

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Fill in the oval for Mark Webb

**To the Editor:**

We encourage you to write in Mark Webb for Grant County commissioner.

Mark has the experience for the job:

- Longtime resident and contractor in Grant County.
- County judge from 2007-2013.
- Chairman of the forest coalition.

Mark is a pragmatic problem-solver:

- He looks for creative solutions to complicated county problems.
- He is open-minded.
- He has no agenda other than the betterment of Grant County.

Mark works to build good relationships with institutions that affect Grant County's well-being. Please write in Mark Webb for county commissioner and remember to fill in the oval.

**Mark and Sandy Murray**  
*Prairie City*

## We need to go slow on new pool

**To the Editor:**

While I am 100% for a swimming pool for our community and feel it is essential, I am equally concerned about the extensive cost that will be the burden of the property holders in the taxing district.

Perhaps those planning the aquatic center could offer multiple building plans, along with the corresponding costs, and allow the community to vote on what they feel they can best afford as well as what is best for the community. Another idea might be to build in stages, which John Day/Canyon City Parks & Recreation has a long history of doing and has done a fabulous job, as is evident with our Seventh Street Complex. I am truly proud of the work they have done and feel this property is a substantial asset to our community. But we are in uncertain times, and it is important that we all live within our means, which includes our local government and JDCCP&R.

**Suzy Burton**  
*John Day*

## Finding grace in an Easter egg hunt

**To the Editor:**

The church in Monument planned an Easter egg hunt for the city park. It had snowed for three nights, but the sun had come out and the snow was gone. Moms and dads had prepared nearly a thousand eggs. I haven't been to an easter egg hunt since I was a kid, so for some reason I felt it was important for me to go.

When I woke up everything was white, cloudy and cold. I thought it would be canceled, but everyone who had helped was meeting at 8:30 a.m. Bright-colored eggs were placed all over the park in 3 to 4 inches of snow. Was anyone going to come?

Cars and trucks started showing up, and I had no idea there were so many children in our small community. The preschoolers and 2- and 3-year-olds were in one group with their moms and dads, and older kids in other groups with their hats and boots on. Everyone was running around finding bright-colored eggs in the snow with their bare hands.

As adults with all our busy schedules, we can take simple, important things for granted. The snow added something special to this Easter egg hunt, and I am grateful for everyone who made it happen. These children are our future. I am an old guy and have lived in this county for the past 52 years with no regrets, but what will stay with me for years was seeing the excitement in these children's eyes and the smiles on their faces.

If Putin had made his troops color Easter eggs and deliver them to all the parks and towns and cities in Ukraine, this war and all the suffering could've been avoided.

**Jim Bahrenburg**  
*Kimberly*

## Dems responsible for mess we're in

**To the Editor:**

Local Democrats indicated it was "mean-spirited" when the sorely lacking in patriotism members of their party were called "self-serving and cowardly."

What other words can describe a political group that is doing its best to destroy all we should hold dear in America?

In just one year the leadership the Democrats put in power have caused the southern border to be crossed by millions of illegal, unvetted people including criminals and terrorists. A debacle in Afghanistan that diminished our trust and credibility worldwide. A blind eye to rampant corruption that includes the president and his son Hunter. Causing an energy crisis where there was none. Inflation that is ruining our currency and causing critical shortages. The list goes on.

Democrats are responsible for the sorry mess we're in and cannot lie their way out. If they were patriotic as they profess to be, then we would see them standing up and demanding honesty and accountability. That's not the case and probably never will be.

**Marc LeQuieu**  
*Mt. Vernon*

## Webb best pick for county court

**To the Editor:**

Greetings, Grant County. This is Boyd Britton, four-term Grant County commissioner, retired.

I left office on July 1, 2018, to move closer to my wife Bonnie's family. We have been keeping up with the events in Grant County through the newspaper and keeping up with old friends. That being said, Grant County has an opportunity to elect an excellent advocate for the county: Mark Webb. I had the honor of serving with Judge Dennis Reynolds and Judge Mark Webb and they were intelligent, hardworking, moral men. Mark had a vision for the county and was and is much respected in state and federal circles. When the regulatory agencies met and Mark Webb was in the room, the bureaucrats knew they would not be able to ignore or run roughshod over Grant County.

Due in large part to Mark's efforts, Grant County still has a mill and timber industry. Mark was instrumental in bringing back the county's health and mental health departments to respectability and to bring a model of how it can be done across the state.

Mark is fiscally responsible and I have witnessed personally his dedication to serving and protecting the county's interests. He is not just a bystander when it comes to the county budget; he gets it. Mark is a happily married family man with three successful children, a Grant County landowner, and has a vested interest in the county's natural resources. He thins brush, removes junipers, builds fence and is a contract tree faller for the Forest Service during fires.

Grant County, Mark Webb would bring respectability to the court by his experience, knowledge and compassion. Please help bring Grant County back by writing in my friend, Mark Webb, for the Grant County commissioner position.

**Boyd Britton**  
*Show Low, Arizona*

## Local children need a new pool

**To the Editor:**

This will be the third year that we haven't had access to a local pool in our community. I have young children, and the last time they swam at Gleason Pool was 2019. I believe it's extremely important that we have a local pool for several reasons, but for our family it would mean our kids can be a part of the local swim team. This community has always been excellent in regards to supporting access to sports, and a pool would not only serve to enhance these options, but for the physical well-being of the entire community.

There are many stories from community members whose children were on swim team growing up or who have memories themselves of the value that swim team provided them as children and young adults. In addition, the proposed facility and pool will be ADA-accessible to include swimmers of all abilities. This is something that was lacking at Gleason Pool, and will improve access to low-impact exercise and therapy options for our local community.

I understand that people are concerned about the cost of taxes and I do think it's important to note that this bond, if approved, will start in 2023 for people living in the John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District

boundary. 2021 was the last year of the bond that provided funding for the hospital, a tax burden which was significantly higher than the proposed 70 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for the pool.

A pool provides important recreational, competitive swimming, physical exercise, and social opportunities for people of all ages in Grant County. You will be receiving your ballots in the coming week, I encourage you to vote yes on ballot measure 12-80 on May 17.

**Amy Charette**  
*John Day*

## Give our children a chance to swim

**To the Editor:**

I have been involved with the Gleason Pool in some way for as long as I can remember. When I was a child I had lessons, was on swim team and spent thousands of hours playing at the pool. When I was old enough to have a job, I was a lifeguard and taught swim lessons in the summers and while in college. As an adult with children, Marty and I were lucky enough to have the pool available, giving our girls an opportunity to repeat the cycle.

Unfortunately, our pool, that has provided thousands of children hours of fun and a very necessary skill (swimming), has come to the end of its life! Do we really want a whole generation to not have that skill? To not have the joy to be in the water and play safely? Play in the lake? Swim out to the log? You know you've done it!

I've heard many comments asking why we can't just fix the pool. I would encourage those of you who think it is fixable to chat with any parent over the last 28 years who, along with Marty and I, worked at the pool to put on swim meets. The pool is beyond fixable; it was built in the 1950s and has outlived its useful life.

The bond for the pool will cost about 70 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. That means your \$200,000 home will cost \$140 per year. That's not even \$12 a month, less than 50 cents per day. If you don't own property, it will cost you nothing. The joy of watching your grandchildren, your children, the child down the street jump in the pool and play or swim out to the log, without you being fearful they will drown — isn't that worth 50 cents per day?

Please vote yes on the pool bond! Give our children a chance to swim! Give them something fun to do in the summer! I could go on for pages about the benefits of swimming, but I won't, mostly, because I've used up my word limit! Thanks for listening!

**Stacie Holmstrom**  
*John Day*

## Community pool is indispensable

**To the Editor:**

When searching for a new location to move our family 13 years ago, Grant County fit the bill because it was a small county that still maintained many essential amenities such as a hospital, grocery stores, and a swimming pool. Over the years that we have lived here, we have spent many summer hours at the Gleason Pool. We are grateful for the strong swimming skills that our older three children developed in swim lessons and as members of the John Day Swim Team. Learning to swim is a vital life skill. Our three older children are strong swimmers and our three younger children are not. The difference between them is the lack of a local swimming pool for two summers now.

As property owners, we recognize the tax impact of the proposed pool bond. However, we believe that funding and building a new pool is a critical investment in the future of Grant County, both in the safety of our citizens (especially children) and in attracting families to move to the area by showing that we value this indispensable amenity. We are thankful that this measure is on the ballot. And we urge you to join us in voting yes on measure 12-80. Thank you, neighbors.

**Heather and Zac Bailey**  
*Canyon City*

## Mark Webb is the right candidate

**To the Editor:**

Mark Webb is the candidate

with the best background and skills to serve as county commissioner. Over the years, I have observed his ability and concern to make sure that everyone had their say during meetings of the Blue Mountain Forest Partners. He works hard to help a wide range of interests and people find common ground. If he is elected, his experience as a former county judge and executive director of BMFP will be an enormous asset to the future of Grant County. I urge you to write in Mark Webb for Grant County commissioner.

**Mark Cerny**  
*Bear Valley*

## Time to make tough decision

**To the Editor:**

No matter how well intended, we the people and our country have an out-of-control spending problem that is especially true of governments utilizing taxpayer funds. We as residents of the city of John Day and Canyon City are now being asked to support a bond measure for the construction of a replacement pool (seasonal) with an office and other recreational amenities. Let's not forget future use and operational costs. This may be an emotional and difficult decision as for small cities we've had the luxury of having a pool for several years.

A reality check for such low-populated cities must be taken. Considering slow growth or even decreased growth and the continuous increases in taxes and other costs, we must consider our financial capability and priorities. What are the other future financial needs of our cities and communities on the horizon we may be asked to support?

We know Grant County's schools have a backlog of millions of dollars in maintenance costs and the desire to build a new school (option to include a pool?). Our hospital, no doubt, will have further needs. How about our emergency services such as policing, ambulance services, fire department as well as just maintaining current infrastructure, etc.?

Consider why other larger cities such as Nyssa and Sandy in Oregon chose to close their pools. You must ask yourself why.

What other options do we have? There is the opportunity for JDCCPD to promote and arrange for swimming activities with our one local hotel having a pool or arrange scheduled bus trips to the Baker City Aquatic Center or the city of Burns for swimming opportunities similar to the trips provided to Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort for snow skiing opportunities. This could also provide the opportunity and benefit of increased ridership for the Grant County People Mover transportation service. We are given the opportunity to make our voices heard and be responsible citizens, so please vote and consider the potential financial hardship for friends, neighbors and others with limited resources.

**Louis E. Provencher**  
*John Day*

## Please vote no on pool tax

**To the Editor:**

I think that Grant County needs a swimming pool, but here are the reasons I am going to vote against a swimming pool tax:

1. Food costs are going up.
2. Fuel costs are going up.
3. Labor costs are going up.
4. Property values are going up.
5. Rent will go up if property tax goes up.
6. The drought we are in is having a major impact on the food chain.

These costs are increasing at a faster rate than normal. The senior citizens living here are going to have a hard time absorbing the increase in these costs. Food is going to be hard to get because we do not have the water to grow the food. This is going to drive the cost of food up even more. Take a moment to look at where the drought is located in the Western part of the United States. It is the area where the food is grown. If they do not have the water, they cannot grow the food.

We do not have control over the costs listed above. What we do have control over is adding additional costs to our senior citizens. I am going to vote no on the swimming pool tax, and I am asking you to not add this additional burden on our citizens.

**Tom Sutton**  
*John Day*

## COMMENTARY

## Grant County is honored by namesake

Today marks the 200th birthday of our county's namesake and one of America's greatest sons: Ulysses S. Grant.

Grant was born April 27, 1822, in Point Pleasant, Ohio. "Unlike many great historical figures," writes Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Chernow in his 2017 biography "Grant," as a boy and adolescent "Grant brooded on no vast dreams, harbored no spacious vision for his future, and would have settled for a contented, small-town life." Fate, however, had much more in store for young Ulysses.



**Richard F. LaMountain**

In 1838, Ulysses' father, Jesse, arranged for his son to be appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Excelling in horsemanship but otherwise an average student, Grant graduated in 1843 in the middle of his class. He served in the Mexican War, married, and served peacetime assignments in New York, Oregon and California. In 1854 he resigned his commission and returned to the Midwest, farming 60 acres of his father-in-law's land. Failing as a farmer, Grant sought to sell firewood in St. Louis — but success eluded him there, as well. In 1860, other options exhausted, Grant grudgingly took a clerical job at his father's leather-goods store in Galena, Illinois.

With the advent of the Civil War, Grant's fortunes changed. After helping organize Galena's company of Union volunteers, he rose swiftly — from administrative aide to regimental colonel to brigadier general. Early in 1862, Grant and his troops took the Confederate Forts Henry and Donelson; at the latter, they captured 13,000 enemy troops. Later, Grant-led armies were victorious in the Battle of Shiloh (April 1862), the Vicksburg campaign (late 1862 to July 1863) and the Battle of Chattanooga (fall of 1863).

After these successes in the war's western theater, in March 1864 President Lincoln appointed Grant commander of the Armies of the United States. In this position, writes Chernow, "he presided over twenty-one army corps ... with a total of 533,000 battle-ready troops." Fighting, now, in the eastern theater, Grant utilized the North's superior manpower and firepower to wear down Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. In April 1865 at Appomattox, Virginia, Grant accepted Lee's and the South's surrender.

A national hero, Grant was elected president in 1868 and served two terms. He pursued civil service reform, returned the United States to the gold standard, and fought valiantly but with limited success to reincorporate a still-bitter South into the Union. After leaving office, Grant took a lengthy world tour and contended in 1880 for yet another term as president. Near the end of his life, beset with tongue and throat cancer, Grant wrote his autobiography, which he completed mere days before his death in July 1885.

As are other great men of America's past, Grant today is under assault by "woke" radicals. They invoke as proof of his "racism" his brief ownership, as a young man, of one slave — whom he'd acquired (possibly as a gift) from his father-in-law. And they cite, during his presidency, the U.S. Army's clashes with Indians and his support of placing Indians on reservations.

Grant, however, freed the one slave shortly after taking possession of him. This was consistent with his overall view on slavery: In a post-war discussion with German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, Grant told him the war was fought because "slavery must be destroyed ... it was a stain to the Union that men should be bought and sold like cattle." As president, Grant fought the Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction South — and, writes Chernow, appointed "an unprecedented number of blacks ... as ambassadors, customs collectors, internal revenue agents, postmasters, and clerks." Indeed, posits Chernow, Grant "deserves an honored place in American history, second only to Lincoln, for what he did for the freed slaves."

In his first inaugural address, Grant promised a new U.S. policy to pursue, as he described it, "the proper treatment of the original occupants of this land — the Indians." He did support sequestering many Indians on reservations. But he supported this in large part, writes historian William S. McFeely, "so they would be protected from white incursions" — and indeed, as president, he ordered the War Department to forcibly remove white settlers who encroached on treaty-protected Indian lands. He appointed Ely S. Parker, a Seneca Indian, commissioner of Indian affairs. And he received Oglala Sioux Chief Red Cloud in the White House, as per biographer Ronald C. White, "with the pomp and pageantry reserved for a head of state."

Rather than vilify Grant, today's "woke" Americans should heed the words of someone who actually knew him: Frederick Douglass, perhaps the foremost Black American of the 19th century. Of Grant, Douglass wrote: "To him more than any other man the Negro owes his enfranchisement and the Indian a humane policy. ... The black soldier was welcome in his tent, and the freedman in his house."

Our county should be proud to share the name of Ulysses S. Grant.

*Richard F. LaMountain, a resident of John Day is a former assistant editor of Conservative Digest magazine*