

Opinion

BAKER CITY
Herald
Serving Baker County since 1870

Write a letter
news@bakercityherald.com

OUR VIEW

Making it easier for voters to register

State Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, believes Oregonians would be better served if they could register to vote right up through Election Day. The change, he argues, would improve voter turnout, and that's not a bad thing.

The state constitution requires would-be voters to have registered "not less than 20 days" before the next election. They also must live in Oregon for the six months preceding the election, and Hass does not propose changing the residency requirement.

But, as Hass notes, the 20-day requirement may have made sense when it was enacted in 1986. The era of modern technology had not yet taken hold, and county clerks favored the Ballot Measure 13 that established the 20-day registration cutoff.

Voters agreed, though elected officials, the League of Women Voters and other groups all opposed it, arguing that the registration deadline would reduce voter participation in elections because fewer people would be eligible to vote. A Bend Bulletin editorial about the measure noted that in 1986, some 71,000 voters registered in the 20 days before the general election, and in 1980, more than 100,000 registered in that same time period.

Supporters of the measure argued the deadline would cut fraud and save money, and the measure passed handily.

Yet, Hass is correct in noting that technology has advanced so much since 1986 that it no longer takes 20 days to verify that those who have registered are, in fact, entitled to vote. He would let voters decide the matter, and, assuming they approved the change, he would charge the secretary of state with establishing what documentation to use to establish voter eligibility.

Hass wants to be his party's candidate for secretary of state in 2020, and he no doubt sees changing the registration deadline as something that voters will favor. But he's also likely right in his belief that same-day registration will get more Oregonians to the polls. It's a change worth trying.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.

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



Your views

Planning Commission should reject proposed cell tower

Whit Deschner's poem in the October 25th edition of the Baker City Herald is pure poetic genius. It's also quite humorous.

But Deschner's criticism of the proposed 70-foot-tall cell tower is meant to be taken VERY seriously.

For the Baker City Planning Commission it should be a slam-dunk "NO" decision to reject the proposal.

I suggest that every member of the Planning Commission, City Council, and all citizens go see the proposed site, which includes a dense residential area within a football field's distance.

Here's how you get there. Go to the corner of Main and D, where City Manager Fred Warner Jr. lives. Drive east on D Street over the Powder River bridge and a little further until you're at the north end of the Fairgrounds and Leo Adler Baseball Park. Stop and look north. Then visualize a structure standing there that is as tall as a 7-story building towering several times

higher than every building in that part of town.

I have a cellphone going on 10 years old. It has no problem sending and receiving calls and messages in every part of Baker City. If my cellphone can do that, it means a 70-foot-tall cell tower in the middle of Baker City is completely superfluous.

Gary Dielman
Baker City

Towers are the price of cellphone convenience

Just read an interesting poem sent in by a fellow reader in opposition to the proposed cellphone tower. Now to explain myself, both my wife and I neither one of us have a cellphone or a desire to have one. We have a land line and an answering machine, which has served us faithfully for decades. However I have absolutely no opposition to the cellphone tower being proposed. My fellow poet and the majority of citizens in Baker City have to ask themselves are they willing to give up their cell-

phones. You can't have reliable service without towers. Everyone wants the freedom of the cellphone and it comes with a price. You can't have it both ways. I'll never understand the "Not in my Backyard" thinking when it comes to wanting something but not willing to pay the price.

Bill Ward
Baker City

Looking forward to Nancy Pelosi as president

Just sitting here thinking, when Mr. Trump is impeached, and vice president Pearce is in prison for being an accomplice, the world will be right again, with Nancy Pelosi as president. Donald Trump should face charges of treason. He is not an American icon, he is an infatuation of all the people out there who wanted change, but chose wrong. He has made the greatest country in the world vulnerable, for his own gain. Wake up America.

Donald Worley
Baker City

Kurds helped track al-Baghdadi

One could be forgiven for concluding that the widespread national security panic following President Donald Trump's abrupt withdrawal of U.S. forces from northeastern Syria was overstated.

As that withdrawal was happening, we now know, U.S. special forces were homing in on the location of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State's leader and founder, in al Qaeda-controlled territory near the Turkish border. Trump himself said the intelligence that led to his capture came together in those fateful weeks as Kurds and Turks briefly fought and dozens of Islamic State prisoners escaped.

What's more remarkable is that as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces concluded that they were being betrayed by Trump, they nonetheless continued to track al-Baghdadi and work closely with their U.S. counterparts in the operation that killed him.

Kurdish spies began to focus on al-Baghdadi's location last spring, after the last Islamic State stronghold in Syria fell. "We began to investigate the presence of Baghdadi, where he was located, in March," said Ilham Ahmed, the president of the Syrian Democratic Council, in an interview Sunday. "Our intelligence units were always following his movements. They were in a high-level coordination with American intelligence."

ELI LAKE

Ahmed said the chaos of the initial Turkish invasion did not stop Kurdish spies in the anti-terrorism unit of the Syrian Democratic Forces from continuing to gather and analyze information gleaned about Baghdadi's location. The New York Times reported that the initial tip about al-Baghdadi's location came in the summer, following the arrest of one of his couriers and one of his wives.

Ahmed is now in Washington to make the case for repairing a partnership that frayed dramatically after the Turkish army invaded that region earlier this month. Despite Trump's public comments that he sees no reason why U.S. forces should stand between Kurdish fighters and the Turkish army, Ahmed said she hopes Trump will use America's vast political and economic leverage to deter Turkey from trying to resettle the 3 million Syrian Arab refugees in historically Kurdish areas.

For now, she said, the Syrian Kurds have received guarantees from Russia to protect some 2 million Kurdish civilians in the area from the Turkish army and allied Islamist militias. She finds this Russian assurance cold comfort. The Kurds would prefer U.S. protection, she said, but "this is our only option."

Part of the new arrangement for Syria's Kurds means they will have to rely on Syrian regime forces to provide protection. This is particularly dangerous in light of recent Syrian history. Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, launched campaigns to cleanse Syria of Kurds.

And while there has been a pause in the Turkish-Kurdish war in the last week, Ahmed is still deeply worried about the long-term prospects of the Kurdish people. She still wants the U.S. to play a role in the Syrian peace process, she said, and to defend Kurdish autonomy within Syria. "America promised us support for negotiations with the Syrian government," she said. "They should keep that promise."

The Syrian Kurds have kept their promise. They have continued to assist the U.S. war against Islamic State, even as they had to seek protection from Russia. The least the U.S. can do now is to use its remaining leverage to deter Turkey — and to advocate for an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria.

Eli Lake is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering national security and foreign policy. He was the senior national security correspondent for the Daily Beast and covered national security and intelligence for the Washington Times, the New York Sun and UPI.

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

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.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets

the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Lynette Perry, Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Ray Duman, police chief; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.