

OUR VIEW

# Greater Idaho movement not going away

If nothing else, the organizers behind the Greater Idaho movement are persistent. The group, which is seeking the ultimate goal of moving part or all of more than 20 Oregon counties into Idaho (which they say is a better cultural match than Western Oregon) has taken the next step to try and gain approval in Wallowa County. Last week, it was announced they had received the OK to gather signatures for a petition to get on the November ballot.

The measure, as has been reported previously, fell by a slim margin — just 41 votes — in November 2020. That could have derailed supporters of the movement, but instead, it appears it's only emboldened them. The new ballot measure being proposed is slightly different than the previous one, requiring county commissioners to meet just twice annually as opposed to three times. That, combined with there being more information organizers can share about the movement, has them hopeful that the second time will be the charm.

The movement, as unlikely as its ultimate goal seems, is gaining traction. Eight counties (including Grant) have already approved measures similar to the one signature gatherers will be hoping to put on the November ballot. Three more are slated to vote next month on it. At least two other counties are in a similar position to Wallowa County and are either at or nearing the petition phase. Conceivably, more than 63% of the counties organizers are seeking to be part of the movement could be discussing the move to Idaho by the end of November. That's a pretty decent chunk in less than three years.

Should this get to the Wallowa County voters — and we see no reason why it won't — it will be very interesting to see how they respond this time. Will there be more disgruntled among those who said "no" last time who switch their vote? Will the group that staunchly wants to keep Oregon as it is keep its edge and win out? Will the minor adjustment to the measure text and more information make a difference?

Regardless of what happens in November, there is a long way for proponents to go, even if they eventually manage to get all 22 counties on board. The states would ultimately have to agree to it, as would Congress.

Is it a long shot? Absolutely.

But the fact that we are still talking about it is evidence that the movement isn't going to die off anytime soon.

The organizers clearly believe that their persistence will, in the end, pay off.



## THE FARMER'S FATE

# Of oxygen masks and flags

"Mom, that's a problem," my oldest said as we began pulling the equipment out of the shed.

He was pointing to the tattered and sun-bleached flags on the tractors. He reveres that flag so much. I watched him climb up the ladder and gently take down the worn Stars and Stripes from each tractor and piece of machinery. We folded what was left of them and set them aside to have a proper disposal ceremony when time allowed.

Later that evening, both boys were excited to put up new flags. Standing back watching, my heart swelled as I watched their faces so proud of their work. I must admit, watching Old Glory wave over green tractors working a field is a sight that fills my spirit with a little bit of old-fashioned Americana.

It wasn't that many years ago it seemed every house had a flag in front, the schools all began with the pledge of allegiance, and everyone removed their hats during "The Star-Spangled Banner." Now to fly the flag of our country is seen as political instead of patriotic. When did loving one's country become selfish?

When a flight attendant gives the steps of what to do in an emergency, you are instructed to put on your oxygen mask before you assist others. Counselors instruct couples to focus on their marriage before their children. Loving your country first does not mean hate for others.

I believe the flag is so much more than ink and cloth. It's a living symbol of freedom and it unites all Americans,



Brianna Walker

from every walk of life, who gather under it and salute. It is our history. It is our future. It isn't perfect — it never claimed to be. But what it is, is ours. Our republic, formed of great men and women who make up "we the people." Our country was formed from the ground up, meaning local action equals national results.

My family loves traveling. We love visiting new countries, making new friends in new places — but when it comes to the United States, I feel a little bit like Scarlett O'Hara at the end of "Gone with the Wind." There is something I love more than traveling — it's my own Tara, my own little chunk of the United States.

Saluting the flag doesn't have to mean your support for the politicians or the government. Instead it is an outward show of respect for all the men and women who lived, served and died under it — for us. As Mark Twain once said, loyalty to country always, loyalty to government when it deserves it.

This winter has been tough and has brought up many deep conversations about what we want out of life, what we want for our kids, and what we want for our country. Harry Truman once said that America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination, and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand.

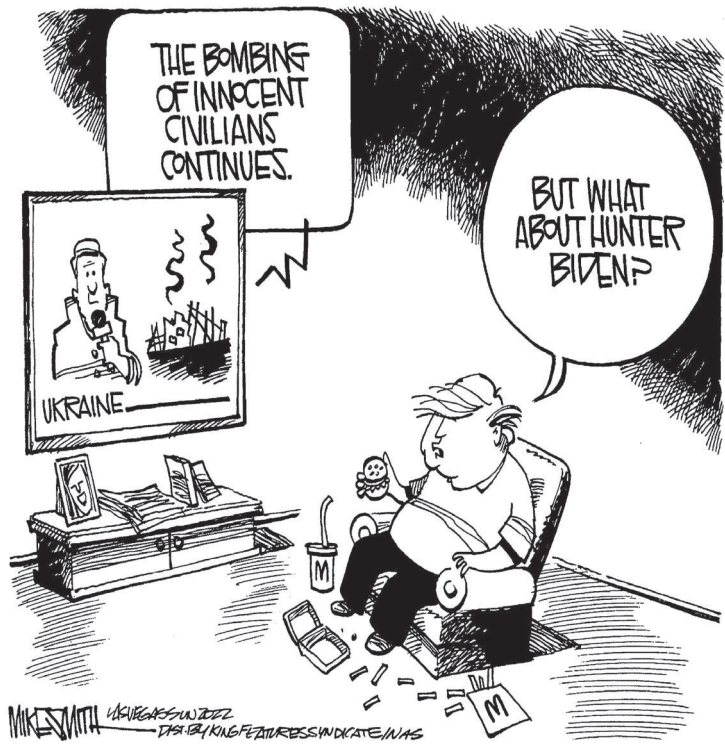
How does one go about instilling courage, imagination and determination into their kids? I don't know

— but I know it starts with my husband and I. We have to secure our oxygen masks first. When people yell "xenophobia" because we proudly display our country's flag, we don't take it down in embarrassment. We just square our shoulders and remember the brave people that have fought and sacrificed for the opportunity of living the American dream.

I never thought we'd need to have courage to fly the American flag. I never thought we'd need courage to carry our Bible to church. I never thought we'd need courage to say the girls' bathroom is on the left and the boys' is on the right. But here we are, and it's time to stand for our faith; stand for our family; stand for our freedom — for if we don't stand up now, our children will inherit a world where they can't stand up.

I want my kids to learn how to take the proverbial bricks others are throwing and use them to build a solid foundation of their character. I want my kids to take their hats off for the flag, never set items on a Bible, and give up their seats on a bus for an elder. I want them to be proud of their country and productive in their community. A community that is made up of young and old, black and white, bald and purple-haired — united together under that striped flag that makes us all Americans. I am securing my oxygen mask, raising up our flag and asking that God bless America, my home sweet home!

*Brianna Walker is a Grant County resident who occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.*



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Move over in that foxhole

To the Editor:

There is a rule regarding letters to the editor that seems unreasonable. I believe it was adopted by the last editor. It is the current policy to limit letter writers to only one letter per month. However, there are situations that arise that need to be commented on sooner than later. If one must wait weeks to reply, the subject can become cold and die.

I know this is the era of social media and online communication, but there are still a few dinosaurs like myself who live, in part, on the pages of the Blue Mountain Eagle. We used to have ongoing exchanges about issues, but under this restriction it is difficult. The more that the editors insert themselves into this process, the more difficult discussions become. It would be very appreciated if the current letter submission policy could be revised to permit writers to participate more frequently. Anyone who might abuse this privilege could be dealt with personally without limiting the benefit of all to hear full responses to topics under discussion. The Eagle's opinion page has historically been an important place for Grant County neighbors to address issues and share ideas.

Recently, there were two different letters to the editor basically denouncing Democrats. The second letter was exceptionally ugly, and as a Democrat I would have liked to answer it in a timely way. Unfortunately, I had used my one letter per month submission weeks earlier on a different topic, so I did not qualify to respond to the current discussion. At this late date, I still have a desire to respond to the writer of that second letter who knows me well enough to know I am anything but a coward. My message to that person is that people who are emotionally condemning of all Democrats should, to be

fair, move away from extreme feelings and realize there would be plenty of us, as Democrats, fighting alongside him in his foxhole. I would also say that the more radical people become with their political views, the more apt they are to make fools of themselves.

Terry Steele  
 Ritter

**Editor's note:** Mr. Steele makes a reasonable case for raising the frequency limit on letters to the editor. We'll try raising the limit to two letters per month from the same writer and see how it goes.

### Grant County needs a new pool

To the Editor:

As many of us do, one afternoon I took my young son fishing down the John Day River. In an instant, what was a good day turned into every parent's worst nightmare. My son got a little too far in the water and within seconds, he was caught in a rip current. In a flash his head was underwater, and he was gone. I immediately jumped in after him, thinking I could save him, but I couldn't do it alone. It took two grown men to pull my 8-year-old son out of the water that day. Had he not taken swim lessons and learned what to do in that situation, I am certain my son would have drowned.

On May 17, residents of the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District will finally get the chance to vote and decide for themselves if they want a pool in Grant County. Gleason Pool was important to people of all ages in Grant County, including myself and other parents who relied on swim lessons to teach their children about water safety. Drowning is one of the leading causes of injury and death in children, but formal swimming lessons can significantly reduce the risk of drowning. This community needs

a pool and, whether we like it or not, Gleason Pool is gone.

The value a pool will bring to our community cannot be measured by tax dollars. The nominal increase in taxes is worth every penny. I want to know my grandsons will be safe fishing with their father on the same river that he fished with me. Having local access to a swimming pool where my grandsons can learn to swim gives me reassurance. Swim lessons saved my son's life.

Thank you, JDCC Parks and Recreation, for advocating for my right to vote. The future generations of Grant County are worth it.

Lynn S. Burton  
 John Day

### McQuisten understands needs of rural Oregon

To the Editor:

We are supporting Kerry McQuisten for governor. We have known Kerry since she was in grade school at Burnt River/Unity. Kerry is a seventh-generation Oregonian. She grew up on a cattle ranch in Eastern Oregon, so she understands the rural part of Oregon. She had the opportunity to live and work overseas before returning stateside to complete her education at Willamette University. She has had a chance to experience both city and rural living. Kerry is now back in Baker City, where she owns her own publishing company, is mayor of Baker City, and is raising her two daughters.

Kerry has campaigned in all 36 counties in Oregon to listen to the concerns of all Oregonians. She cares!

If you want someone who has good common sense with conservative values, and someone who will stand up and fight to get our Oregon back, then Kerry McQuisten is just the candidate for you!

Patty Trost  
 Unity

**LETTERS POLICY:** Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to two letters per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters by email to [editor@bmeagle.com](mailto:editor@bmeagle.com); by mail to Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or by fax to 541-575-1244.