

the HEPPNER GAZETTE

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Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Four locals join 51 Eastern Oregon officials signing push-back letter against Governor Brown's COVID rules

'Our students are struggling in their education as well as their mental and emotional fitness, families have been stressed to the maximum, and decade-old businesses that are the lifeblood of our Oregon communities have closed for good.'

Oregon Democrat Gov. position for our commu- for employing tens of thou-Kate Brown received a letter last Wednesday from 51 legislators and commissioners from across eastern Oregon. They urged her to stop her one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19. Below is the full text of the letter sent to Brown:

We appreciate and un-

derstand the challenges you have faced as our Governor during this challenging time in Oregon. We have seen improvements Morrow in the response to County COVID-19 and the Commission executive decisions
Lindsay you have made that have slowed the

spread of the virus. In our mark for future conversaroles as state legislators, county commissioners and judges, and regional leaders, we've encouraged every effort available to do the same.

A one-size-fits-all approach to shutting down the state was logical and any longer.

It is time to re-evaluate the metrics and the ever-changing goal posts related to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our rural, semi-rural, eastern and frontier communities. We have shut down for months, we have met the metrics required, we have followed the goal posts as they've moved, we have adhered to the rules, we have slowed the spread—and yet, our counties, communities, schools, childcare and coland more, sit in a stale communities wherein. and stagnant state without forward progress. We have for change: done and continue to do all that is within our capac-

we have no control.

will ebb and flow over the next several months just as they have over the last several weeks. This metric is not a reliable indica-Dear Governor Brown, tor of the situation. The metric



Don Russell

that is most important indoor occupancy es- Commissioner are not sustainable. to reconsider at this time is the original goal of ensuring there is adequate hospital capacity and not overwhelming our medi-

tions on how we learn to live with COVID-19.

we don't know about COVID-19, but what we need to be allowed to pardo know is the continued ticipate in extracurricuclosure and limitations under these guidelines disproportionally impact women, teers who want to return to appropriate in March when single-parent homes, rural the onset of this pandemic communities and small be able to do so in a safe was new and was unknown. businesses. Our students manner. All teachers, stu-Over time, we have learned, are struggling in their ed-dents, staff, and volunteers adapted, adjusted and im- ucation as well as their that desire to continue CDL proved. Keeping counties mental and emotional fit- should be able to do so. If it and regions in a Phase II ness, families have been is safe for college athletes to for an indefinite period of stressed to the maximum, return to sports, assuredly time is a one-size-fits-all and decade-old businesses it is safe for high school that allows for freedoms, their best interests and be Grant, Harney Jefferson, approach that does not work that are the lifeblood of our students. Parents need to be Oregon communities have able to return to work, and closed for good.

> weeks, we have safely met with school superintencounty sheriffs, county public health authorities and agency representatives to discuss how we move forward.

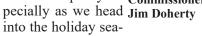
We must make significant changes to the way our systems are being managed going forward. It is not realistic or sustainable to small businesses, K-12 continue in Phase I or II, as currently described, for leges, health departments our districts, counties and tions: Release our church-

We propose four areas

1. Restaurants and bars: Our hospitality industry, ity to slow the spread of restaurants and bars must been more than scrupulous COVID-19, and now, some be able to stay open. The in protecting their congreof our border counties are data shared by OHA does being directly affected by not show any indication that decisions and actions from our restaurants and bars are religious leaders and govoutside our state over which the cause of increased caserning boards the latitude es. In addition, our hospital- to exercise their best judge-This is not a sustainable ity industry is responsible ment for safety.

sands of Oregonians and Our COVID-19 cases keeping our already fragile economy moving. Our

> restaurants and bars need to be able to extend their hours beyond the arbitrary closing time of 10 p.m. and need to safely expand their



into the holiday season and winter when indoor therapeutic restaurants, lodging and tourism activity will grow. We are at risk for nearly 40 cal facilities. We have percent of our remaining met this goal from the businesses closing in the onset and continue to next six months if we do meet this goal. This not allow for reasonable must be the bench- expansion of these services and industries.

2. Schools: Our schools need to be allowed to fully There is still much re-open for in-classroom learning, and our students lar activities. All teachers, students, staff and volunin-person learning should our students and teachers Over the past few need the stability of the classroom.

3. State Agencies: We dents, the ODE Director, need to reopen our state agencies at all levels, including and specifically DMVs, across the state. We would argue, and assume you would agree, that our state agencies and state employees are essential. These agencies are funded with public dollars and our public needs full access to these essential services.

4. Religious institues and places of worship. While outliers will exist as the exception, most churches and places of worship will be and have gations from harm from COVID-19. Give pastors,

We have been living with extreme difficulty with COVID-19 for over eight months and have taken the necessary precautions

during this time, but we have another six, 12, 18 months, or longer to go as we continue to understand this pandemic. Further shutdowns We must adapt our

phases to allow for remedies that appear to be on the horizon.



our kids to Bill Hansell go to school.

our parents and families to work, our agencies to open for services, and our small businesses to reopen for business, we are failing our state and devastating the lives of tens of thousands of Oregonians. Our rural communities are being left out and left behind. As leaders, we are failing our constituents and the future of our state's survival is at

We urge you to considsafety and sustainability to work in conjunction with one another. In order to accomplish this, we must empower our local public health authorities to work with the local elected leadership, both of whom fully know local situations, to work together and in partnership with the OHA to move forward with what can become a regional version of Phase II-A and Phase II-B.

We are having these conversations now, and more importantly, we are taking the necessary steps to develop these plans so we can act and move our unique regions forward towards a sustainable, viable future. Something has to change, and we're prepared to move ahead.

Sheriff will not enforce Governor's **COVID** edicts

'We have not engaged in any criminal enforcement on COVID-19 measures or orders sent down from Governor Brown and we will not start now, 'says Sheriff Matlack



Sheriff Ken Matlack

Morrow County Sheriff Ken Matlack last week issued a statement saying his office will not be enforcing any COVID orders sent from Salem by Democrat Following is the sheriff's complete statement:

row County Sheriff Ken

First, I wish to thank the people of Morrow County for my re-election as your any criminal enforcement sheriff. It continues to be a great honor to serve you.

2020 has been a very challenging year as a nation, state and county. Like I said in April, "We are facing the COVID-19 pandemic head on, at the state, civil litigation or fines from county and local level. To say our everyday lives have not be cited or arrested by been changed would be an any member of the Morrow understatement."

Following Governor Brown's latest executive order, the "Two Week Freeze" we have been asked by members of the public, "Are you going to be enforcing the order. Are you going to be citing and arresting people for spending Thanksgiving with their loved ones, in their own

homes? The short answer to that question is no. When this pandem-

ic started in early 2020, as your sheriff I took the position that the Sheriff's Office would be educating the public on safety measures, recommendations and guidelines. I said at the time we would not be the primary enforcers of the Governor's executive orders. The Governor has the Oregon State Police who work directly for her. In addition, the Governor exercises direct control of OSHA for work-place Governor Kate Brown. violations and agencies like OLCC that regulate alcohol use in businesses A message from Mor- and restaurants etc., along with other state entities that are controlled by the governor's office.

We have not engaged in on COVID-19 measures or orders sent down from Governor Brown and we will not start now. If citizens or businesses refuse to follow the safety recommendations, they could face OSHA or OLCC. They will County Sheriff's Office.

As a county we have worked through the state of emergencies, executive orders, shutdowns, restrictions, health guidelines and safety recommendations. We have been successful by working together as a community of family and

-See MATLACK/PAGE TWO

and across our beautiful state, we would ask that the governor and governor's office participate in these meetings and work with us, assess the proposals and plans we put forward, and consider the options we will be recommending for your consideration and approval. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

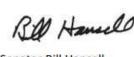
The letter is signed by Sen. Lynn Findley, Sen. Bill Hansell, Rep. Mark Owens, Sen. Kim Thatcher, Sen. Fred Girod, Sen. Brian Boquist, Sen. Chuck Thomsen, Rep. Greg Barreto, Rep. Racquel Moore-Green, Rep. Shelly Boshart-Davis, Rep. Mike Nearman, Rep. Bill Post, Rep. Rick Lewis, Rep. Carl Wilson, Rep-Elect Lily Morgan, We have a simple ask. Rep.-Elect Bobby Levy,

er a more realistic approach As the leaders chosen by county commissioners from and set a course of action Oregonians to represent Baker, Crook, Deschutes, their advocates, throughout Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Polk, Umatilla. Union and Wallowa counties. Local elected officials signing the letter were:



Morrow County Commissioner

Morrow County Commissioner



GOING ON NOW!

Senator Bill Hansell Senate District 29

G-T closed for Thanksgiving

The Heppner Gazette-Times will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday and Friday, November 26 and 27. Normal business hours will resume Monday, November

The Gazette-Times wishes everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving weekend.



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