

Should rules for signature gathering change during COVID-19?

The state of Oregon and the federal courts have not been on the same page when it comes to signature gathering during the pandemic. The case has become a clash between the First Amendment and state authority that could set an interesting precedent for the future.

Supporters of an initiative that would have an independent commission decide Oregon's redistricting want to get it on the ballot. Their concept is it would be more sensible to take redistricting out of the hands of politicians, because they have an incentive to gerrymander voting districts. Groups including the League of Women Voters of Oregon, Common Cause Oregon, the NAACP of Eugene and Springfield, the Oregon Taxpayer Association and more are backing it.

The groups needed 149,360 verified signatures by July 2. They didn't get it. Collecting signatures in a pandemic is, at the very least, more complicated.

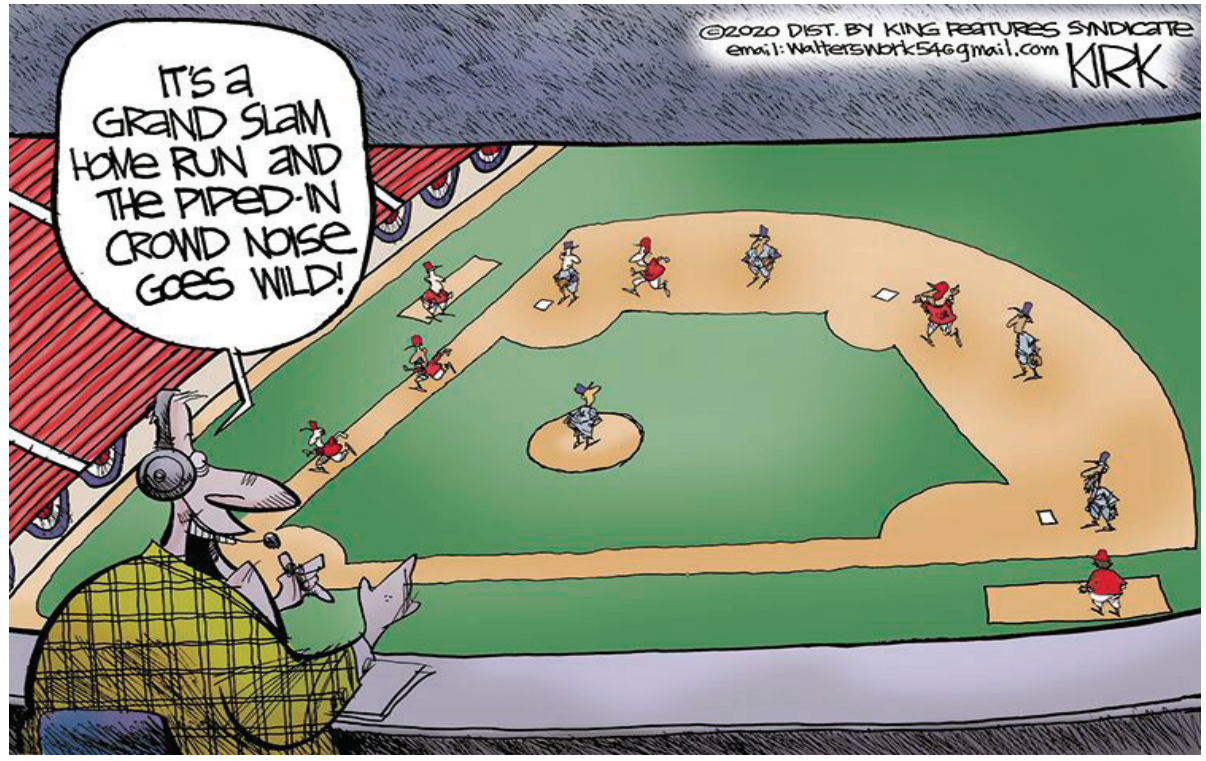
A federal judge ordered Oregon Secretary of State Bev Clarno to either accept the signatures the campaign gathered or give the groups more time to gather a lower threshold of signatures. Clarno picked the lower threshold. Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum appealed the judge's decision to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Gov. Kate Brown's attorney has filed a brief with the court arguing that her executive orders did not specifically prohibit one-on-one petition circulators and Oregon voters. That's correct. But did those orders make it more difficult to conduct conventional signature gathering in any way? Arguably yes.

Brown's attorney also argued that the federal judge's decision makes policy and that is not the role of the courts. The decision allowed the redistricting petition the ability to qualify for the ballot with fewer valid signatures — only 58,789 — than mandated in the Oregon Constitution. That's correct again. But the federal judge's considerations did acknowledge that concern. The judge was trying to find a difficult balance between the core right of Americans to petition their government and state law and the governor's orders.

And Brown's attorney argued the judge's decision is an implicit attack on the health-policy considerations in Brown's executive orders. "When officials make reasonable pandemic-related policy decisions during these times, it is not the role of the federal judiciary to second-guess those choices," Brown's brief says. Chief Justice Roberts only recently wrote when state officials "undertake[] to act in areas fraught with medical and scientific uncertainties," their latitude "must be especially broad." That's right, too. But the federal judge's decision on this initiative does not invalidate Brown's executive orders nor her authority to make critical public health decisions during the pandemic. It, once again, tries to balance state authority against the First Amendment rights of people to shape their government in the midst of a pandemic.

Can we say know who is right or what the courts will ultimately decide? Of course not. But is it better if this initiative is on the ballot and Oregonians get to decide for themselves if they want to change the way redistricting works? To that we would say yes.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Contact legislators about term limits

To the Editor:
Congressional term limits have been an ongoing conversation among Americans since our Constitution was conceived. There've been term limit bills proposed to federal legislators, but none resulted in a constitutional amendment to halt the rising number of career politicians. This isn't a "partisan" issue, but an American problem, and it is up to we, the people, to act.

Over 80% of Americans favor term limits. So why are incumbents who've been in office for 30-plus years still in office? Possible reasons:

- Many Americans believe that Congress will never vote for term limits. However, in 1995, the House passed a constitutional amendment limiting terms. It didn't pass, because any amendment requires a two-thirds supermajority vote.

- Some incumbents and special interest groups say that an election is a natural term limit. Unfortunately, when it comes to campaign financing, the incumbent has an edge from special interest groups. The challenger must finance his own campaign through donations or grassroots fundraising.

- We need experienced legislators in Washington. While this has been a long-held standard by many Americans, it is also true that new ideas breathe life into a stale organization.

I support congressional term limits, because I see our Congress forgetting who they really work for: us, the American people. With the coming election in November, remember that this is not just a presidential election. How long have your legislators been in office? Are you happy with their representation? Email legislators in Washington, D.C. If we don't speak up, who will?

Gayle Davis
Redmond

'Policies are more important than practices'

To the Editor:
In response to the letter "Trump lies, contradicts himself" in the July 22 Blue Mountain Eagle, I find it interesting that when people call President Trump a liar they never seem to offer an example. So, I will suggest one: During his interview with Chris Wallace, President Trump asserted that Joe Biden supported defunding police departments. Joe Biden had not personally affirmed his support for that political position — yet. But within a week Joe Biden had turned President Trump from mistaken to a prophet by affirming his support for defunding police departments. Please understand that "defunding" is different from "unfunding" that the radicals on the left are demanding.

So, Elberta Miller prefers socialism to capitalism and all the enormous benefits of President Trump's policies simply because he doesn't always get his facts straight. And she prefers Joe Biden's socialist policies to "fundamentally transform America" into a socialist country even though he is most often unable to get his sentences straight. "Policies" are more important than "practices." Be very careful what you wish for!

Reg LeQuieu
Mt. Vernon

Editor's note: Joe Biden has said he does not support defunding the police but that some police funding could be diverted to community programs such as social services, mental health counseling and affordable housing. He has proposed more federal aid for police through community-policing grant programs, conditioned on departments meeting certain standards.

'Shawna was a great support'

To the Editor:
I just learned yesterday that my care provider at Blue Mountain Hospital and Strawberry Wilderness Clinic was terminated about a week ago, and escorted from the building. I don't know what the source of the problem was, and don't care. I was so blessed to be able to get my mother in as a patient of Shawna Clark back in 2013 when she came to live with me. Without Shawna, the next 4.5 years would have been impossible, but due to her genuine care and tenacity in getting to the root cause of problems, we were able to navigate a difficult time until 2017 when I lost my mom. Even then, Shawna was a great support and, up until this, was still my care provider.

I can't imagine anyone in the administration of the hospital or clinic that could begin to add a drop of anything good to that institution compared to what Shawna has added during her time there. It appears that whomever has an interest in the hospital and clinic had better be reassessing their position on this matter, as there seems to be a mass exit by some of their capable staff, apparently for good reason.

On July 20 I went to the clinic for an appointment with Shawna Clark, and was told I had the wrong month and time, hmmm. I had written the appointment down while talking to the scheduler. The lady in front of me, using a walker, was told that she was two hours early and had to come back. Hmm again. Another woman from Monument told me she had come for an 11:30 appointment and was told to come back at 1:30 when she was scheduled. Three out of three isn't a coincidence. What a mess!

I will make the drive to Redmond or Bend rather than deal with these people, who seem to value their status more than their patients, and pray that this doesn't hurt Shawna and her family as much as it certainly could.

A disappointed resident of Grant County.

Mary Brown
Prairie City

Unanswered questions about emergency management

To the Editor:
Lest we forget, don't we have several unanswered questions about Grant County's esteemed emergency operations command?

Why suggested by Sheriff Palmer? Why person in place passed over without discussion? Why highest paid deputy sheriff in charge who had no health-care qualifications? Government money went where? Where is purchased equipment (by overrun) gone? Why are we putting up with the most inane excuses from the information designee and the liaison to the sheriff's department for what took place? What really did take place?

I want some answers from these government hating libertarians who have fleeced our taxpayer money in the name of constitutional liberty.

Anybody who believes what just transpired in Grant County by these "no comment-ers" is a patriotic duty upheld by elected officials is so ill-informed that they should not be allowed to vote — just like all the other voter suppression carried out by their "heroes."

This is BS folks. We as taxpayers paid for it — they stole it!

Mark Murray
Prairie City

'Reach your own conclusion'

To the Editor:
I figured the worse had happened to me today when at first light I was semi defeated with a roll of toilet paper. Did you know that the manufacturers of the darn stuff glue down the first sheet so that, if you can just find it, you have to tear it loose, end up with two layers, then wonder which direction the unwind goes. In case you don't know the rule, the wind goes over the top of the roll.

Then I listened to a presentation on the Glenn Beck broadcast with doctor/lawyer Simone Gold on the subject of hydroxychloroquine and realized that things could get worse. In short, she pointed out the scheme of politicians and the pharmaceutical forces (and Mark Zuckerberg, who we know is a medical expert—snicker) who refute the benefits, declare the harmful effects of a drug that has been used successfully for over half a century and virtually removed it from the market. Ask yourselves who benefits from all this. This is not only a United States issue. World leaders are onboard. Does anyone else follow the trail that leads directly to goals set by the United Nation directives in Agenda 21 and 2030 to deplete the population, enact a world order and world bank. I also wonder what the UN has promised their minions (politicians and world leaders). Eternal life, wealth untold?

Does anyone remember how quinine was used to control such diseases as malaria during and after World War II? Quinine was replaced with a more effective version such as chloroquine and chloroquine. Also note that other forms of quinine, primaquine and pyrimethamine, act on blood and tissue to cure and prevent a relapse of certain diseases. Reread the spelling of the COVID-19 drug — hydroxychloroquine — and reach your own conclusion.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Editor's note: On June 15, the Food and Drug Administration revoked the emergency use authorization to use hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine to treat COVID-19 in certain hospitalized patients when a clinical trial is unavailable or participation is not feasible, based on results from a large, randomized clinical trial in hospitalized patients that found these medicines showed no benefit for decreasing the likelihood of death or speeding recovery. On July 1, a summary of the FDA review was released including reports of serious heart rhythm problems and other safety issues, including blood and lymph system disorders, kidney injuries and liver problems and failure.

It's the people that are important

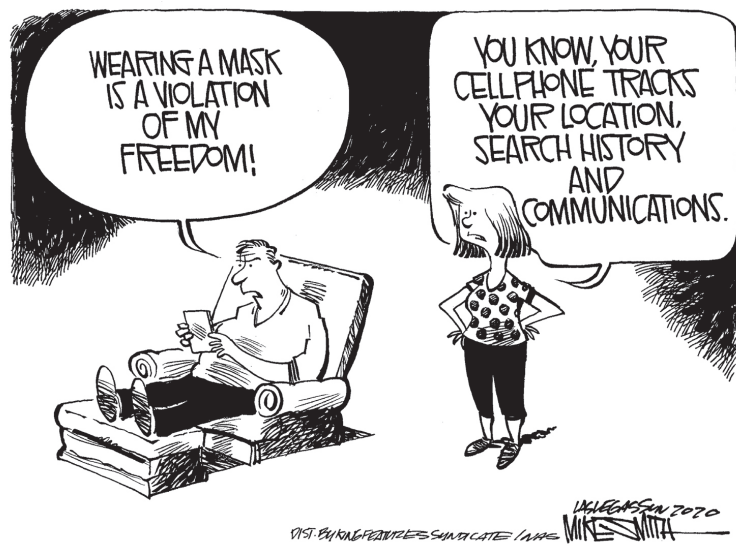
To the Editor:
On July 1, my home and all my personal belongings burned in a house fire, the property surrounding the home along with it.

The amount of damage, I cannot surmise what that might be. One thing for sure, most can be replaced in time. Except for the loss of family heritage — photos, diaries and hand me downs from generations.

Upon losing most of my life, I finally discovered that the material things were not that important. What was important were the fine people who came to help me when I was down.

You know who you are and are appreciated.

Tim Jewell
Kimberly





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