

YOUR VIEWS

Guaranteeing our constitutional rights isn't extreme or radical

I would like to respond to recent opinions in the Baker City Herald about the group Baker County United and their intentions. This is a loosely formed group of concerned citizens. At the beginning of the school year, with continued masking and the threat of forced vaccinations, many groups formed on social media. Baker County United was an idea to try to put an element of public in-person interaction to the discussion on the internet.

This group was organized in much the same way as a barbecue or block party. Earlier, Jayson Jacoby asked for official comment from the group. No one felt qualified to speak for the group, as there is really no defined positions of elected representation. I only respond as an attendee of meetings and have been identified personally as the past coordinator of Oath Keepers and a past candidate for County Commissioner.

I would like to respond to the Jan. 14 editorial where the editor questioned the use of the word mandate. I personally feel that a rule put forth by an appointed agency bypassing the legislative process does indeed constitute a mandate, where in the only authority it possesses is its ability to influence the individual's decision to comply.

In the Jan. 12 work session, Commissioner Nichols stated that the mandates fall under the supremacy clause. My understanding, echoed by the recent opinion of the Supreme Court, is that the supremacy clause is pursuant to the delegated powers set forth by Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution. As a result of the ideas and proposals put forth by the group, a community wide discussion has developed concerning jurisdiction.

I wholeheartedly agree with Jayson's summation that if the Commissioners do not intend to enforce these mandates, that they should remove mention of them from their meeting announcements. Common sense suggests that each level of government represents defined jurisdiction. If the County Commissioners do not possess authority inside their own chamber, then I question what authority and what reason do we have as citizens to support their expense of \$400,000 to the county budget. That consideration coupled with the lack of in-person schooling and continued draconian rules enforced on our youth, many parents joined the large number teaching their children at home. County emergency responders were facing termination for exercising what should have been a government protected freedom to make their own medical choices. It was reported that up to half the response teams intended to refuse to be vaccinated. This would have left the county without those services altogether. This escalated to where the county commissioners declared an official state of emergency, which only served to further erode the jurisdictional authority of the commissioners over matters of health, safety and well-being of the citizens of the county.

I am not in a habit of paying for services that are not being rendered and I personally suggested that citizens withhold their property taxes at least temporarily and the majority of the group agreed. I don't know how many residents actually did suspend their property tax payments, but apparently it was enough to send the message to those in authority to grant religious exemptions and at least our emergency services were spared. Shortly after, BCU encouraged everyone to resume payment of their property taxes.

This message was clear throughout. The website, the emails, the coordination for this effort had a common goal to preserve the rights of the people. It was a shining example of what government by the people, of the people, and for the people is about. We encourage and at times pressure all of our elected body in local government to stand by the citizens in preserving and securing those rights. After all

that is the very reason that governments are instituted.

Members of the community have publicly labeled BCU and its efforts as radical and extreme. I think we should revisit the ideas of radicalism, isn't the nanny state response by appointed agencies to a virus with a 99% survival rate considered extreme and radical? Please join with your friends and neighbors as we hold public debate concerning the rule of law and its correct application. Guaranteeing that our federal and state constitutions are adhered to.

Kody Justus
Baker City

Bentz's concern about money in politics seems a bit hypocritical

While I was gratified to read that Rep. Cliff Bentz agrees that there is too much money in politics, I do detect a wee bit of hypocrisy here. As you recall, House Bill 4, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, provides for the identification of "dark money" donors to political campaigns. Yet Rep. Bentz voted "Nay."

Unfortunately, all of our elections have been "bought." Until Rep. Bentz supports campaign finance reform, like that in HB4, campaigns will remain "bought."

I would like an end to dark money, an end to SuperPACS, and an end to billionaires choosing our candidates. I would also like integrity in our elected officials as reflected by their support for every citizen's right to vote. Bentz needs to aim higher than the Republican leadership in Congress.

Susan Hollis-Shade
Baker City

Who will defend the rights that ensure Americans' continued freedom?

As a young person in the 1950 era, I clearly remember many veterans from the last World War speaking of the hardships and death encountered, the common tasks shared, and the pride of freedom that they fought to keep. That America was decisive and true in assisting the world against tyranny.

The citizens of America held these men and women in high esteem while trusting their sage comments and advice on domestic troubles in the country to which they returned. Freedom, faith, and a united citizenry were common.

In 2022, where are the people who defend the freedoms which are so important to the sustainability of our country and state? Well, I see them nearly every week. They do not berate others who disagree with their opinions or to the actions they initiate to uphold our US Constitution, Oregon's Constitution, or the God-given rights of individuals.

I have heard concerns from many citizens who have been negatively impacted by COVID mandates. Businesses closed, jobs lost, financially ruined families, and those whose health has been damaged by the shot are a few of these negative outcomes caused by this unjust, mandate-driven administration.

Who today would risk taking on an all-powerful government when health agencies thereof, the media, and technology firms all say everything is fine, trust us, and continue to take boosters? So, who will push back on perceived or real tyranny?

Baker County United (BCU) is a solid organization consisting of well-intentioned, freedom aware, and loyal Americans. These young and older members are critical thinkers concerned for their neighbors' well-being. Many, if not most, are Baker County business owners, concerned parents protecting their children, and other professionals who are at risk from the mandates.

There are those who most recently have derided BCU as a demanding, out-of-control, small group of alt-right activists. Nothing could be further from reality. Some individ-

ual comments indicate a wonder of who these BCU people are. I suggest they might attend BCU meetings to get the basic truth. BCU members have been passionate but orderly in presenting their comments to the County Commissioners in past meetings. Unfortunately, the only outburst/disruption came from a person by the name of Gary Dielman who was taken out of a meeting by our good sheriff, Travis Ash.

The constitutional proposal by BCU to the commissioners is simply a request to honor the specific rights established in our founding documents, because our Governor Brown is breaking away from protecting these rights through mandates.

The questions are:
If constitutional rights are limited or taken, do we as citizens just roll over and let it happen? What actions are reasonable to protest? Or, if we do nothing by trusting this government, what happens next time when more freedoms are restricted or taken?

We must know that when lower government levels (counties) are asked for protections from higher government levels (state), the County is asked to simply enforce the constitution. By stating "we already have a constitution" when that document is being broken by government agencies or mandates, means the freedoms have no meaning if not adhered to or enforced by the highest elected official of our County — the Sheriff.

Our Constitutional founding fathers did not trust big government or rule by majority, and this is the reason lower elected government entities established rights to protect the people against state and federal bullying.

Now, there are individuals who are adamant in believing that masks are a surefire way of stopping the spread of delta or omicron, even though it is now the medical consensus that these viruses are now endemic and are here to stay until herd immunity is attained. For those who wish to continue to wear masks go for it. Just do not mandate them for those who decline to wear them. If they truly work for the wearer, then one should not worry about those who decline.

Baker County United is a service organization that listens to the concerns of County residents and bases its actions on providing an outlet for those who are overwhelmed by the occurrences of the past two years.

Finally, "We The People" have the opportunity to change the direction of Oregon in the upcoming 2022 elections. Since many candidates for governor have not been invited to our county, Baker County United at their expense and considerable time involvement, has taken action to insure our citizens can meet those individual candidates by hosting events since last year.

This is a viable organization and we invite all citizens to attend meetings and join us in continuing to support the important issues encountered within Baker County. For years I sat back trusting those that I voted for would do right by the citizens. But, it did not work out that way. If we want the Oregon that we used to know and our country stabilized with sustainable freedoms, you, I, and everyone must do something in our small way to insure freedoms and rights of future generations.

Dan Johnson
Halfway

Former city councilor thankful for vote on quiet zone

I was so thankful that the quiet zone issue passed at City Council Tuesday night, Jan. 25. There is no reason for this to go to a ballot since no taxes would be needed to pay for this project. The ballot and public voting is only needed when you are electing people to represent you and when you will be impacted financially by new taxes. Neither of those apply to the quiet zone issue.

The quiet zone will create safer crossing situations in the city and eliminate noise that has

a detrimental health impact on many of us.

With local community minded volunteers putting forth the effort to raise these funds I am hard put to understand why anyone would be against this project. For those who love the sound of the train, the trains aren't going away, neither is the clickity clack on the rails or the horns in the distance, just the horns in the city. Congratulations to city councilors who care about our health and safety and showed it when they voted yes on the quiet zone. And thank you to the volunteers who are willing to raise the funds to pay for this project.

Join me in support of the quiet zone.

Lynette Perry
Baker City

Baker County United is made up of your neighbors, relatives

Fake news. We have all heard the saying and have seen it. My first experience with fake news was in the mid-90s when I saw a girl being abducted. I called 911 and was on the phone with the operator until the man was caught. When the article was written in the newspaper about the incident, I couldn't believe how wrong almost every detail was; from that moment on I decided I would do my own research about what I read.

The most recent lies I have read are about Baker County United (BCU), not from a journalist, but in the letter to the editor column. BCU is made up of "you." Grandmothers, grandfathers, moms, dads, business owners, blue collar workers, stay-at-home moms, people from every walk of life. We are the "you" who love our families and care for our community. The "you" who believe the Constitution is the solid foundation this country was built upon, not a document that can change with the shifting sand of current culture. We are the "you" who are frustrated with what the future holds for our children and grandchildren if someone doesn't stand up for their rights, for freedom and liberty.

We believe those in Baker County are smart enough to hear from all doctors, not just those following an agenda. We believe that you are smart enough to hear from all the scientists, not just those that agree with the current administration. We believe you should have a voice and we are willing to listen to yours.

Break through the lies and find out for yourself who we are. Come to our meetings, listen, talk with us, find out who we are. If we are a good fit, join us in our stand to protect the gift we were given, the United States of America.

Nanci Klein
Baker City

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: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97850; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.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.

COLUMN

The magic of Harry Potter, on film and in books

I can't imagine Harry Potter with gray hair.

Or wrinkles.

Or jowls, or any of the other obvious physical evidence of the inevitable, incremental effects of aging.

Harry, of course, is a fictional character, and so immune to such signs of impending infirmity.

But he, along with his mates Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley, also is a fictional character who made the great leap from ink on a page to high-definition on a movie screen.

And no matter how rich and compelling the world that author J.K. Rowling coaxed from her imagination — and it's more vivid than most, in my view — prose can't compete with the immediacy of actual people playing roles.

Moreover, that trio, and the many other characters who populate Rowling's fantastical and fabulous tales, portrayed their characters over a series of eight movies spanning a decade, 2001 to 2011.

And actors actually age.

The progression of years is especially noticeable when the decade in question includes the teenage years and the transition from child to adulthood.

Rarely, though, have so many

people around the world watched a group of actors make their way through adolescence and beyond.

But then rarely has a writer pulled off an achievement as epic as that wrought by Rowling.

I passed a couple of quite pleasant hours on a recent afternoon watching many of those actors talk about the legacy of the Harry Potter saga.

They laughed often. A few times they wiped tears from their cheeks. And I'm quite sure these were real tears rather than the feigned emotion that actors can summon (sometimes with the aid of carefully placed eye drops).

This documentary was prompted by the 20th anniversary of the release of the first of the eight films, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

(Rowling actually wrote seven books. But the final installment, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," was divided into two films, the latter released in 2011.)

Although I greatly enjoyed each of the movies — if not so much as I did Rowling's novels — I was nonetheless surprised by how powerful was the nostalgia I felt while watching the 20th anniversary show.

I suspect this had something to do with seeing, as adults, these actors



Jayson Jacoby

who, in many cases, I remember only as children and whose subsequent careers I know little about.

The documentary is thorough, to be sure, featuring interviews from more than a dozen actors who had prominent roles in the franchise.

But naturally the emphasis was on the trio whose friendship weaves the strongest thread through the series — Harry, played by Daniel Radcliffe (who's now 32), Hermione, portrayed by Emma Watson (31), and Ron, played by Rupert Grint (33).

The most poignant moments were those in which these three actors talked about how the unique experience they shared also forged between them a bond which will last the rest of their days.

It could hardly be otherwise, it seems to me.

During the period of life that is so instrumental in determining a person's future — from about age 12 to the early 20s — this trio not only spent hundreds of hours together, but they did so in the intimate atmosphere of a film set while mak-

ing some of the more beloved movies in history.

Few of us become world famous during our teenage years. We can hardly conceive of the experience, so foreign it is to our own.

I was struck by how many of the actors talked not of fame, however, but of how grateful they were to have had the chance to contribute to something that has delighted so many people across the world and across nearly the whole of the age spectrum.

I suppose I ought not be surprised, though, particularly that Radcliffe, Watson and Grint would feel that way.

They could hardly have known, when they started on such a great adventure while still children, how the 10-year span would affect them while it was happening, nor how it affects them still.

Yet as much as I enjoyed watching these actors again, this time following their hearts rather than a script, as much as I relished reliving some of my favorite scenes from the films, my overriding thought wasn't of movies but of books.

Almost none of us, after all, would today recognize the name Harry Potter — or Daniel Rad-

cliffe, come to that — had Rowling never written about the world she conceived in her mind.

And I believe our world would be a lesser place in the absence of these stories and these characters.

I don't know if the magic that Rowling created will be replicated. Such things are rare, and all the more special for being so uncommon. Certainly no other series of novels and films in this century is so celebrated, or beloved.

And as much as I appreciate the films, and was entranced by seeing in real life (albeit a cinematic version of real life) the places and people who until then lived only in my mind, if I had to choose only one format that I could have for the rest of my life I would choose the books without a shred of regret.

This, I think, is by far the greatest of Rowling's achievements — to instill in multiple generations the inimitable experience of reading about a world so vivid that it comes to seem, in those irreplaceable hours spent looking at the pages, as real as the one we temporarily leave to its own devices.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.