

# Opinion

BAKER CITY  
**Herald**  
Serving Baker County since 1870

Write a letter  
news@bakercityherald.com

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Starnes should be invited to all debates

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Patrick Starnes, the Independent Party's candidate for governor, will take part in at least one of the three candidates' debates planned for this election season. That's good, but a real question remains unanswered. Starnes represents one of what the state considers its three major political parties.

Why, so far, has he been excluded from the other two debates?

The Independent Party joined Oregon's political big leagues in 2015, when its membership topped, barely, 5 percent of the state's registered voters. Today it has 120,467 members, small potatoes compared to the state's 956,326 Democrats and 699,769 Republicans. That may not sound like many voters, but it's almost three times more than all minor parties in the state combined.

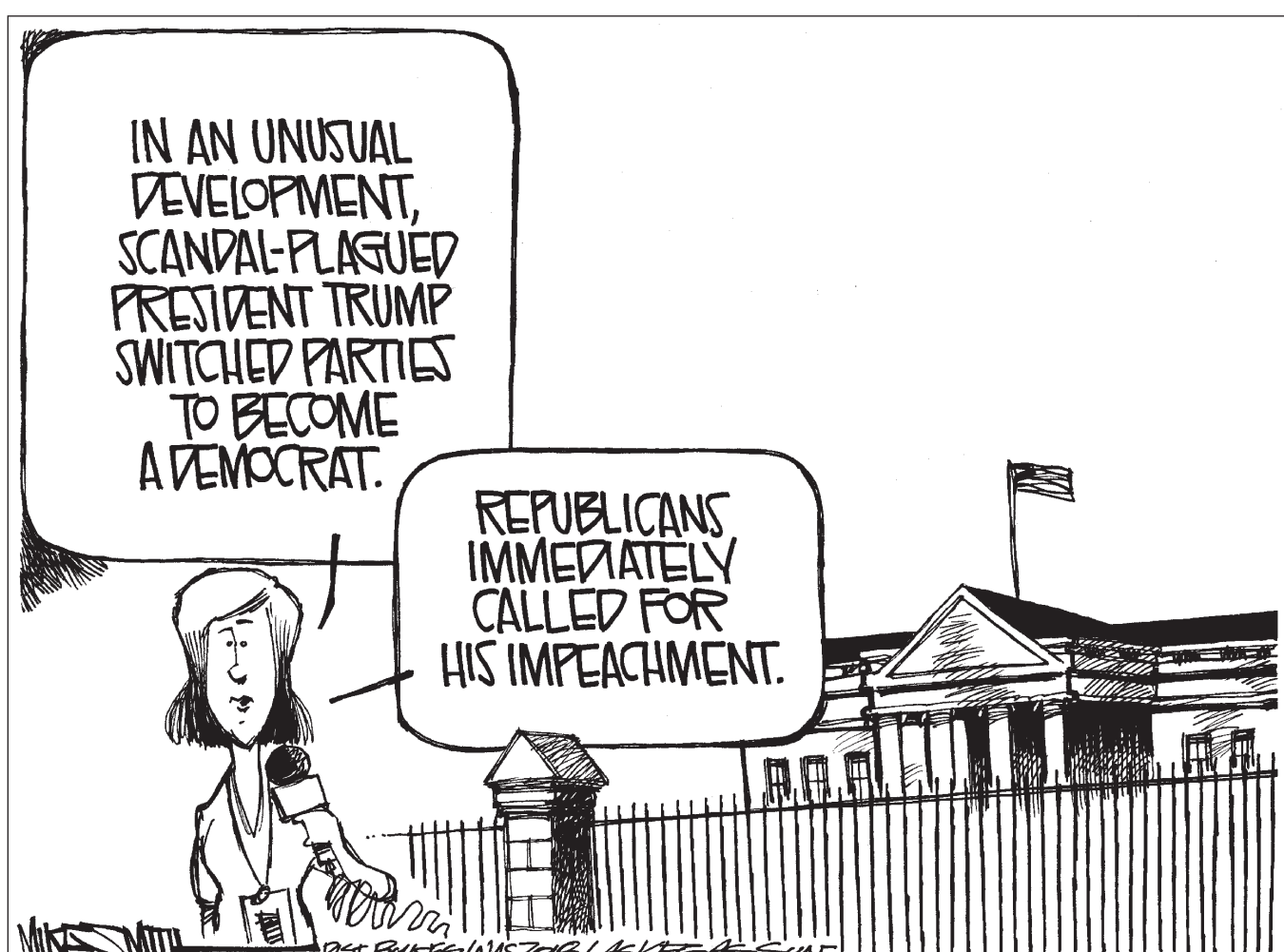
Starnes, meanwhile, is an interesting character in his own right. A cabinetmaker who, with his wife, restores old houses, he holds a history degree from the University of Oregon and has served two terms on the Douglas Education Service District board and one on the board of the McKenzie School District, east of Eugene.

As for the debate, it will be held Oct. 2 in Portland. Sponsored by KOIN television, Children First for Oregon and the Pamplin Media Group, it would break the mold even without Starnes' participation. While a pair of media representatives will moderate the evening, all questions will come directly from children and young people.

It may be that the Independent Party will be unable to continue to attract enough registered voters to maintain its major party status in years to come. That remains to be seen.

For now, however, it is a major party in the state, and it should be treated as such. Its candidates for statewide office should be included in all events that include both Democrats and Republicans. Starnes should be invited to all those events held before the November election.

Without that exposure Oregonians are unable to judge Starnes or future Independent candidates against the rest of the field. That's not fair to the candidates or the voters.



## Much riding on new forest plan

Much has happened over the 15 years it has taken the U.S. Forest Service to develop the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision, which would guide future management of the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur National Forests. During this period thousands of acres have burned, thousands of timber-based jobs have been lost, and countless miles of forest roads have been shut down.

Many in Eastern Oregon have participated in the revision process, attending public meetings and submitting comments, all in the hope the Forest Service would listen and develop a new plan that meets the needs of our communities.

Now the agency has released a plan that, at the very least, acknowledges the importance of our natural resource-based economy and way of life. But as we review the plan's 5,000 pages, it's still uncertain how the three national forests will achieve their goals and uphold the Forest Service's mandate for multiple-use management.

The Forest Service is making a lot of promises in its new plan — namely more timber, accelerated restoration and wildfire mitigation. Yet the plan does not seem to offer a clear path on how they will get there. When it comes to the details, there are also serious questions about forest access, habitat enhancement, and grazing that need to be answered.

The revised plan needs a clear path because there's so much at stake. When it comes to timber, the region's remaining forest products industry continues to be highly vulnerable due to the lack of log supply. Local forest contractors and

ARVID ANDERSEN  
NICK SMITH

the milling infrastructure, for example, must harvest and transport logs from hundreds of miles away to simply keep operating in the current environment. That is despite the close proximity of the three national forests (over 4.8 million acres), which today are losing half of the forests' natural growth to mortality (enough to build 30,000 houses).

To protect the region's forest products infrastructure, businesses in the industry need certainty that the new forest plans will deliver the promised volume through timber sales, stewardship contracting and restoration work. The new forest plan will only be successful if it provides a new direction from the analysis paralysis and process obstruction that continues to plague the management of the three national forests. It must also eliminate arbitrary regulations, such as the 21-inch "eastside screen," that has prevented opportunities to restore the health of our forests.

Without clear direction, the Forest Service's intention to increase active forest management will be stymied again and again by interest groups that reject authentic collaboration and are ideologically opposed to tree cutting. These groups will continue to exploit our broken and arbitrary federal land management policies to obstruct, litigate and prevent Forest Service personnel from doing their jobs. The forests will lose the opportunity to sell timber and will fail to generate revenue for non-timber priori-

ties, including recreation and forest road maintenance.

Congress has provided some relief by approving a wildfire-funding "fix" that should allow the Forest Service to meet growing wildfire suppression costs without directing money away from non-fire programs. Congress has also provided a number of policy tools to enable the national forests to expedite certain forest management activities. But the use of these tools, including those that expedite projects under the National Environmental Policy Act, are required to be consistent with existing forest plans.

Natural resource groups, counties, forest access advocates and other individuals will be filing formal objections before the deadline. Those of us in the forestry community will be participating in this process to help the Forest Service improve its plan. We will urge them to provide a strong blueprint that recognizes modern forestry practices and the industry's ability to help meet shared land management goals.

There is a lot riding on the new forest plan considering their long-term implications for our communities and economy. The Forest Service needs to get this right. The agency should not miss the opportunity to accept constructive feedback during the objections phase, and provide a final product that can help restore confidence in federal forest management.

*Arvid Andersen is a forestry consultant and member of the Baker City Council. Nick Smith of Sherwood is executive director of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities, a nonprofit organization promoting active management of federally owned forests.*

## Your views

### Where's Walden? He's out working for his constituents

What does a U.S. Representative do? I can tell you what Greg Walden, the U.S. Representative for Oregon's 2nd congressional district, does.

He finds lost Social Security checks, helps get funding for economic development projects and cuts through red tape to secure veterans' benefits. He is working on legislation that addresses forest health and managing our rampant wildfires. He has worked to expand rural broadband and roll back regulations that have hurt small towns. He is fighting to fund crucial rural health care for the Children's Health Insurance Programs and Community Health Centers.

I am amused at recent letters to the editor from folks who say they can't find Greg. Let me tell you why. He is working! He is busy addressing the needs of his Oregon constituents.

It is the plot of a made-for-TV movie

that a new, fresh-faced person from California, who has just been elected to Congress from Oregon, goes to Washington, D.C., and convinces all the seasoned and experienced legislators to immediately join her and endorse her ideas. It is a great fantasy for the campaign trail but the reality of the job of representative involves years of hard work, study of the issues and experience working with other legislators. It is not an instant process, like mixing a cup-o-soup.

Real life involves gaining experience, trust and making friends and allies on both sides of the aisle. Real life involves representing Oregonians since Greg was first elected in 1998.

Congressman Greg Walden is the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. That prestigious honor only comes by virtue of knowledge, experience, being bipartisan and working hard. We need to keep that experience and knowledge working for

Oregon.

We need Greg Walden.

**Zee Koza**  
La Grande

### McLeod-Skinner will represent us, not just the rich

The wheels on Trump's clown car are really coming off now.

Greg Walden, where are you? What are you doing to protect and defend the Constitution? Seems you're keeping a pretty low profile like other Republican congressmen. Why? Are you holding party over country? Show me you're not.

Otherwise I keep pushing hard for our better candidate for Congress this Nov. 6: Jamie McLeod-Skinner!

Jamie will represent us Eastern Oregonians, not the millionaires who pay for Walden. Greg really needs to go home.

**Jane Wentzel**  
Baker City

## Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

**Mail:** To the Editor, Baker City Herald,  
P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814  
**Email:** news@bakercityherald.com  
**Fax:** 541-523-6426

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-

326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La

Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

**U.S. Rep. Greg Walden** (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-

225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.