

Ballot title certified for revived animal cruelty initiative

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — A controversial voter initiative in Oregon that would remove exemptions for farming and ranching under the state's animal cruelty laws is being revived for another run.

Proponents of Initiative Petition 3 — named the Abuse, Neglect and Assault Exemption Modification and Improvement Act — took another step toward qualifying for the 2024 general election after being issued a certified ballot title on June 13.

IP3 is essentially a reboot on Initiative Petition 13, which was filed last year for the 2022 election. It calls for amending Oregon's animal abuse and neglect statutes, abolishing longstanding exemptions for agriculture.

The result would make it a crime to slaughter livestock for food, while also banning common animal husbandry practices such as branding and dehorning cattle. Artificial insemination would furthermore be considered sexual assault of an animal, a Class C felony.

Exemptions for hunting,

fishing, rodeos, pest control, scientific research and wildlife management would likewise be stripped away under the proposal.

According to the "Yes on IP3" campaign website, the laws would retain exemptions for killing or injuring animals in cases of self-defense and providing veterinary care.

David Michelson, a Portland-based animal rights activist and lead organizer for the campaign, said IP13 failed to garner enough signatures for the 2022 ballot because, "unlike the claims some have made that we receive funding from the likes of (George) Soros or (Bill) Gates, this is a very grassroots initiative that had started with very few team members."

"Since we started this process in November 2020, we have steadily grown in support and are hopeful of our chances for qualifying in 2024," Michelson said in response to questions emailed by the *Capital Press*.

Petitioners filed IP3 on March 16. It is largely the same as IP13, but with two



George Plaven/Capital Press

Holstein cows eat feed inside the dairy barn at Tilla-Bay Farms in Tillamook, on Oregon's North Coast.

additions, Michelson said.

First, he said IP3 would remove additional exemptions for livestock and farmed animals under animal neglect statutes requiring they have access to "adequate bedding, adequate shelter and other minimum care provisions."

Second, the initiative would make it so that anyone convicted of animal cruelty could not own any animal for 5-15 years, depending on the severity of the crime.

While the attorney general did certify the ballot title for IP3, supporters are not yet approved to start circulat-

ing the petition. Those who commented on the draft ballot title for IP3 may appeal the certified title to the Oregon Supreme Court. Appeals are due June 28.

If approved, the campaign would need to collect 112,020 signatures to place IP3 on the 2024 ballot.

As it was with IP13, farming, ranching and hunting groups fiercely oppose the measure and are preparing to push back against it.

Tami Kerr, executive director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, said IP3 would put dairies and cattle producers out of business, hurting rural communities statewide.

"I know how hard our producers work, my family included. It's personally offensive," Kerr said. "As crazy as this is, and as negative as it would be to our rural communities, I would hope that a lot of our elected officials would speak out in opposition to it, our state senators included."

Cattle and calves ranked as Oregon's second-most valuable agricultural commodity in 2020, worth approximately \$587.8 mil-

lion. Milk ranked as the fourth-most valuable agricultural commodity, at \$557.3 million.

"We love our local food," Kerr said. "We have award-winning products all over the state that this would have a negative impact on."

Michelson said the campaign recognizes the need for economic security, sustenance and self-reliance in rural Oregon. He suggested that current subsidies for animal agriculture may be redirected to help farmers transition to other plant-based crops, or providing farmers with a universal basic income or guaranteed jobs program.

"We believe a world can exist where both human and nonhuman animals can co-exist without relying on the violation of one another's basic right to life," Michelson said. "There are many different strategies we can use to get to that world, and I do not think there is only one good solution."

Once successful in Oregon, campaign leaders say they hope to see similar initiatives introduced in all 50 states.

Bentz says he never asked colleague to pursue pardon

By **LES ZAITZ**
Oregon Capital Chronicle

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz said Friday, June 24, that he was unaware that a colleague had recommended a presidential pardon for his Jan. 6, 2021, vote to challenge the 2020 election results in Pennsylvania.

Bentz, Oregon's lone Republican in Congress, was one of 138 representatives who objected to counting the Pennsylvania election results in the 2020 presidential race.

Witnesses told a congressional investigating committee on Thursday, June 23, that a handful of U.S. representatives sought pardons from then-President Donald Trump.

U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Alabama, five days after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol wrote to the White House because "President Trump asked me to."

Brooks recommended Trump grant general pardons to "every congressman and senator who voted to reject the Electoral College vote submissions of Arizona and Pennsylvania."

Brooks said he expected Democrats "with perhaps some liberal Republican help" are "going to abuse America's judicial system by targeting numerous Republicans with sham charges."

In response to written questions, Bentz said through a spokesman that he had never considered requesting a pardon and hadn't researched the matter. He said he didn't authorize Brooks to represent him in a pardon request.

"I have never even spoken to Rep. Brooks," Bentz said.

They both participate in the Sportsmen's Caucus in



The Observer, File

Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, speaks to a group of residents during a meet-and-greet Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022, at Brother Bear Cafe in La Grande. Bentz said he never considered or asked for a presidential pardon for voting against Pennsylvania results.

the House, their official websites show.

Bentz said he knew nothing of the letter until it became public on June 23.

"I was made aware of it in the same manner as everyone else — when the media began talking about it," he said.

Bentz, a former state legislator and an Ontario attorney specializing in water law, had been in office just a few days when Congress took the formal step of counting electoral votes in the presidential election. The counting was disrupted by rioters and more than 700 people have been charged with federal crimes since then.

Republicans joined in Trump's effort to overturn the election results showing Joe Biden won.

Pennsylvania was a key to the strategy to deliver the election to Trump by disputing results in several states.

In a statement after his vote opposing the Pennsylvania numbers, Bentz explained he didn't think the election process in that state passed

constitutional muster. He said he concluded that after he and his staff researched the matter. He was troubled that state officials, including the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, were allowing mail-in ballots to be counted.

He said that process "contributed to a widespread loss of faith by many Americans in the integrity of the 2020 election — including many in my district. Such a violation of our Constitution must be discouraged in the strongest terms possible."

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, 10,000 ballots postmarked by Election Day but received afterward were set aside and not included in Pennsylvania's vote count.

In a later interview with the Malheur Enterprise, Bentz said he didn't realize that those 10,000 votes had not in fact been included in the Pennsylvania results. Litigation contesting the Pennsylvania results ended when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider an appeal.

Bentz said on June 24 he

stands by his statement given after his Pennsylvania vote.

He had said then that he shared frustrations of his constituents over the 2020 election and "I will do my best to address their concerns."

He didn't share what steps he had taken in the past 18 months.

Instead, he said, "We are awaiting proposals from the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties."

Bentz represents Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, which includes all or part of 20 counties including Baker, Union and Wallowa counties.



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