

Oregon attorney general joins legal tussle over gun rights ordinance

■ Topic is Second Amendment Sanctuary ordinance passed in Columbia County

By Anna Del Savio
Pamplin Media Group

Oregon's attorney general and a group of Columbia County residents are getting involved in the ongoing legal proceedings over the county's Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, through senior assistant attorney general Brian Simmonds Marshall, filed a document in the case, requesting that the ordinance be declared invalid.

Rosenblum wrote that the county ordinance and the two ballot measures it was based on "conflict with and are incompatible with the state's criminal laws ... the duties of the Columbia County sheriff, the duties of the Columbia County district attorney, and the duties of other officers and departments of Columbia County."

Four Columbia County residents also filed to appear as "interested parties" in opposition to the ordinance. The four residents are Brandee Dudzic, a 2020 candidate for the county board of commissioners; Shana Cavanaugh, the founder of the progressive group Moving Forward Columbia County; Robert Pile, a member of the gun control organization Moms Demand Action; and Joe Lewis, a former Scappoose School Board member who was one of nine people injured at the Kent State shooting in 1970, when Ohio National Guard members fatally shot

four people protesting the Vietnam War.

The four are represented by attorneys from the Oregon firm Stoll Berne, but are asking the court to allow two New York-based attorneys to join the case. The attorneys, Mark Weiner and Len Kamdang, are with Everytown Law, the litigation arm of the gun control nonprofit Everytown for Gun Safety.

"We have a range of opinions in Columbia County on many issues, including gun laws, but tying the hands of law enforcement officials here in Columbia County is not the answer," Pile said in a press release from Everytown Law.

Eric Tirschwell, managing director for Everytown Law, said in a press release that Oregon law and the U.S. constitution "make clear that local governments don't have the legal authority to pick and choose which public safety laws apply within their borders."

"Groups that oppose state and federal gun laws have every right to try to change them in the statehouse and Congress, but claiming to nullify them at the local level is both unconstitutional and dangerous. That's not how our democracy works," Tirschwell said.

In a Jan. 21 letter to Columbia County attorney Sarah Hanson, attorneys from Stoll Berne and Everytown Law argued that the county ordinance was not permissible under state and federal law and

recommended that the county use the state's procedure for judicial validation proceedings.

Chris Brumbles, a Columbia County resident and gun rights activist who filed both ballot measures, said that he disagrees with the county's choice to pursue judicial validation.

"I think they did this so that they could get it in front of a judge, so the judge could throw it out. I hope I'm wrong. I've never hoped I was wrong more," Brumbles said.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is a huge attack on the will of the people. The people voted these laws in not once, but twice," Brumbles added. "If this was happening to the other side, I think there would be an uproar."

As of May 7, the county hasn't filed any briefs in support of or in opposition to the ordinance.

The petition for judicial validation filed by the county in late March did not ask for a particular verdict. Instead, it laid out the issues to consider in evaluating the legality and constitutionality of the ordinance.

Voters approved a version of the Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance last year. The ordinance would effectively bar local law enforcement from enforcing almost any restrictions on gun sales or ownership within Columbia County.

Idaho governor repeals ban on mask mandates set by lieutenant governor

By Keith Ridler
Associated Press

BOISE — Idaho Gov. Brad Little on Friday, May 28 issued an executive order repealing a 24-hour-old mask-mandate prohibition put in place while he was out of the state by the lieutenant governor, describing her actions as a tyrannical abuse of power and an "irresponsible, self-serving political stunt."

The Republican governor up to now had been reserved in his comments about Republican Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin, a member of the far-right who has worked to undermine Little's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

McGeachin last week announced her run for governor, challenging the first-term incumbent Little.

Her executive order Thursday, May 27 banning mask mandates in schools and public buildings is widely seen as part of that campaign. And she is already using her nullified executive order in fundraising efforts.

Little has never issued a statewide mask mandate, though he has worn a mask and encouraged others to do so to slow the spread of the virus.

Some Idaho counties, cities and schools have issued their own mask mandates but many have been lifted as more Idaho residents have been vaccinated. Two counties and 10 cities still have them in place, as do multiple schools.

About 590,000 of Idaho's 1.8 million residents have been vaccinated. State officials have reported that the virus has killed more than 2,000 people in the state and sickened some 190,000.

"I have opposed a statewide mask mandate all along because I don't think top-down mandates change behavior the way personal choice does," Little said in a statement about his repeal of McGeachin's order.

Little added: "But, as your Governor, when it came to masks, I also didn't undermine separately elected officials who, under Idaho law, are given authorities to take measures they believe will protect the health and safety of the people they serve."

Little was attending the Republican Governors Association conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and returned late Thursday.

While he was out of state,



Nathan Howard/Getty Images-TNS

In this photo from March 6, 2021, Idaho Lieutenant Governor Janice McGeachin speaks during a mask burning event at the Idaho Statehouse in Boise. McGeachin is running for governor.

"Taking the earliest opportunity to act solitarily on a highly politicized, polarizing issue without conferring with local jurisdictions, legislators, and the sitting Governor is, simply put, an abuse of power."

— Idaho Gov. Brad Little, referring to Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin's decision to ban mask mandates in the state, a decision Little, who was out of state, reversed a day later

the lieutenant governor is the acting governor and has the power to issue executive orders under Idaho's Constitution. It's not clear when or if an Idaho lieutenant governor has ever before used the authority while a governor was out of state.

McGeachin in her order issued Thursday and that took effect shortly after at 11 a.m. didn't notify Little of her intentions, but the governor's office did notify McGeachin before Little's order to rescind hers went out.

McGeachin also didn't notify ahead of time schools or elected officials affected by her order, or discuss the order with them.

"Taking the earliest opportunity to act solitarily on a highly politicized, polarizing issue without conferring with local jurisdictions, legislators, and the sitting Governor is, simply put, an abuse of power," Little said. "This kind of over-the-top executive action amounts to tyranny — something we all oppose. How ironic that the action comes from a person who has groused about tyranny, executive overreach, and balance of power for months."

McGeachin fired back on Twitter with a statement shortly after Little issued his executive order nullifying hers, saying Little had rejected conservative solutions.

"I understand that protecting individual liberty means fighting against tyranny at ALL levels of government — federal, state, and local," she

wrote. "It is your God-given right to make your own health decisions, and no state, city, or school district ever has the authority to violate your unalienable rights."

Little said McGeachin's order would have had alarming consequences if it had lasted.

He said there would have been no safety requirements for social workers visiting homes of at-risk individuals, at the state testing lab, or at prisons that could have been hit with coronavirus outbreaks. He also said McGeachin's executive order conflicts with existing laws.

"This is why you do your homework, Lt. Governor," Little said in his statement. Little has been criticized by the far-right of his party ever since the pandemic entered Idaho and he issued a temporary stay-at-home order in late March of 2020 as patients overwhelmed some hospitals and health care workers became sick.

Health care facilities feared running out of protective equipment as the illness spread. The lockdown allowed the situation to stabilize and the state to bring in masks and other equipment.

Lawmakers in the Legislature earlier this year tried but failed to pass a mask-mandate ban. One bill overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives, but it died in the Senate when a powerful

committee chairman declined to give it a hearing.

Little has stated his goal throughout the pandemic has been to balance the safety and health of Idaho residents with economic concerns. Idaho has rebounded economically much faster than other states, with an unemployment rate now of just over 3%, approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Sports

BAKER WRESTLING

Bulldogs grapple with La Grande, Union, Enterprise

By Corey Kirk
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The Baker wrestling team traveled to La Grande on Friday, May 28 to take on the Tigers, the Union Bobcats and the Enterprise Outlaws in a group meet.

Baker coach Brandon Young said he had been working with his wrestlers after playing host to Burns on May 26.

"Coming out of our match with Burns, we felt a lot of the kids were really listening and showed a lot of improvement in just a day, the way they were wrestling and focused on shooting more," Young said.

Mixing and matching opponents with the other three schools, the performances of freshman Sage Darlington (126 pounds) and Cole Hester (132 pounds) are two that stood out for Young.

"Those two really are really excited to go out there, and take more shots in their matches," Young said.

He also highlighted junior Adrian Allen, at 195 pounds. "Adrian Allen might have had his best performance," Young said.

Though those three performances stuck out to Young, he said he was proud of the entire team as the Bulldogs prepare for the regional tournament set for June 17 at Gladstone High School.

"It's such a short window, just trying to get everyone trained and ready for regionals," Young said.

Baker travels to Boardman Wednesday, June 2 for a multischool meet, and then hosts an unusual outdoor meet Thursday, with the mats set up at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium. Ontario, Vale and possibly Grant Union will compete, with matches starting mid-afternoon.

BMS hoops in action

The Baker Middle School eighth-grade boys basketball team beat La Grande 51-22 on May 25.

The Baker seventh-graders lost 31-19.

The eighth-graders, coached by Mike Long, won despite missing starter Grant Gambleton. Eli Long had 17 points,

Daniel Brown 10, and Palmer Chandler and Jaxon Logsdon six each.

The seventh-graders, coached by Joel Richardson, were led by Kale Dalke with eight points. Hunter Coleman had five points, and Tyler Wirth, Chase Roy and Connor Martin two points each.

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