sweep has detected a growing sense of disenchantment with Oregon's government during the past decade, noting they believe, like Darrow does,

that the needs and concerns of Eastern Oregon are largely ignored by the Legislature.

"We have become nothing more than window dressing," he said.

Darrow in his 2015 letter to the editor expressed this point even more starkly.

"It would appear to any rural resident or outside observer that most of Oregon's urbanites view Oregon's rural residents as nothing more than Third-World inhabitants occupying their weekend and vacation playgrounds in what they advertise to the world as Oregon's unique diversity," he wrote.

Regulations are choking businesses

Darrow objects to things such as the way state government is imposing more and more regulations and fees that make it increasingly difficult for Oregonians to start and operate businesses in Oregon.

"It has gotten so bad that I could not afford to start a career as a chimney sweep in Oregon today," he said, adding that every time government puts in a new regulation or fee it adds to the red tape citizens must deal with. "It gets to be absolutely crazy."

Darrow does not know what Greater Idaho will lead to, noting that it may push to something beneficial to rural Oregon that might not involve moving Idaho's borders west.

"It could morph into any direction," he said.

He believes the Greater Idaho campaign could lead to a positive change in how the Legislature perceives rural residents, the creation of a new state or Greater Idaho.

The Cove resident is sometimes asked by people who know how much he dislikes Oregon's urban-rural divide, why he doesn't move to Idaho.

"I tell them, 'That is what I am trying to do,'" Darrow said.



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