

## EDITORIAL

## County seeks to legalize public road access

For a route that's steep, narrow, strewn with rocks and inaccessible to many vehicles, the Pine Creek Road has attracted quite a lot of attention the past 2 years.

And quite a lot of litigation.

But the controversy over this road on the east side of the Elkhorn Mountains, about a dozen miles northwest of Baker City, isn't surprising.

The issue isn't the condition of the road, but where it goes.

The road not only accesses several parcels of private property, some of which have cabins, but it leads to some of the more scenic alpine country in Baker County. After passing through swathes of private property, the road enters the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. It's the access route to Pine Creek Reservoir, a popular place for visitors to see mountain goats on the eastern slopes of Rock Creek Butte, at 9,106 feet the tallest summit in the range. The road ends at an unofficial trail that crosses a ridge and descends to Rock Creek Lake, another jewel of the Elkhorns.

It was inevitable, then, that people would be upset after David McCarty bought the largest chunk of private land in the area, 1,560 acres, in September 2020, then installed a locked gate at the east end of his property.

Baker County commissioners reacted to the subsequent public outcry by cutting the lock.

After McCarty filed a lawsuit against the county in April 2021, commissioners started the process, under Oregon law, of declaring the road a public right-of-way. Commissioners gave final approval, on Aug. 17, to a resolution doing so, and ordering all gates and other obstacles to be removed. The requirements didn't take effect immediately, as the resolution is in a 60-day appeal period.

Commissioners' legal action was appropriate considering the importance of the road and its decades-long history of public access. Unfortunately, that access had never been formalized. In court filings McCarty has pointed out that before he bought the property he reviewed a title report that showed no public rights-of-way across his property coinciding with the road.

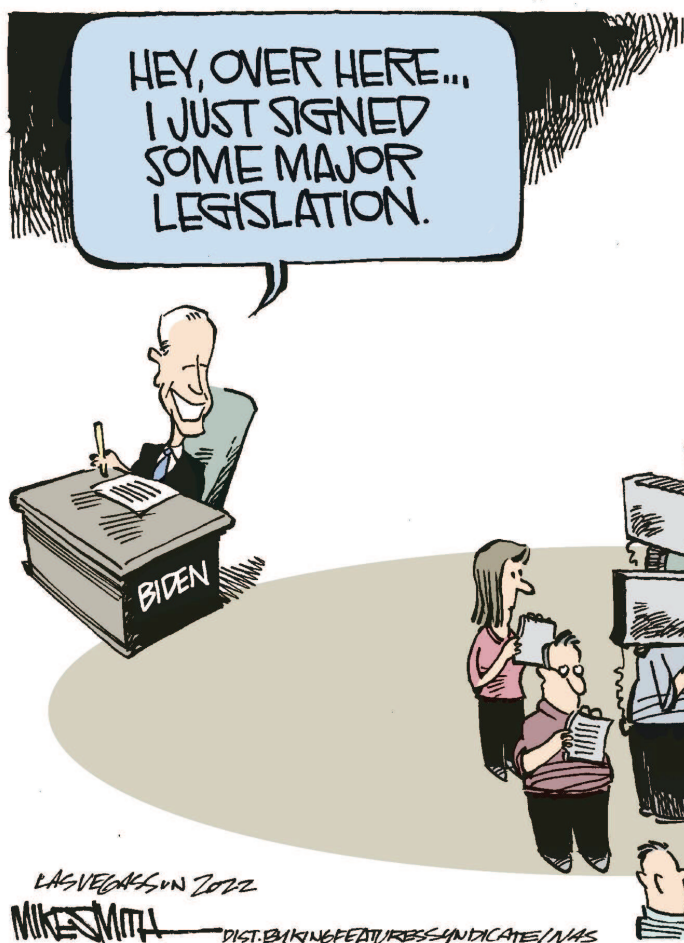
McCarty's suit, in which he is asking the county to pay \$730,000 if the road is deemed to be public, is still active. So is the lawsuit that two couples, who own property adjacent to McCarty's, filed in late July. They're asking for at least \$250,000 each for loss of enjoyment of their property.

The Pine Creek Road controversy illustrates the potential issues that can arise when a road has been customarily used by the public for decades, but never actually had a legal right-of-way. This is hardly surprising, considering such issues weren't necessarily important when the county was young.

The county's new resolution doesn't end the dispute over Pine Creek Road — the two lawsuits are pending.

But ideally the commissioners' action will legally, and permanently, establish the public's right to travel a road that has been a popular route into the high country of the Elkhorns, and access for private landowners, for decades.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## YOUR VIEWS

### Sarcasm and stereotyping intended to highlight problems

That someone took umbrage with my last letter to the editor is unsurprising. I stereotyped by design. My goal was to show the un-researched kneejerk reactions and hypocrisy that permeates our locale. It was meant as a humorous smack.

The quiet zone is a smart, logical and very worthy pursuit. I certainly apologize if in any way I made that goal more difficult to achieve,

since it will not be voted on by our good, smart, hard-working, welcoming community members. I think not. I am also confident that inside my "disparaging circle" I am not alone. I'm guessing there are others who don't feel obliged to accept or respect everyone. Respect is a two-way street. My sarcasm and stereotyping was meant to annoy and irritate, just as I am annoyed, irritated and appalled on a daily basis, "Let's Go Brandon," "Joe and the Ho Gotta Go" "Move Oregon's Border"... There is a little shop downtown with

a notice posted threatening you if you enter with a mask? There exists a flag on one of our lovely city streets "F" Joe Biden and F you for voting for him"? The pickup trucks waving the Confederate flag. Who is making who feel less than or othered? Not conducive to any lovey dovey feelings emanating from this guy.

The deep partisan trenches already exist... no digging necessary. Many of the words and hand gestures hurled our way during both the Pride and Woman Rights walks were hardly filled with kindness

and respect. Let's not forget about the BLM rally (intimidators brandishing assault rifles actually showed up for this small respectful gathering?) Hard to make peace with that. If I offended with my outlandish, cartoonish stereotypes maybe you should be looking at why? I leave you with a quote from Salman Rushdie: "The moment you declare a set of ideas to be immune from criticism, satire, derision or contempt, freedom of thought becomes impossible."

Mike Meyer  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

## After a year under Taliban rule, Afghans feel the price of peace

### EDITORIAL FROM THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE:

Afghanistan today under Taliban rule virtually mirrors what the country was like before the American invasion in October 2001.

Girls cannot attend secondary school. Once again, women no longer work as lawyers, judges or police officers. Men must wear beards and traditional Afghan garb.

As it was before, morality police scan streetscapes to make sure women are in burqas and accompanied by a male relative.

The country has been firewalled from any Western influence. Movies, foreign broadcasts and music have all disappeared.

A year after the Taliban retook Kabul and imposed its oppressive brand of governance, Afghanistan enjoys peace. But that peace comes at a stiff price — acquiescence to a fundamentalist, backward way of life that cannot be defied.

For the U.S., Afghanistan poses a profound foreign policy quandary.

The country is starving. Following the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan's economy collapsed. Unemployment and food prices skyrocketed. Afghan families are selling their household belongings to survive.

The United Nations World Food Program says more than half of the country's population isn't getting enough food, and 25 out of its 34 provinces are experiencing acute malnutrition at emergency levels.

Afghanistan's central bank has \$7 billion that could help buoy the country's economy, but it's in the wrong place. After the Taliban took over the country, the Biden administration froze the \$7 billion that the Afghan central bank had previously deposited in the Federal Reserve Bank in New York. That money remains frozen. In February, Biden decided to set aside half for families held in the U.S. Releasing that money to the Taliban regime risks seeing it end up in the hands of terrorist groups. Though the Taliban portray themselves as a legitimate

keep that money frozen.

The reason? Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The al-Qaida leader was killed July 31 by a U.S. precision drone strike as he stood on a balcony at a safe house in a Kabul neighborhood where many Taliban leaders live.

Though the Taliban deny providing al-Zawahiri safe haven, it's abundantly clear that they were indeed sheltering him. The house he was in belongs to a top aide of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister and head of terrorist group the Haqqani network.

After the strike, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Taliban had "grossly violated" the terms of the withdrawal accord reached between the extremist group and the U.S.

Essentially, the Taliban gave Biden little choice but to continue the freeze on the \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the U.S. Releasing that money to the Taliban regime risks seeing it end up in the hands of terrorist groups. Though the Taliban portray themselves as a legitimate

government with the best interests of the Afghan people in mind, their continued allegiance to al-Qaida and unconscionable treatment of women say otherwise.

Taliban leaders know what they have to do. Allow women to pursue any career track they wish, permit girls to attend secondary school and do away with crude tools of oppression such as the regime's morality police.

And, of course, Taliban leaders must prove to the U.S. and the rest of the world that they no longer align themselves with terror groups. Words won't be enough.

It will be up to the U.S. to decide when the regime has shown it no longer is a terror enabler, and hence a threat to the West.

Until then, it must be treated as a pariah state. Governments that harbor terrorists can't expect the rest of the world to lend a helping hand. Domestically, the Taliban can help themselves by helping their people — not with restrictive edicts and brute force, but with basic rights.

## COLUMN

## Deceptive marketing of the 'Inflation Reduction Act'

### BY E.J. ANTONI

The so-called Inflation Reduction Act is one of the greatest examples of deceptive marketing around today. Not only will the legislation fail to reduce inflation, it will further increase prices.

Inflation is fundamentally a problem of too much money chasing too few goods and services.

It was hardly a surprise: In the last two years, the government has spent, borrowed and printed trillions of dollars while also hamstringing production in the economy.

The result was a vast increase in the amount of money in circulation without comparable growth in the size of the real economy. All that extra money bid up the price of goods and services, a phenomenon we call inflation.

Unfortunately, this latest piece of legislation in Washington does nothing to solve the problem. It does not reduce the amount of money in circulation. Worse, it reduces the quantity

of goods and services through measures like higher energy taxes and excessive regulation.

People underestimate just how much energy affects the price of everything we do and everything we buy.

Before an item can be placed on a store shelf, it had to be transported there, whether on a train, a ship, a plane, a truck or even all of these. Energy is used not just in transportation and manufacturing, but also in supplying services.

The modern world could not function without electricity. More than 60% of electricity in the U.S. comes from coal, oil and natural gas. Additional taxes on those fuel sources under this new legislation will drive up electricity prices, which will trickle down into higher prices everywhere in the economy.

Yet this legislation is marketed as providing relief to consumers — a bald-faced lie.

Meanwhile, natural gas is not only

a widely used fuel for both power stations and home use, but also used in producing countless chemicals that go into making even more products. Additional taxes on natural gas will make all these more expensive.

Once again, the marketing around this legislation is not merely misleading, but exactly opposite its actual effects.

The higher prices that stem from these tax increases on energy will ultimately decrease the amount of goods and services that consumers can afford. As fewer goods and services are traded, the economy contracts. In June, sky-high energy prices proved a sure-fire way to decrease consumer purchases. Gasoline consumption in July fell to levels below where it was two years prior — during the pandemic when there were mandatory lockdowns, causing people to drastically cut back their driving.

As if the energy taxes were not bad enough, the legislation provides for 87,000 new IRS agents. We're told

they're intended to hound tax-cheating billionaires, but this is just more deceptive marketing. There are fewer than 3,000 billionaires in the country, and they already face high audit rates. The new army of agents will allow the IRS to perform an additional 1.2 million audits a year, far exceeding the number of billionaires supposedly in the crosshairs. The claims about only going after those making more than \$400,000 a year is also just a political talking point because when Congress had the chance to enshrine that into the statute, it was voted down by Democrats — strictly on party lines.

The expansion of the IRS will target the middle class. Unlike the claims of going after tax cheats, the massively expanded IRS will prey upon people who are overwhelmed by a 10-million-word tax code. In one experiment, when 46 different tax professionals were given the same family's tax return to file, they produced 46 different estimates for what the family either owed or was entitled to

in a refund.

Even if the IRS expansion is successful in raising billions of dollars from the already-squeezed middle and working classes, that money does not magically disappear from the economy; the government will simply spend it instead of households. The amount of currency in circulation has not been reduced, it has merely changed hands. In other words, there is still no reduction in inflation.

The talking points and even the name of the Inflation Reduction Act are misleading at best. The more one digs into the legislation, the bigger the lies become. Perhaps a single line from the 1940s film "Pinocchio" best sums up the marketing of this tax-and-spend boondoggle: "A lie keeps growing and growing until it's as plain as the nose on your face."

■ E. J. Antoni is a research fellow for regional economics at the Heritage Foundation's Center for Data Analysis and a Senior Fellow at Committee to Unleash Prosperity.