

EDITORIAL

Taking a step to curb poaching

The news the Oregon Department of Justice hired a special prosecutor to crack down on poachers did not roll across social media or the news wires with a snap, but it is a move that most hunters should, and do, applaud.

The new slot appears to have been created in response to a surge in unsolved illegal killing of deer and elk.

Jay Hall was hired recently by the justice department to be the new assistant attorney general focused on enforcing anti-poaching laws.

Finding a way to stop poaching was also a priority, in the past, for lawmakers as the Oregon Legislature approved money to boost the effort in 2019.

The move to hire a special prosecutor to focus on anti-poaching initiatives is a good idea. The more that can be done in this regard, the better.

Poaching is a terrible crime that damages one of the region's great attributes. For most law abiding and sensible hunters, poaching is a crime that wouldn't even enter into their thinking. Those who cherish our region's attributes — including the ability to go out each season and hunt game — know that poaching hurts many while helping very few.

Our ability to hunt each year is one of those sacrosanct features many of us enjoy yearly and when someone poaches an animal — whether its deer or elk — it impacts every one of us who hand over cash to get a tag.

Legal hunting is one of those intangible elements to our area that make it such a great place to live, work and play. When someone breaks the law and kills game out of season illegally, the entire community suffers.

There is no doubt that poaching will be a part of our western landscape, regardless of how senseless it is. However, a move like the Department of Justice to create a position that will put a spotlight on the crime is good news. The more emphasis we can put on stopping the crime of poaching, the better off our unique way of life will be.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.



OTHER VIEWS

Vaccine makers deserve the profits

Editorial from The Chicago Tribune:

As people abandon masks and gather in bigger groups, it's important to remember that COVID-19 is still with us. A new form of the omicron variant called BA.2 is causing another surge, though on a much smaller scale than previous variants. BA.2 is spreading so fast that it's expected to be the dominant form of the disease in Chicago by the end of this month.

Fortunately, most Americans have ready access to vaccines that prevent the worst symptoms. These amazing pharmaceutical products, created in an incredibly short time, have saved millions of lives worldwide and enabled the country to get back to business.

If you haven't yet gotten fully immunized, do so. Now. Stop making excuses, including the latest one we've heard about how Big Pharma is raking in too much money.

Considering the companies' financial incentives, the theory goes, no one should trust them. When they say their vaccines are safe for babies and toddlers, or that a fourth shot may be needed for full protection, well, that's just to put money in their pockets, right?

Here's a news flash: It's OK for people who market blockbuster new products to make a lot of money. In fact, it's crucial, so those people and their competitors will keep it up. And that's why everyone should be celebrating now that vaccines have become profitable again, after many years in the commercial wilderness.

In the 2000s and before, no one was making money off vaccines — not re-

searchers or manufacturers, or pediatricians giving shots.

Then, as now, the research, development, testing and manufacture of vaccines cost big bucks, and the market was much smaller than for other pharmaceuticals. The result was under-investment and high production costs that led to shortages. As the number of companies making vaccines dwindled, federal health organizations pushed for the government to ensure supplies by taking over production.

Fortunately, the market turned around. Demand soared in developing countries, thanks to the World Health Organization, the Gavi public-private vaccine partnership and other groups devoted to vaccinating the poor. On the business side, some new or updated vaccines started making good money for their companies, such as Merck's Gardasil for human papillomavirus.

It's difficult to calculate profit margins, as research costs aren't typically made public, but this much is clear: Vaccines are some of the most cost-effective medical interventions ever.

Fully immunizing a baby saves at least \$10 for every dollar spent, a study published in the journal Pediatrics shows, and another study of vaccination in the U.S. between 1994 and 2013 estimates a net savings of almost \$300 billion in direct costs and more than a trillion in societal costs. That was before COVID-19 exposed our acute vulnerability to invisible bugs.

We don't know how much Pfizer, Moderna and BioNTech have saved the world so far, but the amount surely eclipses their profits. Yes, these companies have made

tens of billions from their COVID vaccines — while at the same time heading off premature deaths and getting the global economy moving again.

These same companies should be doing more to distribute their vaccines in poor and middle-income countries. Inequality in vaccine access is making it more difficult to end the pandemic. Still, a recent push to increase supply by seizing their technology and giving it away to local manufacturers is terribly shortsighted, as it would deter investment in vaccine development at a time of tremendous progress.

The potential exists for new vaccines that not only prevent diseases but cure them. Consider the impact if it became relatively easy to shrink tumors, eliminate allergies and end addictions, or to stamp out long-lasting, stubborn infections like malaria and HIV. Research into new methods of delivery could make it possible for many vaccines to be administered all at once, with no needles required.

Northwestern University recently announced a new study of nanoparticle-based vaccines that appear to work more efficiently than traditional formulations. And National Geographic has been shining a spotlight on "contagious" vaccines that self-spread among wildlife, curbing scourges such as rabies and Ebola. It's a controversial idea, for sure, but the research could head off the next pandemic by stopping animal viruses from jumping to humans, as the coronavirus is thought by many to have done.

Vaccines, finally, are on a roll. Let's make sure we keep the incentives in place to bring about future breakthroughs.

COLUMN

Ag overtime bill is a win, not a victory

Before even the first gavel dropped on the 2022 legislative session, I knew that one of the most consequential bills of my legislative career would be considered.

HB 4002, or the agriculture overtime bill, was a divisive bill from the start and presented the Oregon Legislature with two options. One that would favor one side to the detriment of the rest of Oregon, especially the agricultural economy. This is what I called a win — a win for a select few at the cost of the rest of us. The other path included compromise, good-faith negotiation and a bill that would generate support from both parties. This is what I called a victory — a victory for all of Oregon.

I worked hard to get a victory, not just a win on agriculture overtime. But the final result was a win — a win

for Willamette Valley liberal special interests who donate money to the majority Democrat's campaign funds.

It will make these groups feel good about themselves, but it won't make Oregonians better off. HB 4002 will result in higher prices at the grocery store for working families, hours and pay capped for agricultural workers, and ultimately the shuttering of small family farms that fill my district.

Agriculture is a unique industry. During harvest seasons, it requires long hours to reap all the crops before frost or rains come. In ranching, there is even more nuance.

The bottom line is that farmers and ranchers don't set their own prices, they have to take whatever price the markets are offering. The Democrats advanced an argument about ag overtime that essentially stated that



Sen. Bill Hansell

a bushel of wheat harvested in the 41st hour is worth 50% more than one harvested at the 5th hour. Anyone who has grown up around farms knows that that is not true. And requiring farmers to pay their workers as such will soon result in a dwindling number of family farms to even employ these workers.

HB 4002 leveled all these unique distinctions in agriculture and mandated a one-size-fits-all "solution" that is really no solution at all. The "olive branches" that Democrats extended, the agricultural community never asked for. One example: Under this new overtime pay mandate, fam-

ily farms will now be able to apply for tax credits to ease the burden of the new overtime pay mandate. Now taxpayers will be subsidizing this new program. Farmers and ranchers never asked for that, but the majority decided that is what would be best for them.

I worked hard to come to a compromise. Simple adjustments for seasonality, flexible scheduling, and recognizing the difference between the kinds of agriculture would have helped. But the majority party rejected all these and charged ahead with what seemed to be a predetermined outcome, driven by their special interest groups.

I know how much Oregon's farmers and ranchers care about their employees and their families. HB 4002 will now force those farmers

Editor's Note

Do you have a point you'd like to make or an issue you feel strongly about? Submit a letter to the editor or a guest column.

and ranchers to make difficult decisions about how much they can afford their employees to work. I grew up on these kinds of farms and I am afraid that under this policy, less and less of those farms will be around in the future.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, is in his 10th year representing the seven counties that make up Senate District 29.

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Joe Biden: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20501; 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 97505; 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., S-403, 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.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Jonathan Cannon, city manager; Ty Duby, police chief; Sean Lee, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durrflinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Chris Hawkins, Andrew Bryan, Travis Cook, Jessica Dougherty, Julie Huntington.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

• We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.

• The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters.

• Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.

• The writer must include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

• Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814

Email: news@bakercityherald.com