

Second Amendment advocates launch initiative petition

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

The Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance movement has come to Umatilla County.

Gun rights advocates are collecting signatures to get an initiative on the November ballot that would restrict Umatilla County from using any resources to enforce state or federal laws that will “infringe on the right of the People to keep and bear arms.” The initiative designates the county sheriff as the authority to decide which state or federal laws meet the definition of unconstitutionally infringing on those rights.

Umatilla County’s chief petitioners are Jesse Bonifer of Athena and Kevin Pettey of Hermiston, but Bonifer said similar efforts to pass an ordinance with matching language are taking place in counties around the state. Four — Wallowa, Coos, Curry and Wheeler counties — already have passed a Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance through their county board of commissioners or, in Coos County’s case, via ballot initiative.

“This is a firewall for anyone coming into Umatilla County to take our guns,” Bonifer said.

The ballot initiative — gathering signatures under the official title “Umatilla County Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance” — is a response to statewide initiatives that would restrict firearm ownership, Bonifer said. He referenced current efforts to gather signatures for IP 43, which aims to ban certain guns defined by the measure as “assault weap-



HH FILE PHOTO

“TRUMP” and “MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN” are engraved on a gun grip at the Crosshair Customs booth on March 10, 2018 at the Pendleton Gun Show at the Pendleton Convention Center. A group will try to collect enough signatures to get a Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance on the ballot in Umatilla County, which would direct county government to not spend county resources enforcing any gun ownership laws the county sheriff deems unconstitutional.

ons” and magazines holding more than 10 rounds, and said people in rural Oregon were tired of people in Portland or Salem trying to take away their constitutional rights.

“We should be able to pack anything, any time or own any type of weapon,” he said.

The language of the ordinance cites several parts of the U.S. Constitution, including the well-known Second Amendment and the Ninth Amendment, which states that certain rights in the Constitution should not be used to deny other rights

not specifically listed. It then states that the “Umatilla County Government shall not authorize or appropriate governmental funds, resources, employees, agencies, contractors, buildings, detention centers or offices for the purpose of enforcing any element of such acts, laws, orders, mandates, rules or regulations that infringe on the right of the People to keep and bear arms” and that it is the duty of the Umatilla County Sheriff to determine whether any laws relating to firearms, ammunition or accessories were enforceable in their jurisdiction.



CHRISTOPHER OERTELL/PAMPLIN MEDIA GROUP

A group will try to collect enough signatures to get a Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance on the ballot in Umatilla County, which would direct county government to not spend county resources enforcing any gun ownership laws the county sheriff deems unconstitutional.

The Umatilla County initiative is matched by identical initiatives for other counties, in part of a movement coordinated by Rob Taylor of Coos County.

Since the gun rights/gun control battle has reached a fever pitch in recent months, Taylor said he has gotten a flood of calls from people in many counties asking for help in passing their own Second Amendment Preservation Ordinance. He said so far this year people in 18 counties have submitted paperwork to their county elections office and have been cleared to start gathering signatures in 12, including Umatilla County, with legal help from the Committee to Preserve the Second Amendment, of which Taylor is chair.

“I didn’t realize how far it would go,” he said.

Opponents of such initiatives question the legality of a county ordinance to supersede state and federal law, but Taylor said it doesn’t overrule that law so much as defunds it and de-prioritizes

enforcement. Sheriffs make decisions all the time about what to prioritize, he said.

“This really isn’t giving them any authority, it’s just using the discretionary authority they already have,” he said.

In fact, Taylor said language in the initiative mirrors language in Oregon’s “sanctuary state” law direct-

ing that state and local law enforcement resources and personnel should not be used to enforce federal immigration laws.

“They’re already doing it,” he said. “Why not do it for guns, if they can do it for illegal immigrants?”

He also pointed to legalization of marijuana, which law enforcement is not arresting people for use of despite it still being illegal on a federal level.

In Umatilla County, Bonifer said people are collecting signatures at various local gun shops, including Garner’s Sporting Goods and Blagg Rifles in Pendleton and Columbia Outdoors and Smitty’s Outpost in Hermiston, and at Advanced Tarps and Covers in Athena. He said they need 1,200 registered Umatilla County voters’ signatures and have to turn them in by Aug. 6 to get them on the November ballot.

“The people of Oregon are finally standing up and speaking,” he said.

Bounds headed for Senate confirmation vote

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston native Ryan Bounds is headed to the Senate floor for confirmation after the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 11 to 10 on Thursday to forward his nomination for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.



Bounds

Bounds’ judicial nomination was thrust into the spotlight after liberal activists Alliance for Justice publicized four op-eds Bounds wrote for the *Stanford Review* during college, which spoke mockingly of ethnically based student clubs and “sensitivity” and criticized universities for using a lower standard of proof than “beyond a reasonable doubt” when taking action against students accused of sexual assault.

Bounds has since denounced those writings, calling them tone-deaf “college kid” opinions that “do not reflect the views I have hewn to as a lawyer and, frankly, as a grown-up.”

But after the op-eds came to light Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley declined to issue a “blue slip” of support, which is customarily given by a nominee’s home state senators before the Senate Judiciary Committee moves forward. Democrats have criticized the committee for going ahead with the nomination process without the blue slips, and last month Wyden on the Senate floor called ignoring the advice and consent of home state senators a “dangerous mistake.”

“What is clear to me is that the majority is now

chipping away at a century of bipartisan tradition that has protected the interests of those in our home state and served as a check on the power of the executive,” he said.

Committee Chair Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, addressed those concerns at Thursday morning’s vote, according to the video recording of the proceedings, stating that it was his policy that negative or unreturned blue slips should not necessarily block a nominee from having a hearing, and pointing out that a screening committee convened by Wyden and Merkley had recommended Bounds as a nominee in the first place. He said that during the hearing Bounds had been able to answer questions about his college writings and “clarify the confusion” about why he had not previously disclosed them (Bounds testified that

staff from Wyden’s office had only asked for materials going back to law school).

“We shouldn’t assume that views expressed years ago during college and law school represent the nominee today, especially when the nominees tell us that they don’t. Let’s let all 100 senators — not just two — decide whether Mr. Bounds deserves to be confirmed,” he said.

Bounds graduated from Hermiston High School, then received an undergraduate degree from Stanford in 1995 and his law degree from Yale. He has practiced commercial law in Portland, was a federal prosecutor for the District of Columbia and is currently an assistant U.S. attorney in Oregon.

If the Senate approves his nomination he will have a lifetime appointment as a judge on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.



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