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“They silenced one man’s voice, but in doing so, they created 13 more very loud voices.” — Jeanette Fincum

The meeting that never happened



Eagle photos/Rylan Boggs

Jeanette Fincum encourages attendees to get involved however they can at “The meeting that never happened” Saturday at the Grant County Fairgrounds in John Day. “One man can make a difference. He did make a difference,” she said of her late husband LaVoy Fincum.

Supporters gather in Grant County to honor LaVoy Fincum

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

Attorneys, ranchers and members of the Fincum family called for political activism in the wake of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation and the death of LaVoy Fincum last year.

Jeanette Fincum — the widow of the refuge occupier who was killed during a traffic stop en route to a meeting in John Day in the final days of the Malheur occupation — spoke to the crowd and thanked God and all those who supported her and her family since her husband’s death.

“They silenced one man’s voice, but in doing so, they created 13 more very loud voices,” Fincum said.

She read a statement prepared by the family’s lawyers announcing they filed a notice of administrative claim as a precursor to filing a federal civil rights lawsuit.

“While we could have filed our wrongful death lawsuit against the state of Oregon, it is more efficient to wait a short while longer to include the FBI in one lawsuit,” she said.

She recounted the jury’s acquittal of seven of the occupants on federal conspiracy charges to thunderous applause, adding her husband should have been



Sixth-generation rancher Trent Loos and Jeanette Fincum’s daughter, Thara Tenney, raffle off a picture of LaVoy Fincum during an event in John Day Saturday, Jan. 28.

among them.

“Our family is truly grateful that some of them have been able to return home to their families, and we are praying for all those who are still incarcerated, unjustly, for their immediate release,” she said. “We hope for the same outcome for the next seven that are still on trial and for those in Nevada.”

Fincum played several videos made by her husband before and during the occupation, which explained he supported the occupation because he believed the federal government was overreaching and overly regulating farmers and ranchers.

She urged those in attendance to become involved however they can in their local communities.

“One man can make a difference,” she said. “He did make a difference.”

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A crowd of more than 500 gathered Saturday night at the Grant County Fairgrounds for what was billed as “The meeting that never happened.”

Unlike the Jan. 26, 2016, event LaVoy Fincum, Ammon and Ryan Bundy and other occupation leaders were en route to when stopped by police, no

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Fifteen-year-old Laine Norton speaks about her experience with the Center for Self Governance during a meeting in John Day Saturday, Jan. 28. The center is a non-partisan educational organization that trains citizens in applied civics.

Educators discuss funding, legislative fixes for schools

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

Education officials from across Eastern Oregon converged in John Day last week for an education forum with state legislators before the legislative session.

School administrators and school board members provided their thoughts and ideas for improvements on education funding and legislation, focused on the smaller districts in rural Oregon, to Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, and Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, Jan. 24 at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School.

Several educators said stable, consistent school funding was needed. Baker School District Superintendent Mark Witty said the same discussions happen every two years when the Legislature convenes to balance the budget.

“We need to fund education over the long haul,” Grant School District Superintendent Curt Shelley said. “Attempting to fund it biennium to biennium is not going to be a good solution for education.”

Bentz said Republicans have ideas, but Democrats must be willing to cross the aisle to develop bipartisan solutions. He said he was willing to discuss increasing revenue through tax reform but only if Democrats were willing to reduce expenses.

Witty said the Public Employees Retirement System, which carries a large cost for school districts, was a “big issue.”

Ferrioli agreed and said PERS beneficiaries should be demanding reform to ensure the program remained solvent. Bentz said one way to reduce costs statewide would be requiring state employees, such as teachers, to pay more for retirement and health insurance benefits.

Everyone at the meeting appeared to support the Small School Correction, which provides small schools more money per student. Oregon School Boards Association

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Long road to a transportation package

By Rylan Boggs
and Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Oregon Legislature is again trying to clear the roadblocks to a comprehensive transportation package after failed attempts in 2015.

State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, co-vice chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation & Modernization, has been working with Co-Vice Chair Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, and Democratic Co-Chairs Sen. Lee Beyer and Rep. Caddy McKee to develop a framework to present to the entire 14-person committee in the upcoming legislative session.

With the state already facing a \$1.8 billion budget



The Eagle/Rylan Boggs

State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, right, listens to concerns about transportation funding at the John Day City Council meeting Wednesday, Jan. 25.

shortfall to maintain current government service levels, funding the infrastructure package will be difficult. Democrats hold the majority in both the House and the

Senate but not the 60-percent majority needed to pass bills raising revenue, so Republican votes will be necessary.

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Lawmakers, governor lay out session priorities

By Claire Withycombe
and Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Oregon’s legislative leaders say they have a difficult session ahead of them.

With the games due to begin today, balancing the state’s budget is top of mind.

Health care costs, education programs and rising state employee costs all mean that the state has nearly \$1.8 billion less than it needs to maintain the present level of government services.

Possible changes in federal immigration and health care policies also seemed to muddy the waters as legislators discussed their agendas for 2017

with members of the press in a forum at the Oregon Capitol organized by The Associated Press.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, for her part, said she is focused on finding solutions to the state’s immediate deficit and emphasized improving the state’s transportation system and maintaining access to health care.

Legislators have until midnight on July 10 to do their main job, which is to balance the state’s books; Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, warned this week that legislators might go into a special session after that deadline.

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