

# Opinion

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

Write a letter  
news@bakercityherald.com

## EDITORIAL

# Ambition vs. reality

You know a member of Congress has gotten a tad too ambitious when a spokesman tries to explain away a proposal — and very obviously a serious proposal, since it borrows the term “New Deal” — by describing one aspect as “literally — clearly — irony.”

Irony is an important ingredient in, say, a sitcom.

It is not a hallmark of well-crafted legislation.

The case in point is the “Green New Deal” offered by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat from New York, and Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass.

The proposal, which is a non-binding resolution rather than an actual bill, has gotten considerable attention recently as much for what it doesn't include as for what it does.

The actual resolution is itself quite a piece of work, calling for, among other things, eliminating the use of fossil fuels for transportation and electricity production.

But it was the “frequently asked questions” that temporarily accompanied the resolution — but are not actually part of the proposal — that spawned much controversy.

(The FAQ was later removed from the Ocasio-Cortez's website.)

Among the questions, related to the goal of replacing fossil fuels, was: “Why 100% clean and renewable and not just 100% renewable? Are you saying we won't transition off fossil fuels?”

The answer — since deleted from the website, a hopeless move if ever there was one in the internet age — includes this often-quoted passage: “We set a goal to get to net-zero, rather than zero emissions, in 10 years because we aren't sure that we'll be able to fully get rid of farting cows and airplanes that fast...”

This is the passage that Ocasio-Cortez's spokesman described as “irony.”

Notwithstanding that he probably meant “satire” or “sarcasm” rather than “irony,” the section of the answer about cows is troubling even if, as the spokesman implies, Ocasio-Cortez doesn't consider it a serious goal to “fully get rid” of the gaseous bovines. The mention of cows at all suggests the congresswoman doesn't understand the ramifications of the government trying even to shrink the nation's cow herds.

This is not a criticism of Ocasio-Cortez for having ambitious goals not only for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also, as her resolution outlines, for ensuring Americans have access to good jobs, healthcare and housing, among other things.

These are all noble objectives. And although Ocasio-Cortez's resolution lacks details, particularly as regards the costs of her manifesto, it is, to repeat, a resolution, not a fully fledged bill. It's perfectly appropriate for the congresswoman to draft such a wide-ranging list of ideas to start a discussion.

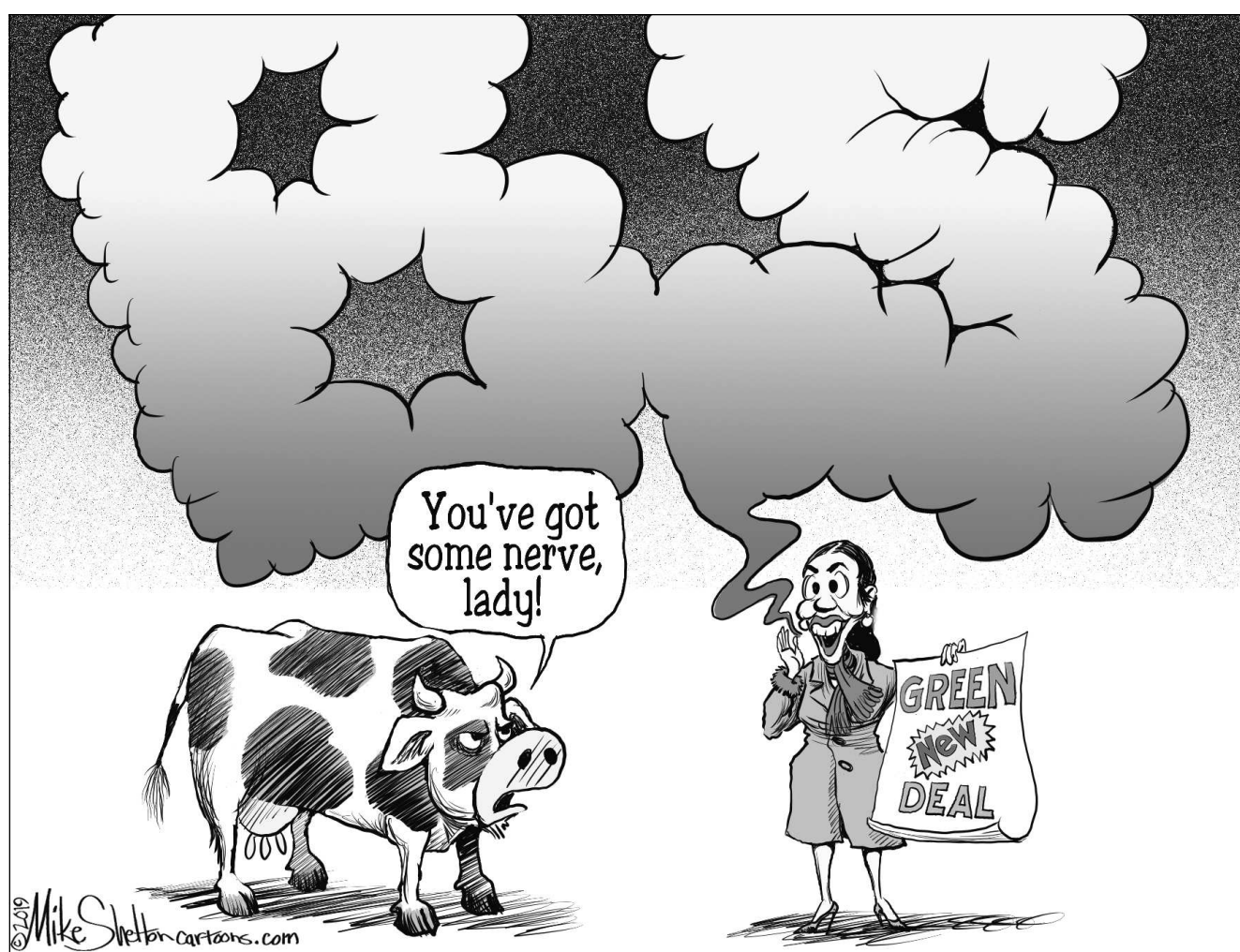
But a flippant reference to ridding the nation of “farting cows” isn't amusing — and not only because the emissions of greater concern from bovines actually come from the opposite end of the animal. (Cows burp. And what comes out includes methane.)

What's bothersome is that Ocasio-Cortez obviously believes the government should make it a priority to cull, if not eliminate, the nation's beef cattle and dairy cows (both kinds burp).

This is no minor matter in Baker County, where more than 100,000 beef cattle live and where the sales of these animals is a major driver of our economy. Were Ocasio-Cortez to realize her goal, she would learn that ensuring every adult American has a “job with family-sustaining wages” (another passage from the deleted FAQ) would be even more difficult, and costly, than it would be otherwise. It is hard to be a profitable cattle rancher without cattle, to run a dairy without cows, or to operate a creamery without milk (and it's unlikely Tillamook is going to go over to goats).

Moreover, cutting the U.S. herd would have no meaningful effect on reducing greenhouse gases. Unless Ocasio-Cortez intends to convince people not only in this country but worldwide to stop eating beef and ice cream, the loss of American cattle would be made good, quickly and profitably, outside our borders, beyond the range not only of the congresswoman's ambition, but also her legislative power.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## Your views

### Seeking a compromise on road blocked by locked gate

I attended last week's County Commission meeting and listened to the discussion about the road issue on Big Lookout Mountain. I have hunted in that area for more than 40 years and was dismayed when I encountered the locked gate near the top of the Manning Creek road blocking access to public land. I spoke with the county road department and two of the commissioners, and learned of the county ordinance declaring the Connor Creek road from the Snake River road to the Lookout Mountain road a county road under Revised Statute (RS) 2477.

Using RS 2477 as a tool to claim jurisdiction over roads in the West has been asserted many times. Generally these assertions take place on public lands, but some have occurred on private lands where documentation shows the route existed prior to the land's transfer out of the public domain. The RS 2477 case law is extremely complex and generally is consistent with state law regarding road definition, location, duration of use, improvements (or the lack of), tread, etc. One common element is that the rule of "... as is, where is..." applies, meaning that significant route modification, surface changes, or widening are not allowed. If routes asserted on public lands under RS 2477 need to be modified, the county applies for a right-of-way under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). In the case of private

lands the county would negotiate with the landowner for a right-of-way or easement for any modifications.

An important point in this case is whether or not the county has enough documentation to establish its claim on the private lands in question. In the recent past, the existing county ordinance regarding this road was enacted. The private landowner, taking issue with the county's documentation, installed a locked gate. Litigation seems likely to resolve this dispute. I hope it doesn't come to that. My sincere hope is that a negotiated settlement resulting in ensuring public access to public lands from the top of the Lookout Mountain road can be reached. I am confident that both parties (with input from adjoining landowners, hunters, and recreationists) can do this.

Dave Hunsaker  
Baker City

### Enjoyed re-reading two recent Herald articles

Relaxing in my living room, after shoveling my walk from today's snowfall, I re-read some very pleasant articles by the paper's editor, Jayson Jacoby. I have long enjoyed his obvious enjoyment of nature, and his very unique writing style, but somehow I really took to his two articles of Feb. 8. One article, concerning the natural water cycle in Oregon, including the dual effect of the Elkhorn Mountains, was not only informative, but fun to think about. How many articles have

### Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Letters are limited to 350 words. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.

you read that can combine a 7-year-old boy's fun in a few puddles, with the hydrologic cycles in Oregon, in such a unique and fun way?

The second article concerned the frozen art along various different rivers in winter, and with similar musical comparisons of creeks (or cricks) in warmer months. To me, God's beauty in nature surrounds us at any season of the year. During most of the year we're usually too busy with our own lives to pay much attention to the gifts of nature. Mr. Jacoby often reminds us to open our eyes to what we have. But on a cloudy winter day, when nature puts on her quiet, restoring effects of winter beauty to counteract the politics, injustices of the world, rampant hatred, and innumerable other problems, Mr. Jacoby hits a seldom-used nerve of appreciation in us to turn our hearts toward peace and tranquility. Many thanks, Jayson, for reminding us.

Peter Jeffs  
Baker City

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Misguided parents and the measles

### Editorial from The Chicago Tribune:

If a disease were striking children, causing rash and fever and sometimes escalating to brain swelling, pneumonia and even death, there would be a public demand to do something about it.

America did, and measles was declared eradicated here in 2000.

Now the malady is back in Illinois and at least nine other states, with two cases in downstate Champaign and an alarming breakout in the Pacific Northwest, where the governor of Washington has declared a state of emergency.

Blame a stubbornly resistant anti-vaccine movement driven by dangerous pseudoscience and the worst impulses of obsessive overparenting. “I know what's best for my child!” anti-vax parents say, and measles spreads.

The World Health Organization warned Thursday of a dramatic rise in measles cases globally as parents reject vaccines for their children. In Europe, measles cases reached their highest level in a decade in 2018. Outbreaks have hit the Philippines and Madagascar. In a world of global travel, these aren't distant concerns. A monthslong series of cases in New York has been traced to an unvaccinated child who caught the disease on a trip to Israel.

Measles can cause lifelong effects including deafness. It is ugly, with its blotchy, fevered spots, some of which leave permanent scars. It's highly contagious and miserable to experience.

A worried anti-vaccinations parent posted on Facebook to ask whether there were any precautions she could take to protect her 3-year-old from a measles outbreak. Ah yes, if only there were a way. She was rightly given a social media spanking.

Measles vaccine is 97 percent effective after two doses, which usually also protect against mumps, rubella and sometimes varicella, or chickenpox, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A well-vaccinated population takes on a “herd immunity” that hinders outbreaks. Some states, including Washington, allow parents wide latitude in skipping the vaccine. The Washington legislature is now rethinking that.

“Thankfully, we live in a highly immunized community,” Julie Pryde, administrator of the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, told the local News-Gazette. “That's why it doesn't go wild like a brush fire.”

Watching plump, pure baby flesh pierced and feeling trepidation about how the child's system will react can be legitimately nerve-racking for

a parent. That's no license to avoid a medical necessity that protects child and community. The right to resist comes with a corresponding responsibility to back up that impulse with rigorous research.

Once more: Both studies that purported to find a link between vaccines and autism have been thoroughly discredited. There is no evidence connecting the two.

Seeking a second opinion may sometimes be wise. Opting out of sound medicine and public health policy in favor of conspiracy theories is not.

“All school-children who have not yet had a measles immunization should beg their parents to arrange for them to have one as soon as possible,” children's author Roald Dahl wrote in a 1980s essay promoting vaccination. His daughter Olivia, to whom he dedicated “James and the Giant Peach,” died of measles-induced encephalitis at age 7.

Dahl was onto something. Illinois is among states that allow “mature minors” a voice in their own medical care. Children of anti-vax parents are visiting websites like Reddit to seek advice on how to get vaccines all by themselves.

Now that's some healthy skepticism of unwise parenting.