

EDITORIAL

Welcome reversal on football

Brad Dunten and Josh Cobb talked, and people listened.

The winners are high school football players in some of Oregon's tiniest towns.

Dunten, the athletic director at Powder Valley High School in North Powder, and Cobb, the school's head football coach, were dismayed by a recent proposal from a state committee to do away with 8-man football, the format that Powder Valley and dozens of other Class 1A schools have used for decades.

The Oregon School Activities Association's (OSAA) Football Ad Hoc Committee made that recommendation on Dec. 20. The committee's plan would have switched to either a 9-man or a 6-man football format for the state's smaller high schools.

The proposal prompted immediate opposition from Dunten and Cobb, who had, less than a month earlier, watched Powder Valley play Adrian in a classic Class 1A state championship game at Baker High School, a thrilling contest in which Adrian rallied to win 46-38.

Dunten dispatched a survey to 95 Class 1A schools, which are fairly evenly distributed, geographically speaking, in the state, including more than a dozen in Northeastern Oregon.

The response was overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the 8-man format. School officials who answered Dunten's survey mentioned, among other reasons for their preference, that the 8-man format is well-suited to the number of players who normally turn out for football at Class 1A schools, and that it allows schools to schedule games against teams from neighboring states that also play 8-man football rather than the 9-man format.

"Eight-man just feels right," Cobb said.

Dunten was among the Class 1A school officials who expressed their concerns during the OSAA committee's Jan. 5 meeting.

Two days later the committee announced that it supported continuing the 8-man format for Class 1A schools.

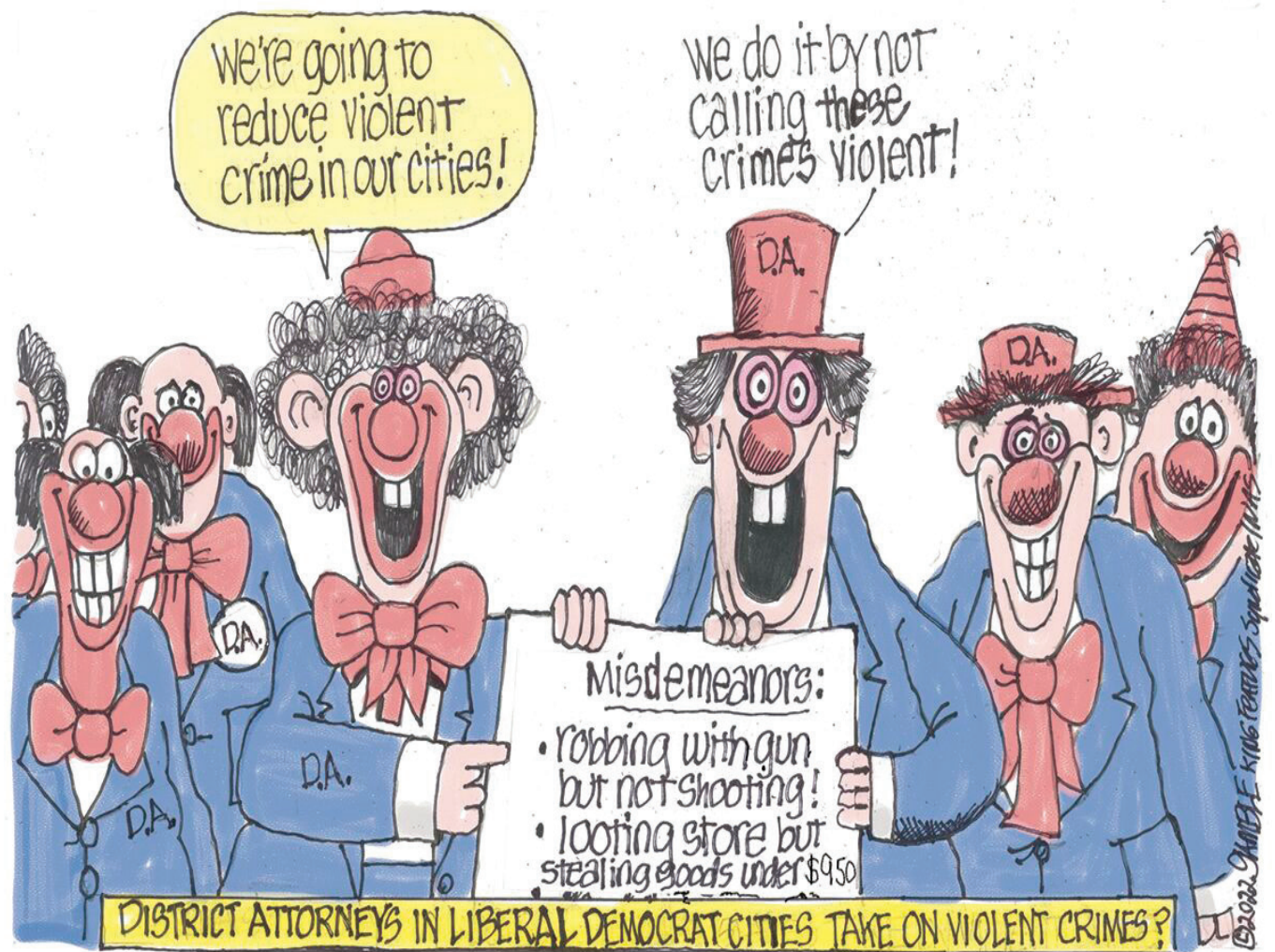
The 6-man option, which has been in place for the past few years, would continue for the smallest schools or those that have too few players for 8-man competition. Baker County's three Class 1A schools — Pine Eagle, Huntington and Burnt River — already play 6-man football.

The OSAA executive board has yet to approve the committee's revised recommendation. But it should be an easy choice.

Thanks to Dunten's efforts, the schools most directly affected by the committee's earlier proposal to do away with 8-man football have made explicit their feelings on the matter.

The committee acknowledged those schools' preferences, and OSAA should make it official.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



YOUR VIEWS

City dropped the ball on plowing snow last week

I understand city Public Works bigshot Tom Fisk decided the rate of melting Friday, Jan. 7, was going to solve all our problems with the snow and, therefore, plowing was no longer necessary.

So, is he not capable of reading a weather forecast? Or doesn't he understand that melting depends on the temperature ... which fell again to freezing Saturday and days thereafter?

I have some pictures of the frozen snow ruts on city streets. I'd like to complete the collection with street conditions in front of Tom Fisk's house...and the houses of ALL city bigshots, for that matter. I have a feeling THEIR places look a little more tidy than ours.

Doug Darlington
Baker City

Idaho Power should leave Oregon property owners alone

I am responding to article "Utility goes to court over B2H," which explains how Idaho Power Corporation is now attempting to compel land owners in Baker County to allow surveying for the proposed B2H power line project. One of my big objections to this massive and unneeded project is the sheer amount of private land that the government will have to take in order to complete the project. Even though the article mentions only five parcels in Baker County, the amount of private property required for the entire B2H line is enormous. Do the math: 74% of the proposed 296-mile power line is on private land. And the line requires a minimum 250-foot-wide corridor. Any land owner who doesn't want to cooperate will eventually get hauled into court, first to allow surveys, and later to coerce sale of their land through eminent domain.

And for what? The line passes through five Oregon counties and distributes no power along its way to SW Idaho. Idaho Power has been fixated on building a new B2H line for 14 years without adequately considering alternatives, like upgrading and fire-hardening existing lines, or siting wind and solar plants in SW Idaho, where the power would be used. It's time to tell

Idaho Power to leave Oregonians alone. For more information, see www.stopb2h.org.

Jon White
La Grande

Why did Baker school district refuse to delay or cancel classes?

Who is running the school district? With several feet of snow, sub-zero temperatures, and slick road conditions why does Baker School District (BSD) refuse to delay opening or cancel classes? When every other school in Eastern Oregon shuts down, does BSD? No. When the heating system breaks down leaving classes a balmy 40°F do they shut down, delay start, or even warn parents and students of the refrigerator they'll be learning in? No. When four entire bus routes are shut down forcing their hand, do they close the school so teachers won't have to re-teach their absentee students when they return the next school day? No. When a dozen students and staff members, driving on their own to make it to school on these wintery days, slide off of the road, into other cars or buildings or trees or ditches, do they cancel school the next time snow-pocalypse arrives? No. So I ask again, who the hell is running this school and why am I the only one pissed off about their negligence? Oh, and if you've been wondering, all of that happened last week.

Best regards and Happy New Year.

Casey Smith
Baker City

Commissioners should reject 'constitutional county' proposal

I write today to express my opposition in the strongest possible terms the resolution recently brought forward by the group Baker County United to make Baker County a "constitutional county."

I also oppose any attempt by the county to join the fringe group COSPA.

And I most strongly oppose empowering our county sheriff with the power of interpreting federal and state law.

These proposals, taken separately, amount to:

1) A resolution for Baker County to unnecessarily declare that we're governed by a constitution. We're already aware of this.

In fact, we're governed according to federal and state constitutions that do not mention sheriffs!

2) A resolution to give undue influence over county affairs to an anti-government, extremist, minority group with known ties and relationships to white supremacist organizations. (Founder Richard Mack was a board member of the Oath Keepers and the concept of "county supremacy" originates with the far-right Posse Comitatus movement of the 1960s).

3) A resolution to subvert state and federal jurisdiction and grant the county sheriff outsized authority over the citizens of this county.

Taken together, these proposals are a subversion of the supremacy clause of the US Constitution, Article VI, Paragraph 2 which prohibits states from interfering with the federal government's exercise of its constitutional powers.

This entire proposal is distracting the Baker County Commission from the very real job of guiding this county through the crisis of COVID as well as its ongoing work on the deep issues confronting our citizens: jobs, lack of health care, homelessness, food scarcity, and poverty.

Additionally, members of the Baker County United group openly flouted the mask mandate at the last public meeting on Dec. 15 and this mandate was not enforced by the commission. This is extremely unfortunate. Not only did it send the wrong signal but, as a parent of a medically fragile child, it made it impossible for me to attend the meeting on Jan. 12 to make my voice heard. I have no doubt that this tactic is intended to silence the voices of the majority of people in this county who take the recent COVID surge seriously and who oppose this proposal. If Baker County United wants to waste our time with a vote on this proposal, they should be required to gather the requisite number of signatures to get it on the ballot. (496 necessary signatures — 6% of 2020 votes cast for governor).

The Baker County Commission should table this resolution and move on to more important matters.

Jack Greenman
Halfway

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Joe Biden: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

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. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 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. Cliff Bentz (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.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

OTHER VIEWS

Social media: prophets for the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot

Editorial from St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

In the weeks before the November 2020 election and subsequent Capitol insurrection, podcasts and Facebook postings lit up with allegations of massive voting fraud and calls for violence to address the spreading myth of a stolen presidential election. Social media companies, including Google and YouTube, allowed the use of their platforms to spread the myth and whip up pre-insurrection hysteria. And recent investigations indicate social media companies had the technology to intervene but didn't. Misinformation sites flourished, including one formed by a Missourian, United

Conservatives for America, with more than 11,000 group members on Facebook.

Facebook waited until after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack to curtail that latter group's activities, which prompted founder Jerry Smith to complain to a Washington Post/ProPublica reporter: "Are you going to do away with their free speech? If someone thinks it's not a fair election ... why can't they have their opinion on whether it's a fair election or not?"

Freedom of expression is a right that all Americans should exercise and defend. But all should be able to recognize the difference between responsible free expression and de-

liberate misinformation that incites violence. It's not always easy to draw a clear line, particularly when it involves internet communications. The kinds of violent discourse outlined in separate investigations by the Brookings Institution, ProPublica and The Washington Post underscore the need for tighter checks by social media companies on the radical groups using their services.

The "big lie" wasn't something President Donald Trump invented on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, before he unleashed thousands of supporters to attack the Capitol. Rather, Trump's foot soldiers had spent previous weeks and months flooding the internet with wild, unsubstanti-

ated assertions that Democrats were plotting to steal the election. Smith, for example, posted in August 2020 that "DEMS Are Pushing For Vote By Mail. Another Way For Them To Steal The Election." That was just one posting that prompted the unfiltered conspiracy-mongering by thousands of his other members. Facebook didn't intervene until it was too late.

Crazed rants on other group sites talked of lynchings, civil war and shooting traitors. They were so voluminous — 10,000 per day — that Facebook either couldn't keep up or stopped trying. It did crack down completely on QAnon groups before the election. But then Facebook re-

laxed its focus, just as a new crop of radical groups was surging forward between November and Jan. 6, the ProPublica/Post investigation found.

A Brookings analysis of podcasts yielded similar findings, with a particularly sharp increase in the advancement of the big lie by prominent Trump backers like Steve Bannon, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, each of whom devoted half or more of their episodes to election-fraud conspiracy theories.

The insurrection might have come as a huge surprise to most Americans, but these investigations suggest it should've been no surprise at all, especially for their social media hosts.