

EDITORIAL

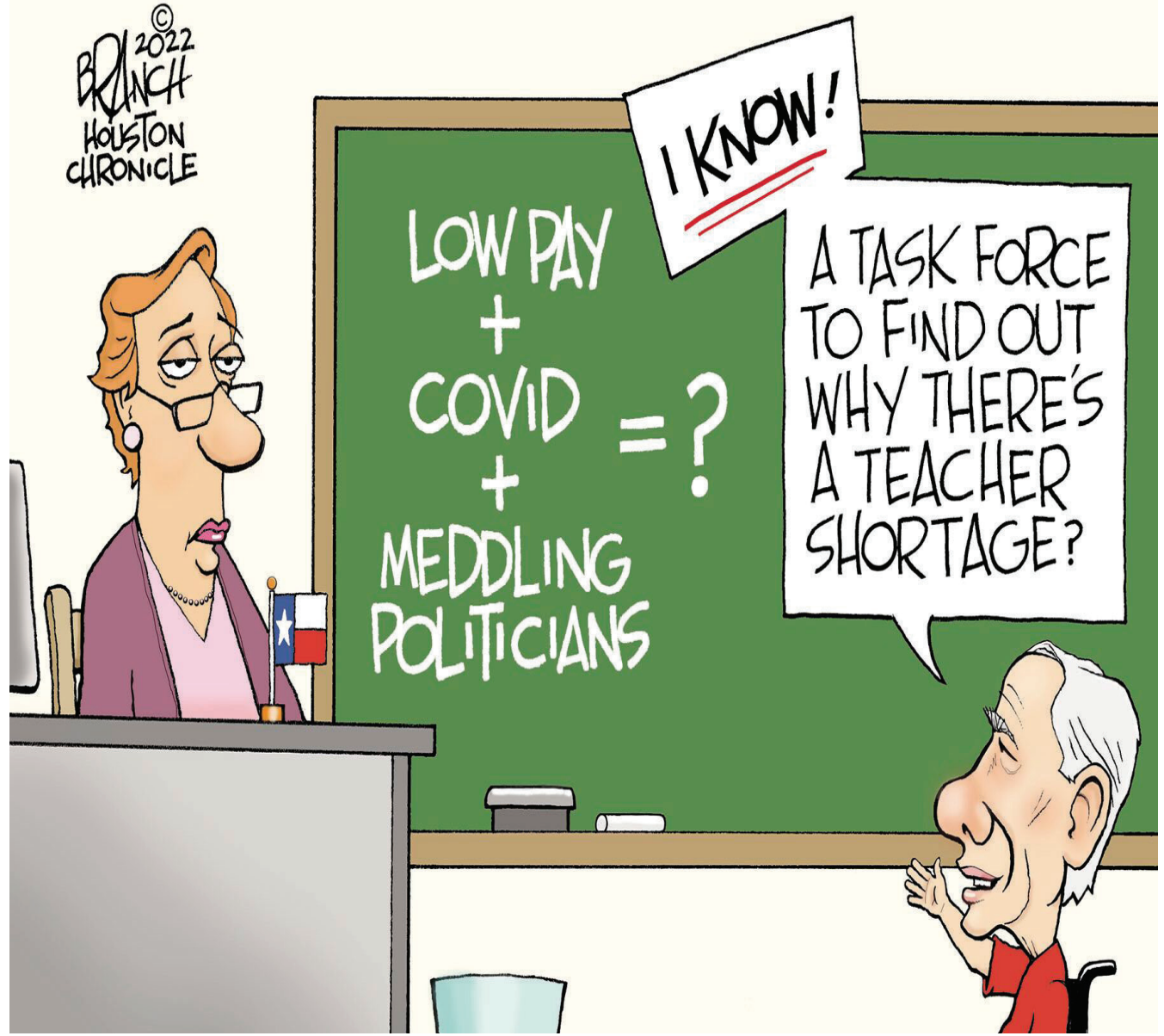
Bracing for a drought

Today, streams and springs in Baker City's watershed are producing plenty of water to meet our needs. But this situation is not likely to continue through the summer. Michelle Owen, the city's public works director, said recently that the city likely will ask, and possibly require, residents and businesses to cut back on water use this summer, as happened in 2021.

Last summer's restrictions were in effect voluntary — the city didn't issue citations or fines. That was in part because people heeded the city's warnings and curbed their consumption.

This year, with ample advance notice that similar conditions probably will prevail, it's worth considering taking steps to prepare for another summer of drought. This could include, for instance, revising your garden plans, replacing thirsty grass with landscaping that requires little or no water, or installing drip sprinklers that use less water and can be programmed to run at night when there's less evaporation.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



YOUR VIEWS

Baker County United working on behalf of all county citizens

I have witnessed Gary Dielman acting out at County Commissioner meetings in ways that I would think an 82-year-old man would not. I would expect wisdom and fortitude from a man his age, but that is not what I have seen.

In December, Mr. Dielman was escorted out of the County Commission Chambers by Sheriff Ash as he would not stop talking in his outside voice and out of turn. I am a huge proponent of free speech but that was beyond the definition.

What I find funny about that is that Mr. Dielman, in one of the many, many emails sent to Baker County United, asks if Baker County United will "storm the Courthouse" while indeed, he is the only one who has acted out in aggression.

Why would he think that Baker County United would do that? The Commissioners have had them on the agenda twice and called a special meeting outside of the courthouse chambers. There is no need for such silliness.

During the meeting on March 16, 2022, Mr. Dielman was the only one who testified against Baker County United's proposed resolution, yet he stated that Baker County United was a "little, tiny, small group (that) does not represent the people I know in this county," yet his group was not there, nor did they speak up online. (Well, in his time speaking he was supposed to testify against the resolution, but instead he turned to the group of people behind him, poking his finger in their direction, verbally attacking the group. Chairman Harvey had to keep directing him to the front, reminding him that his time was given to testify against the resolution and not given to address the people in the room.)

I'd like to address and correct Mr. Dielman. Baker County United DOES represent YOU and YOUR group of people because Baker County United cares for all of the people of this county, and for their rights as citizens. "All men are created equal." Why do you hate your fellow human beings so much? You would not make eye contact with one single person in that room, except for the commissioners. You would not sit in any available chair with your fellow citizens, but rather you sat on the floor until Chairman Harvey brought you a chair. (You also had special seating provided to you at the Jan. 12 meeting at the Community Center. I found that odd.) You were specifically greeted by a few people and you ignored them, staring straight past them. Why do you show such disdain?

Mr. Dielman said that the elected officials are just that ... elected. And the Democrats weigh the scales in

both the Senate and House. Yes, that is a known fact. It is agreed that the power is in the vote.

The vote is coming and I think Mr. Dielman is scared because Baker County United is helping to educate voters, build courage against a government that is not working for the people and offering a platform for candidates to meet the public.

The County Commissioner meeting on March 16, 2022, is available on the Baker County Facebook page. I highly recommend those who weren't there and didn't watch it online to view it. It was a productive meeting and I am grateful to our Commissioners for the time given.

Debbie Henshaw
Baker City

Child tax credit extension vital to addressing huge wealth gap in U.S.

I believe that much of today's extreme social and political unrest is deeply rooted in widespread poverty. We've endured stagnant wages over the past 45 years, as computer automation and offshoring have stymied wage bargaining, while the rich got richer, and, now, inflation pushes prices higher.

The American Dream has faded, as we work harder and harder, but still fall below our parents' gains. How can we reverse this trend? How can we increase our purchasing power? Is a Universal Basic Income in the cards down the road?

One hopeful sign has been the Child Tax Credit that temporarily lifted tens of millions of American families out of poverty as part of President Biden's coronavirus relief package. But these payments came to an end in December, after the evenly-divided U.S. Senate, with zero Republican support, failed to pass the Democrats' Build Back Better Act, which would have extended the policy.

Perversely, if the policy is not reinstated, it could deal another blow to Democrats' already fading prospects in November's midterm elections. Republicans are currently favored to retake control of the U.S. House, and the failure to pass the Build Back Better Act — and specifically its extension of the expanded Child Tax Credit — may make voters even less inclined to reelect Democrats.

The bitter irony is clear: If Republicans win the House, we will almost certainly lose all chance of a national response to poverty, and the dysfunction and the suffering will likely continue.

I urge all my fellow readers to push for a comprehensive fact-finding about the huge wealth gap in the United States of America, and to get behind a vigorous national debate

on the alternatives which might give us a just and livable future.

Marshall McComb
Baker City

Constitution resolution is a safety net to protect against government overreach

I am thrilled that the country commissioners voted to send the Constitution resolution "as is" to the legal counsel for review.

The Constitution resolution is meant to fill in any gaps to protect Baker County citizens from an overreaching government. Does the Baker County charter affirm its basic and sole duty to its people? Has the government actually been representative? Are we happy with the direction government is going and the excessive burdens that have been put on our own bodies, our children, and on our families?

The very first paragraph of the Constitution resolution expresses how important and necessary this protection is for the people of Baker County.

"Pursuant to the powers and duties bestowed upon it by our citizens, the Baker County Commissioners do hereby resolve that any federal officer, agent, or employee, regardless of supposed congressional authorization, is required to obey and observe limitations consisting of the enumerated powers as detailed within Article I Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill Of Rights."

We do not need to feel helpless in the face of our government. There are things we can do and this resolution is a good start. I am puzzled by the repeated excuse of county commissioners to reject the Constitution resolution because it is insulting them. Somehow, requesting a resolution that puts in an extra encouragement for the Baker County commissioners to follow the Constitution in their official duties is insulting? This thinking doesn't make any sense.

Unless they are like Rep. Nancy Pelosi serving for nearly 33 years, Sen. Patrick Leahy 47 years, and Sen. Chuck Grassley 47 years, this resolution is not about any particular county commissioner. The resolution is about the people of Baker County. It is not personal in any way, shape, or form to any county commissioner. It is a safety net for the people of Baker County. It is about the people of Baker County, no matter who is in office.

We would never have found ourselves in the mess we are in if our government stayed with the original idea of "We the people for the people." The last paragraph of the resolution is as important as the first. It reads:

"All actions by the federal and state government and its agents will conform strictly and implicitly with the principles expressed within the United States Constitution, Declara-

tion of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. That federal and state law enforcement agencies are encouraged to continue to consult and work closely with local law enforcement and the District Attorney to assure that the people's rights guaranteed under the United States Constitution are protected and preserved from any unlawful encroachments. There is no greater obligation or responsibility of any government officer than to protect the rights of the people. Thus, any conduct contrary to the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, or the Bill of Rights will be dealt with as criminal activity."

Nanci Klein
Baker City

Baker City needs to make a decision about police detective's future

I read the letter from a fellow retired police chief, Wyn Lohner, and I concur totally with his comments. Except for an overly cautious personnel director and/or city manager and/or chief of police there is no reason for this matter to have drug on for seven months. If the potential criminal issues regarding the detective raised in court have any substance then there would also have been serious violations of department policy. An administrative investigation regarding that should have been conducted long ago. If violations were sustained then appropriate disciplinary action should have already been taken. That could include termination. If not, bring the employee back to work in a restricted (nonenforcement) capacity until the results of the state investigation are known. If the employee is charged with a criminal offense then put her back on leave until a trial is concluded. At least, in the interim, Baker City taxpayers will be getting some, at least limited, service for the \$6,000 a month that employee is paid.

This is not the only police officer case in the state where a state investigative agency — typical of them, I might add — is dragging its wheels. A several month old officer-involved shooting in Central Oregon is likewise in limbo because of the state's incompetence. I concur with Chief Lohner. It is time for the BCPD chief and city manager to take action. Their failure to do so is an injustice to ALL involved and is a gross misuse of tax dollars.

Jerry Boyd
Prineville
Formerly of Baker City

Why are commissioners delaying decision on reaffirming Constitution?

Why is it so easy for our elected commissioners to pass a resolution regarding denouncing the Russian

invasion of Ukraine, but they can't pass a simple resolution reaffirming our Constitution? They need Kim Mosier's legal opinion about the Constitutional resolution? What are their priorities?

Jason Bland
Baker City

Baker County United represents the basic values of Westerners

In the wee hours of the night I found myself thinking about a question raised in the "Letters To The Editor" pages of our local paper. The question was, "Who are the BCU?" Looking back on our convivial meeting March 17, I concluded that was like asking, "Who are the Westerners?" I made that connection as I reflected upon the Founding Fathers, our local patriots and the people I knew while growing up in the Rocky Mountain West.

Let me explain just what I mean. If you ever had to rise in the night to tend stock when the weather was not too kindly, you might be a Westerner. If you know firsthand where your food comes from, felt the touch of a wide open sky or looked in wonder at a mountain range from atop an adjoining peak you might have the soul of a Westerner. Sitting atop a horse and realizing God's natural air freshener carries the scent of sagebrush, jimson weed and a bit of horse manure, you could consider yourself a Westerner.

A Westerner gives a firm hand shake with a friendly twinkle in his eye, speaks basic truth and knows the value of hard work. A person that can sit a horse or a corral fence in equal comfort, buck bales, shovel out a corral, knows to brush down their horse, can split firewood, may have delivered a baby or two, human or otherwise, is likely a Westerner.

Now let's take a look at the Founding Fathers. They had different stories, different ideas and a strong respect and love for their fellow man. That is what brought them together. They created a social framework that became our national model, firmly enshrined in our Constitution and Bill Of Rights. If you love and trust your fellow man, believe in guidance from God, if you live with mutual respect and freedom for all and accept that good comes from civility and cooperation, if you feel the strength of the mountains in your bones, if your heart is as wide as the sweeping plains and your love of God as vast as the magnificent Universe we have the privilege to contemplate, you might be a Westerner. You might be Baker County United.

Rick Rienks
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.

State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane): Salem

office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.MarkOwens@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. Councilors Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer.