

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Increase budget for ranchers' wolf losses

The Oregon Legislature has acknowledged that the state has a responsibility to partially compensate ranchers for livestock killed by wolves.

Lawmakers created the wolf compensation grant program a decade ago.

It was a necessary step. Ranchers, after all, aren't responsible for wolves returning to Oregon — indeed, many of them objected to the state allowing wolves to migrate into Oregon from Idaho, starting in 1999.

(Oregon never transplanted wolves into the state.)

But some ranchers, unlike the vast majority of Oregonians for whom the presence of wolves has no direct effect, have sustained financial losses due to wolves.

The money the Legislature has allocated to the program is a paltry sum that hasn't been sufficient to cover both the actual losses of livestock as well as other costs ranchers have borne, including installing fencing and taking other steps to prevent wolves from attacking cattle, sheep and other domestic animals.

During 2020, for instance, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which administers the wolf compensation program, distributed \$130,164 among 12 counties, including Baker. That was just 37% of the amount requested. In 2019 the state awarded \$251,529, or 58% of requests.

In Baker County for the period Feb. 1, 2020, through Jan. 31, 2021, the county requested \$47,708 from the state and received \$32,708 — 68%. The county distributed almost all of that to local ranchers (the county kept \$495 as an administrative fee).

One Eastern Oregon lawmaker wants to boost those percentages. Rep. Bobby Levy, a Republican from Echo, in Umatilla County, plans to introduce a bill, when the Legislature convenes Feb. 1, 2022, allocating \$1 million for the compensation program for the next two-year budget cycle.

Baker County Commissioner Mark Bennett, who is a cattle rancher and oversees the county's wolf compensation program, said he "wholeheartedly" supports Levy's bill.

Bennett said he expects that even with the one-time increase of \$400,000 that the legislature approved for the statewide program earlier this year, Baker County won't be able to compensate ranchers both for their cattle killed by wolves in the Lookout Mountain pack this summer and fall and for the money they spent, for fuel and other expenses, to monitor their herds.

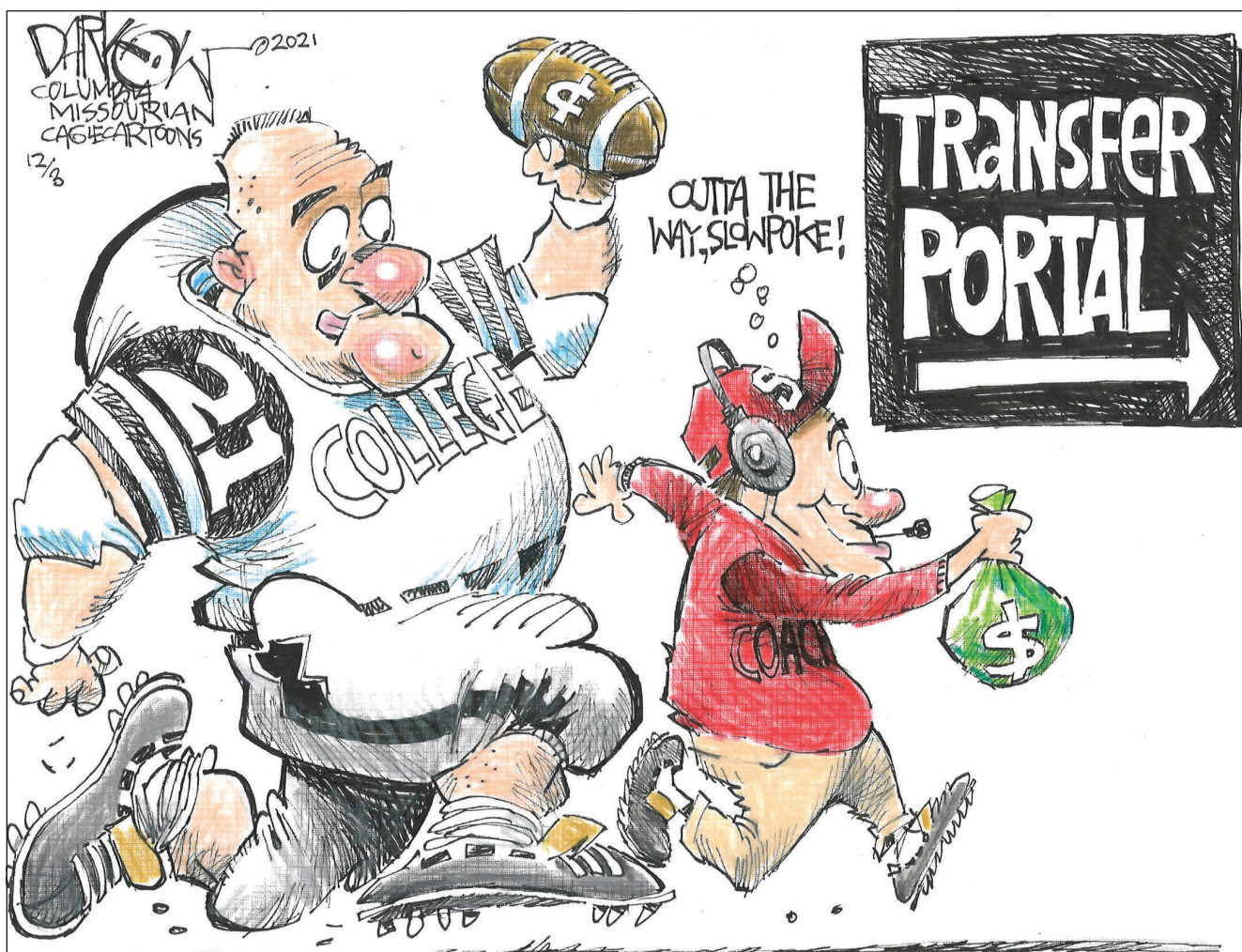
The Lookout Mountain pack's chronic attacks on cattle — biologists from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) confirmed that wolves killed at least nine head of cattle and injured three others — prompted ODFW Director Curt Melcher to authorize state workers to kill eight wolves from the pack this summer and fall.

Statewide in 2021, ODFW has confirmed 87 animals killed or injured by wolves, including 51 cattle, 28 sheep, six goats and two guard dogs. That is up by more than double over 2020, when 32 animals were attacked or killed by wolves — 28 cattle, two llamas and two guard dogs.

Compared with Oregon's state budget, the million dollars Levy is proposing to spend for wolf compensation barely qualifies as a pittance. And it's almost certainly not enough to fairly compensate ranchers for the loss of their livestock and to help them deter wolf attacks — which everyone, those who want wolves in Oregon and those who don't, agree is the ultimate goal.

But boosting the compensation budget by \$1 million is a solid start to better addressing a problem that, based on 2021, is growing rather than receding.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



# Calling on Baker County to resist state's dictatorial control

*Editor's note: The author submitted this letter to Baker County Commissioners Bill Harvey, Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols.*

Bill, Mark, and Bruce, first I am speaking to each of you as a friend. Our friendships go back more years than we care to enumerate.

Secondly, and more adamantly I am speaking as a frustrated citizen that has come to the absolute realization that the continuing tyranny of Kate Brown (non-capitalization intended!) has intimidated, distorted, plus perverted the purpose and mission of our local schools, businesses, health providers, social fabric and other essential needs/qualities of our community. Our centuries long culture, customs, and historical heritage are dangerously close to being forever lost, because of the overreach of the tyrannical desire of centralized, illegitimate governmental control!

More, and most importantly, her attempt at this abusive dictatorial control of our lives, has and is absolutely abusive of our most valuable resource. Namely our children's ability to learn, gain experience, mature, achieve their goals, plus their opportunity to achieve their highest potential, and quality of life here in Baker County, IS being eliminated.

So I HAVE stated the problem, and definitely it is a clear and present danger.

The opportunity to begin our recovery does lay with your dedication to the oath of office you solemnly took, acknowledging this challenge, then choosing to lead by listening, being informed, then understanding the "Constitutional County" concept. Your adherence to represent us, your constituents, most assuredly will take courage and boldness. Your integrity to what we hired you for, will be exhibited publicly by attending the Baker County United informational meeting the evening of December 14th. Guest speaker "Bert" Ramos, county manager for Lander County, Nevada, is traveling over seven hours to explain the success of that county returning the rightful governing control to the citizens of Lander County, through becoming a "Constitutional County." As this is an informational meeting only, you have no worries of "Open Meeting Laws" violation. Please do not find any way to make excuses to show this community, that you are open minded, willing to find positive, proactive solutions, AND to get out from under this oppressive rule from Salem! This is a moment to have a respected and noble legacy last long after you leave your positions as county commissioners.

I can totally assure you that we, (yes that's correct, I am a much supporting member of Baker County United) are not violent, physical, verbally intimidating, or any type of threat to anyone's safety or comfort. You definitely have my word on that, plus we sincerely invite County Sheriff Travis Ash, plus any number of deputies to please attend. Oregon State Patrol is more than welcome, and we would appreciate them being there also.

I am sincerely committed to this cause, because I have been blessed to live and thrive with my constitutional guarantees, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness(!), AND I will not deny those God-given rights being assured to my adult families and most definitely I will do every thing in my power, so my grandkids can realize the supreme liberty and beauty of the United States of America, Baker County!

In closing I would remind all of you, "For tyranny to flourish, good people need only remain silent!" I beg you, do not stay silent, nor acquiesce to dictatorial control. We can control our own future and destiny with the freedoms granted from God, through the inspiration/adherence to America's founding documents.

Curtis W. Martin lives near North Powder.

## Your views

### If we silence train horns, what's the next target?

For the last few days, the wind has been blowing just right for me to hear the trains going by. I have loved listening to that "klickety klack" sound for over 74 years now. The railroad tamed the West and has been a part of Baker Valley's history since before any of us were born. I want to thank the City Council for following common sense and not catering to the whiners. If their reasoning were correct, everyone attend-

ing South Baker School would be going deaf by now ... not to mention half of all Americans! But that was just a scare tactic and a lie ... the same as their claims about it being free to install all those cross-bars. Grant money is NOT free. The cost would be outrageous and wasteful.

When I step outside my home, I can hear every car and truck going by on I-84 ... 24/7. It never occurred to me to call the trucking industry and ask them to stop their lifeline because the noise

interfered with my barbecue.

What will these "complaining Karens" think up next? Perhaps silencing the police sirens ... and the ambulance sound ... how about those loud fire engines and the rescue helicopter? People need to "cowboy-up" and find more constructive ways to use their energy. America needs more common sense solutions to much bigger problems than being offended by life's conveniences.

Patricia Hanley  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

# Holding those responsible in shooting

**Editorial from New York Daily News:**

Michigan prosecutors think they have a strong involuntary manslaughter case against the now-apprehended parents of the 15-year-old boy who fatally shot four of his high school classmates Nov. 30. We concur.

Though it is the teen who squeezed the trigger, it was his dad who just days earlier bought him as a gift what would become the murder weapon, even though Michigan's legal age of handgun ownership is 18. And just hours before the high school turned into a live-fire zone, both mother and father were called to the school to meet with administrators and shown a drawing the boy had made with a person bleeding and the words

"help me."

At the meeting, says prosecutor Karen McDonald, the two "were advised that they were required to get their son into counseling within 48 hours." Yet, she says, never did they mention that their son might have a weapon on his person, even as they resisted a request to take him home for the day.

Whether two parents will be found guilty in what is a relatively novel prosecution remains to be seen, but there is a larger issue here. Though disturbed young gunmen are legally guilty of murder at Sandy Hook Elementary, and at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and at Columbine High School, not to mention in so many

killings that'll never make the front page, their impulse to murder did not materialize out of thin air.

Guns don't kill people, say the NRA zealots, people kill people. Of course they're dead wrong about that — people with guns can kill with ease and speed and callousness that people without guns cannot — but the grain of truth is that it's rarely only a single trigger puller who causes carnage. While the official culpability usually rests with one, morally many are implicated. Someone gives a young, unstable man a gun. Someone feeds him with toxic revenge fantasies. Someone else sees warning signs and looks the other way. Few are guilty; many are responsible.