

# **GUEST OPINIONS “RELATED” TO PRIMARY PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES (PSS) TAX MEASURES: 2012 - 2016**

**On Josephine County’s Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) Problem/Issue  
Published In *The Grants Pass Daily Courier*, Grants Pass, Oregon**

## **HARD COPY ARCHIVES**

**Compiled by Mike Walker & Jon Whalen, Members  
Hugo JS&PSS Exploratory Committee  
Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society**

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

**January 19, 2016**

As of November 7, 2015, the Committee had web published 15 guest opinions on the primary PSS tax measures from 2012 - 2015 (Appendix A)

### **Guest Opinions On Primary PSS Tax Measures: 2012 - 2015**

- 2015 Guest Opinions On Grants Pass, Oregon City Sales Tax (Measure 17-67)
- 2015 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy (Measure 17-66)
- 2014 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy (Measure 17-59)
- 2013 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy (Measure 17-49)
- 2012 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy (Measure 17-43)

On January 22, 2016, the Committee had web published 17 additional guest opinions related in some way to the primary tax measures from 2012 - January 2016.

### **Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures: 2012 - 2016**

- 2016 Jon Whalen & Mike Walker. *Public Safety Study Design Idea*
- 2015 Greg Walden. *Forestry bill deserving of support*
- 2014 David Jones. TGPDC. *Frivolous lawsuits hurt timber communities*
- 2014 John Chambers. *Making marijuana more accessible will hurt young people, increase the addition rate – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*
- 2014 Anthony Johnson. *Measure is most responsible legislation plan ever presented to Oregon voters – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*
- 2014 Robert Hirning. *Wildfires an issue for national defense*
- 2014 Jonathan Spero. *Health risks of GMO crops still unknown - The GMO Debate*
- 2014 Barry Bushue. *Ban brings costly, unintended consequences - The GMO Debate*
- 2014 Brady Adams. *Libraries a big part of a vital community*
- 2013 Simon Hare. *Restore balance to timber approach*
- 2013 Jack Shipley. *O&C counties need to pay own share*
- 2013 Dan Fowler. *Levy opponents put out misinformation*

- 2013 Jim Boston. *Back GP's top-notch police, firemen*
- 2013 Amy Wels. *Levy's failure uproots another family*
- 2013 Jennifer Sherman Roberts. *You determine future of library, JoCo*
- 2013 Connie Roach. *Assessor Office is fiscally responsible*
- 2012. Jack Alan Brown Jr. *Suggested charter not crazy or illegal*

As applicable to all *Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015* research of the Committee, this research is an on-going work in progress.

*Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015*

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

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## Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures: 2012 - 2016

### 2016

Jan. 18, 2016. Jon Whalen & Mike Walker. *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Public Safety Study Design Idea*

### 2015

August 25, 2015. Greg Walden, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Forestry bill deserving of support*

### 2014

Nov. 11, 2014 David Jones, *GUEST OPINION*, p 4A, TGPDC. *Frivolous lawsuits hurt timber communities*

Sept. 14, 2014 John Chambers, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Making marijuana more accessible will hurt young people, increase the addiction rate – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*

Sept. 14, 2014 Anthony Johnson, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Measure is most responsible legislation plan ever presented to Oregon voters – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*

Sept. 2, 2014 Robert Hirning, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Wildfires an issue for national defense*

Mar. 25, 2014. Jonathan Spero, *GUEST OPINION*, p 4A, TGPDC. *Health risks of GMO crops still unknown - The GMO Debate*

Mar. 25, 2014. Barry Bushue, *GUEST OPINION*, p 4A, TGPDC. *Ban brings costly, unintended consequences - The GMO Debate*

Jan. 28, 2014. Brady Adams, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Libraries a big part of a vital community*

### 2013

Nov. 15, 2013. Simon Hare, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Restore balance to timber approach*

Oct. 30, 2013. Jack Shipley, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *O&C counties need to pay own share*

Oct. 24, 2013. Dan Fowler, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Levy opponents put out misinformation*

Oct. 16, 2013. Jim Boston, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Back GP's top-notch police, firemen*

July 5, 2013. Amy Wels, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC: *Levy's failure uproots another family*

Jun. 5, 2013. By Jennifer Sherman Roberts for the Daily Courier, TGPDC, *GUEST OPINION: You determine future of library, JoCo*

May 10, 2013. By Connie Roach for the Daily Courier, *GUEST OPINION: Assessor Office is fiscally responsible*

### 2012

Apr. 11, 2012. By Jack Alan Brown Jr., for the TGPDC, Guest Opinion. *Suggested charter not crazy or illegal*

## 2016 Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

2016

**Jan. 18, 2016.** Jon Whalen & Mike Walker. *GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. Public Safety Study Design Idea* - As submitted to The Grants Pass Daily Courier on January 18, 2016.

What is Josephine County’s (JO CO’s) Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) Problem/Issue (i.e., PSS issue)? After five PSS tax proposals in four years, the public could be excused if it feels exhausted.

The Hugo JS&PSS Exploratory Committee was established in 2013 to research the question, *What can we do to shed some light on the PSS issue?* In 2015 it decided to document “listening” which could be challenged as non-scientific in the sense of the database not being a random sample public opinion survey with a targeted population; this listening database was simply what fellow citizens wrote. The Committee called this project, *Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015*, or the public safety *Study Design* idea.

What is the PSS problem? Or, is there a problem, and, either way, judged by what standards and criteria? A scientific study to determine whether JO CO is providing a *minimally adequate level of public safety services* (MALPSS) would help answer the question, *“Is there a problem.”* Answering this question is not about implementing the 2013 House Bill 3453 by turning over PSS to the State. It is about the MALPSS concept as a sound educational analysis tool to assist understanding in a scientific documented way . . . versus relying on professional opinions.

What are the benefits of an educational MALPSS analysis? Under the legal MALPSS process, the CO must first provide to the Governor, a request for a proclamation of a public safety fiscal emergency in a written MALPSS declaration, because an analysis of the CO’s fiscal conditions compromises its ability to provide a MALPSS. Next, the State’s independent MALPSS analysis conclusion must agree with the CO. Finally, an intergovernmental agreement must be entered into that specifies the PSS activities to be performed by the State, and by what means.

From an educational point of view, the potential CO advisory question to the voters would have significant value for an informed public, if citizens understood the CO’s proposed MALPSS declaration/analysis before the advisory question was put to a vote. For example, how do the different PSS elements work together as a system? Otherwise, in the Committee’s opinion, the people will not really understand some significant points on what they are voting for, except yes or no, nor whether there was a PSS problem, or not, and by what standards.

JO CO’s Management Team’s August 19, 2014 recommended strategy elements to identify mandated and elective PSS would be foundational in developing an educational MALPSS analysis. A framework of understanding is significant in realizing where the CO’s PSS program stands in the scheme of things. Are we above an emergency level of PSS, or below? Are the

PSS adequate, or less than adequate? And, just as important, what are the facts supporting the adequacy determination, beyond the limbo of historical conditions, beliefs, and opinions?

Why support the *Study Design* idea and its major product, an independent, philanthropic-funded, socio-economic, impact *Study*, that purports to represent the citizens in addressing the PSS issue? The Committee has three responses.

Response 1: A key need is how to demonstrate trust and enhance communication between neighbors with different values, and government. *Study Design* proposes a *Study* based on formal vetted inventories and informed decision-making through a unique decision process, *where the citizens identify the problems and potential solutions, and are the decision-makers.*

A scientific analysis of the public's written opinion database is underway by Nathan Davis, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate student at Oregon State University, in the School of Public Policy which is part of the Rural Studies Program. His Master's of Public Policy (MPP) will research what the citizens think about public safety, by relying on citizens to identify problems, and formulate their own goals and solutions for the future (e.g., history of voting, writing letters-to-the-editor (LTTE) and guest opinions in *The Grants Pass Daily Courier*, writing arguments in voters' pamphlets, etc.). LTTE are not intended to be representative measures of public opinion; rather, they are measures representing public opinion. The MPP is scheduled for completion the Spring of 2016.

Response 2: Vetted *Study* Baseline Facts/Inventories. Understanding is made more difficult with all those noisy facts when truth isn't always something as clear and unquestionable as desired. It is believed that a step in the right direction is for different folks, that don't trust each other to share vetted, or checked, information. This is one of the purposes – for citizens to speak a common language, to solve problems, to minimize spending valuable time and energy discussing potential conflicting facts. For that purpose, a web page of “*listening*” to baseline information, vetted facts, and disputed facts, has been started for consideration by the public and in *Study*: over 800 letters-to-the-editor; 10 guest opinions, over 650 media articles, 5 voters pamphlets, and several dozen studies and other information publications (e.g., declining federal payments to counties, demographic & population, health, reports of criminal offenses and arrests, budget, MALPSS, fiscal indicators, local crime information, poverty, etc.).

Response 3: Key Outcomes Of *Study Design/Study*. It is difficult when citizens are polarized over the PSS issue and have not yet found a consensus definition of either the public safety problem, or the solution; and its compelling that a significant number of city and county citizens fear for their family's and community's safety because of a decreased number of jail beds, lack of 911 call responses, rural patrol coverage, etc. How will *Study Design* change the way people live? The goal is all about the idea of slow long-range incremental changes, and the confidence that there will be an increase in the number of informed and trusting citizens believing in their future starting to show between 2016 - 2026 (i.e., *More People* know they are being listened to, are better informed, trust the vetted baseline facts/inventories, have a consensus of the problem and potential solutions, etc.).

## 2015 Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

August 25, 2015. **Greg Walden, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Forestry bill deserving of support***

### GREG WALDEN

Around Oregon and throughout the West, another fire season is well underway. Overstocked, diseased, and bug-infested forests are at risk of the massive and catastrophic wildfires that clog our air with smoke and threaten our streams. All this while our mills are starving for a reliable supply of timber and people need jobs. It's clear the status quo isn't working for our forests, our communities, or our environment. We can do better.

The U.S. House of Representatives has approved a bipartisan bill — the Resilient Federal Forests Act— that would help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires and bring active management back to our federal forests. Through active management, we can clean up our forests, prevent these unnaturally large fires, protect our air, and put people back to work in our forested communities.

Our bill puts into place much needed reforms to federal forest policy. For example, the bill repeals the arbitrary and outdated prohibition on harvesting trees over 21 inches in diameter on national forests in eastern Oregon. "Temporarily" put in place in 1997, this rule still hasn't been removed 20 years later. This flawed, one-size-fits-all rule illustrates just how broken federal forest management has become. The restriction greatly limits forest managers' ability to address site specific needs of the forest on the ground and has only served to further tie up projects in endless appeals and litigation.

Our plan also gives the Forest Service greater flexibility to move quickly on projects to reduce the threat of fire around our rural communities, streamlining projects developed through local counties' community wildfire protection plans.

Right now, after a fire, the Forest Service is able to reforest less than 3 percent of areas burned. This plan would accelerate the removal of timber after a fire (to help pay for replanting), and requires a large percentage of the area impacted be reforested within five years. Just like we do after other natural disasters, we ought to clean up and rebuild after wildfires. As we saw earlier this summer on the Buckskin Fire in Southern Oregon, failing to clean up only leads to future fires in old burn scars full of fallen trees and snag that prove difficult and too dangerous for firefighters.

This bill also cuts costs and streamlines rules for timber production on legislation pertaining to Oregon's unique O&C Lands. The Bureau of Land Management recently unveiled new management plans for these lands that would fall short of the needs of local communities for a reliable supply of timber to fund essential local services like schools, roads, and law enforcement. The bill tells the BLM to go back to the drawing board, and propose new plans to

actually provide sustainable timber production for Oregon's rural communities as required by law.

Finally, the endless cycle of "fire borrowing" — forcing the federal government to use wildfire prevention funds to pay for fighting fire — is ended under this bill. It fixes how we pay to fight fire by allowing the Forest Service to apply for FEMA disaster funds to pay for firefighting. This treats wildfire as the natural disasters they are, similar to hurricanes or tornados.

The Resilient Federal Forests Act will improve the health of our forests and our rural economies. During the last session of Congress, the House twice passed bipartisan legislation I worked on to reform federal forest policy. The Senate failed to take up forestry legislation. However, with new leadership in that body I'm hopeful that the Senate will take meaningful action on forestry legislation. We cannot let this opportunity pass us by again. Our forested communities have already waited too long. Now is the time to act.

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Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central, and eastern Oregon, including the Grants Pass area of Josephine County.

## 2014 Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

- Nov. 11, 2014 David Jones, GUEST OPINION, p 4A, TGPDC. *Frivolous lawsuits hurt timber communities*
- Sept. 14, 2014 John Chambers, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Making marijuana more accessible will hurt young people, increase the addiction rate – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*
- Sept. 14, 2014 Anthony Johnson, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Measure is most responsible legislation plan ever presented to Oregon voters – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91*
- Sept. 2, 2014 Robert Hirling, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Wildfires an issue for national defense*
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### DAVID JONES

Local county budgets lack sufficient funds for critical programs like law enforcement, libraries, county Extension services and social programs. Ballot measures increasing taxes were recently approved in Jackson County to keep some of these programs afloat. However, such funding needs will continue to increase.

Is the solution to keep raising taxes? Not necessarily. Some taxpayers either are unaware of or choose to ignore another key funding source: the O&C Act of 1937, which is still in effect. This unique act, involving only specific forested federal land in western Oregon, differs from other federal national forest management legislation. It requires that O&C timberland be managed for permanent forest production, with timber harvested in conformity with the principal of sustained yield for the purpose of providing a permanent source of timber, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities. It further requires that not less than 500 million board feet of timber volume, or not less than the annual sustained yield capacity, shall be sold annually.

Meeting these requirements would provide a critically required reliable flow of timber volume to industries, sustainable family-wage jobs, healthy forests and much needed county revenues. The Northwest Forest Plan was supposed to address these mandates but has failed miserably.

Federal land management agencies have put tremendous efforts into trying to meet these legal mandates, but have been repeatedly stopped by frivolous lawsuits by environmental activists who oppose timber harvesting. Such lawsuits cost the activists virtually nothing to file, and the litigants have virtually no financial obligation. You and I as taxpayers pay for resulting court costs. In some cases, activists use such lawsuits for financing their organizations. Environmental activists are attempting to force federal agencies to develop "idealistic old growth forests" — forests which mother nature will not allow to reach fruition. Fact: Forests in southwestern Oregon experience about 300 fires a year. Fortunately, most of these fires are small and are extinguished quickly. Unfortunately, some become catastrophic and damage thousands of acres of timberland and structures, including homes, plus create unhealthy air quality and degrading water quality from runoff.

Every year the annual volume growth and number of trees continues to significantly outpace what is harvested. Trees transpire (suck up and exhale) billions of gallons of water every day which is extremely important with drought conditions increasing. Jamie Workman, of the Environmental Defense Fund, and Helen Poulos, a fire ecologist at Wesleyan University, estimated that excess trees in the 7.5 million acre Sierra Nevada conifer forest are responsible for the loss of 15 million gallons per day or 17 million acre-feet of water per year.

Due to the frequency of fires, leaving more volume in the forests will contribute to an increasing number of fires and environmental and economic devastation. Older trees, including old-growth will die from fires — either burning up in the fires themselves or dying from damage sustained from the fires. Such fires will continue to degrade air and water quality, and adversely affect recreation and tourism. Nobody wants to visit areas of poor air and water quality or view burned forest areas. Unfortunately whenever attempts are made to salvage severely burned timberlands to remove a useable resource and thereby create jobs, more frivolous lawsuits are filed delaying or stopping salvage action until remaining burned trees ruin. This also creates another major problem: dangerous standing snags which will increase the fuel load for future fires and causing them to burn hotter. It also creates a major safety hazard, dangerous to anyone hiking such areas or attempting to enter these areas for future management actions including the replanting of trees.

You can support continued tax increases to raise much needed county revenue. If you don't want continued tax increases, contact all of your Oregon congressional representatives and urge them to introduce and help enact legislation which would stop frivolous lawsuits by special interests by requiring them to have a financial stake and responsibility, such as requiring a monetary security bond as part of lawsuits and resulting costs. Otherwise our essential and renewable forest resources and their many uses will continue to be destroyed by catastrophic forest fires and continue to adversely affect our air and water quality, recreational use and tourism.

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David Jones is a 34-year veteran of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, having worked in several locations throughout the West and in Washington, D.C. He retired after serving 12 years as the BLM's Medford District Manager.

**Sept. 14, 2014**     **John Chambers, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Making marijuana more accessible will hurt young people, increase the addiction rate – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91***

## **JOHN CHAMBERS**

“Marijuana should be regulated like alcohol” is the battle-cry for the backers of Oregon’s Measure 91, the “Control, Regulation, and Taxation of Marijuana and Industrial Hemp Act of 2014.”

Measure 91, similar to the Colorado Marijuana Act of 2012, touts that it will eliminate the problems of prohibition by establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework that prevents innocent citizens from being imprisoned for marijuana use, prevents the distribution of marijuana to children, eliminates the black market, and stops the diversion of marijuana from Oregon to other states.

First, alcohol, regulated alcohol mind you, is the top drug of choice by those high school kids who do drugs (most don’t). Marijuana is a distant second. Colorado has seen an increase in high school students using marijuana with a 32 percent increase in drug-related suspensions. Young people think that because it is legal, it is safe. Do we want really more children smoking dope?

Second, Coloradans were promised \$132 million annual income from marijuana taxes. As of June 30, 2014, half the year gone, revenue has been only \$15 million and regulatory costs have come out of the state’s General Fund. According to Barbara Brohl of the Colorado Department of Revenue, regarding the state’s earlier medical marijuana regulatory scheme, “The funding model just didn’t work, and as a result, the division wasn’t able to perform the regulatory and oversight functions it was created to do.” The cost of regulation has been unexpectedly high but the state has not been able to regulate it as promised. Individual cities that have taxed it are also finding they cannot control it, don’t know how many providers are operating, and are collecting precious little in taxes.

The “comprehensive regulatory framework” envisioned in Oregon’s Measure 91 is similar to Colorado’s. The levels of allowed pot are similar: less home possession, more edibles, but fewer plants. Measure 91’s fees and taxes are lower.

Third, marijuana advocates cite the “problems of prohibition” as (a) thousands of otherwise innocent citizens imprisoned for merely wanting to get high on marijuana, and (b) the fact that prohibition has failed. The truth of “(a)” is that virtually all those in prison on “drug charges” are incarcerated for serious felonies — burglary, assault, etc. — they committed while they were high on marijuana. Oregon does not put people in prison for smoking a joint. The failure of “(b)” is that yes, dope is more prevalent, but murders still happen, too. Do we throw up our hands in despair and allow mass murders because “they are going to do it anyway?”

Prohibitions will continue even if Measure 91 is approved. Prohibitions regarding children, diversion to other states, and smoking in public. While the Colorado law prohibits public

smoking of dope, public displays are omnipresent and virtually unenforceable. But if Coloradans got serious about their law, citizens could conceivably be jailed for smoking a joint. And what happens when it is taxed and your marijuana doesn't have the tax stamp on it?

Fourth, Measure 91, like the Colorado act and every act in every state, recognizes that children should not be allowed this drug, just like alcohol. In Colorado, children are picking up dope cookies and being rushed to the hospital. Marijuana-related exposures for children 5 and under, on average, have increased by 268 percent from 2006-09 to 2010-13. Even veterinarians have noticed a significant rise in the number of pets brought in for marijuana overdoses. It is well-known that the more accessible a drug is the more likely kids will be tempted to try it. Fifth, elimination of the black market is another promise Measure 91 cannot keep. Colorado has a thriving market of those who want to avoid the tax. Colorado marijuana, since the advent of medical marijuana in 2008, captured in other states has nearly doubled. Weed from Oregon has been found as far away as Florida. Do we really think that by making pot more accessible, Oregon weed will become pristine?

The real question is: Do Oregon voters want to make pot more accessible and under the guise of regulating it like alcohol? If so, we can expect a rise in youth use and addiction rates. Legalizing a drug makes it more accessible and increases new markets for consumption. It has happened in Colorado.

Colorado's social experiment with pot is not for Oregon. Vote NO on Measure 91.

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John Chambers is a community volunteer, a member of the Substance Abuse Community Action Team, and coordinates the Truth about Drugs campaign for Josephine County. His opinion is solely his own.

**Sept. 14, 2014**     **Anthony Johnson, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Measure is most responsible legalization plan ever presented to Oregon voters – Oregon Legalized Marijuana Initiative Measure 91***

## **ANTHONY JOHNSON**

Treating marijuana use as a crime has failed. Last year, more than 11,000 adults were arrested or cited for marijuana use in Oregon, according to the Oregon State Police. One in every 14 arrests in Oregon is for small marijuana offenses; that's 7 percent of all arrests in the state. It is distracting police and sheriffs from taking on violent crimes, and it perpetuates a system run by organized gangsters and cartels.

One of the best ways to understand how the mechanics of Measure 91 work is to compare the current system of prohibition to a regulated system we could have by passing this measure.

Right now, marijuana is sold in back alleys and on playing fields. The sellers — drug dealers — don't ask for ID, aren't held accountable when they sell to young people, don't provide any drug prevention or education programs. Nobody really knows what they're getting because the product is untested, unlabeled and unregulated, while gangs and cartels turn a tax-free profit.

Under the regulated system of Measure 91, marijuana would be sold at licensed, audited, inspected, properly-zoned facilities that are strictly regulated and away from schools. The sellers would be licensed salespeople who have passed background checks, who ask for ID, and who would be held accountable in sting operations to make sure they don't sell to youths.

Only adults 21 and older could buy and possess marijuana. The product would be tested, and packaged in labelled, child-proof containers. Money from purchases would go to legitimate businesses and to taxes used for essential public services.

Under Measure 91, the new revenue from taxes will go to schools, state and local police, mental health and addiction services, drug treatment and drug prevention programs. This revenue will be distributed through a special account that, by law, must go to these programs. There is not one vital public resource on that list that doesn't need more support. The Josephine County Sheriff's office doesn't have enough deputies to answer all the calls to 911, especially those late at night. Freeing up law enforcement from chasing minor marijuana offenses and handing over new money for the budget is a perfect fit for public safety. Federal money for schools is coming up short; a sustainable, local industry that provides support through tax revenue can help make some of that up.

When it comes to regulating, taxing and legalizing marijuana, Oregon has the benefit of going third. We've already learned a lot from Washington and Colorado's legalization of marijuana. Measure 91 is designed to take advantage of lessons learned from Washington and Colorado's laws and improve upon them. And Measure 91 has been designed with built-in flexibility to continue adjusting the law in the future if needed. By the time the first licensed storefronts open in Oregon in 2016, there will be nearly a decade of combined experience and data to draw from

in the three states. The longer we wait, the more lives are ruined, the budgets for schools and sheriffs continue to come up short, and drug cartels gain a stronger foothold in Southern Oregon's wilderness land.

To quote former Oregon Supreme Court Justice William Riggs, "I think it's inevitable that marijuana is coming to Oregon in one form or another, and I hope it comes in the form of a good bill like this one. If we are going to have marijuana in Oregon, this is the way to do it."

Measure 91 is comprehensive — more than 35 pages long — and writing it was a huge project. We went through more than 50 drafts. We got input and help from parents, law enforcement, tax experts, legislative lawyers, drug treatment specialists, parents, Democrats, Republicans, independents, the governor's office and many more.

We studied what worked in other states, and we based the current bill on one that's already in effect in Oregon — the laws used to control beer, wine and liquor — because we wanted to use existing state infrastructure and not create a new agency. Yet, under Measure 91 marijuana is even more strictly regulated than alcohol, including no public use, and limits on the amount one can buy or have on them at any given time.

It is inevitable that marijuana will be legalized — and if it's going to happen, we need the right restrictions put into place. Measure 91 controls marijuana from seed to sale; penalizes access by minors; keeps drug-free workplace rules, and prevents public use.

Measure 91 is by far the most restrictive and responsible plan for regulation, taxation and legalization of marijuana ever put before Oregon voters. Please read it yourself at [www.voteyeson91.com](http://www.voteyeson91.com).

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Anthony Johnson is the chief petitioner and a co-author of Measure 91.

Sept. 2, 2014      **Robert Hirning, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Wildfires an issue for national defense***

## **ROBERT HIRNING**

Rising numbers of intense wildfires during the past decade have triggered a national debate over the strategy to be used in fighting these fires, particularly in the West. We hear that regular low-intensity ground fires historically kept forests healthy and that years of suppressing them led to buildups of understory fuels.

We hear that it is not fair to the majority of taxpayers to have to pay for defending rural communities that have allowed people to live in the "wildland/urban interface." Smokey the Bear says, "Only you can prevent forest fires," but now adds, "and if you people choose to live there, it's your own fault when your house catches fire." Americans are being told that rural residents should be responsible for taking care of their own wildfire problems.

Since when do people affected by natural disasters have to pay for their own rebuilding? Did New Orleans have to bear the cost of Katrina? Did New Jersey and New York have to cover the cost of Hurricane Sandy? In our country, we agree to share the cost of defending our nation against enemies domestic and foreign. I use the word enemies because — unlike disasters such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes and hurricanes — wildfires can be fought.

We used to be very effective in stopping fires early. In the 1970s, we had commanding federal forces stationed right here in the valley: the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, a helicopter crew based at the station, a 40-person suppression crew with 20 people standing by and other personnel available on-call.

Mountaintop towers on Sanger, Waldo, Serpentine, Bolan, and Pearsoll Peak were all manned lookouts. There were many fires, but none that got away and we took pride in that. More than 40 years later, there is hardly a brush truck in the district. Crews dispatched from Grants Pass need an extra hour to get to a fire. For example, one lone Forest Service rig showed up at the Four Corners fire, and only after state and local crews had already set up a command post and gone to work. This fire was not on federal land, but when I worked on initial attack 40 years ago, we cut line anywhere under mutual-aid agreements.

Now the burden is on state and local forces, which have been beefed up and are doing a good job. Anyone who witnessed the Four Corners Fire in 2013 or the Reeves Creek Fire in 2014 knows what can be done with a well-equipped, dedicated firefighting force. We pay state and local taxes and certainly get excellent protection from these agencies. However most of the land in the West is federal and that is where the catastrophic fires have raged in recent decades.

The U.S. Forest Service doesn't make money anymore selling timber, and a stingy, urban-centered Congress refuses to appropriate adequate funds. Fire crews have been largely privatized through contracts, important aircraft bases have been regionalized and smaller ones

closed. The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was closed in 1981 to save \$45,000 annually, yet the 2002 Biscuit Fire cost nearly \$500,000.

Where would the money come from to pay for federal aircraft, jumpers and ground troops at 1970s levels? Much of it should come from the bloated defense budget. Unlike other natural disasters, wildfires are fought like military campaigns.

The defense budget includes staggering expenditures for unnecessary military hardware. The Pentagon plans to buy 2,443 F-35 aircraft at a projected cost of \$400 billion. This is several times the cost of all wildfire fighting costs combined for the next generation.

Instead, we should build a fleet of hundreds of aircraft specifically designed for wildfire fighting, capable of short-runway take-off, and station them at airports around the West. Sure it will cost money, but it will create just as many jobs as wasteful military spending. Win-win!

The suggestion that rural folks in wildfire-prone areas should pay for their development policies in rural areas is not only coming from anti-expenditure Tea Party types, it's coming from progressives, too.

Rachel Cleetus, an economist with the Union of Concerned Scientists writes, "A lot of the firefighting money is coming from federal sources like the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service, whereas a lot of decisions around development are being made at the local level ... where the folks who make those decisions are not paying the firefighting cost."

She could not be more wrong. We do pay for state and local firefighting costs through taxes, and if a fire starts on federal land it is their obligation to put it out. Remember the first smokejumpers were 555th Airborne soldiers and only after World War II became a civilian Forest Service crew. Shouldn't wildfire fighting again be part of our national defense policy?

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Cave Junction area resident Robert Hirning is a former Forest Service employee and firefighter at the Illinois Valley Ranger District.

**Mar. 25, 2014. Jonathan Spero, GUEST OPINION, p 4A, TGPDC. *Health risks of GMO crops still unknown - The GMO Debate***

## **JONATHAN SPERO**

Some myths about GMOs, and a silver lining.

First: The myth of "proven safe." Studies of GMO foods and feeds from around the world show that questions of risk to health have not been resolved. Here in the United States we are told that GMOs are known to be safe. Studies from elsewhere are mixed and seem to tell a different story.

A study in France showed that Bt toxin kills human kidney cells. A study in Egypt found abnormalities in livers, kidneys and spleens of rats fed on Bt corn. A study in Norway found high levels of glyphosate (Roundup herbicide) and its breakdown products in GMO soy. Glyphosate is actually taken up by and into the plant and can remain in the food. A study in Brazil found 32 differently expressed proteins between Mon 810 (GMO) corn and equivalent non-GMO corn.

Recently, scientists have discovered that there is a second code "hidden" in the DNA. These pieces of DNA that are moved between species contain more than one set of genetic instructions, and at least one of these sets is new to science. This simply points out how little we actually know.

Second: The myth of "substantial equivalence." Regulatory agencies in the United States base their GMO food safety testing requirements on what is called "substantial equivalence." The concept is that if a new food is substantially the same as an already existing food, it can be treated the same way as the existing food with respect to safety testing. This designation has allowed GMOs to bypass the more thorough testing required of "new" foods.

Several studies are finding differences between GMO crops and their non-GMO counterparts. These differences may have impact on human and animal health. Current U.S. testing requirements are not adequate to evaluate the safety issues inherent in genetic modification. Nations that require more stringent testing, and tests not funded by the patent holder who stands to benefit, do not seem to be moving toward approving GMOs.

Genetic engineering is a process, not a product. Some GMOs may prove to be harmless or beneficial, while others may cause harm. Any food source modified by insertion of unrelated genes needs to be tested as a new food. Genetic modification can cause substantial, unpredictable and uncontrollable changes in the modified plant or animal and its offspring.

I urge everyone to vote in favor of a ban on planting of GMO crops in the Rogue Valley. There are also some myths out there about the impact of a GMO planting ban. First is that it will mean higher taxes. Counties set budgets and priorities and enforcement authorities do what they can with the funds they are given. Nothing in these rules mandates higher taxes.

A second myth is that a ban on GMOs only benefits organic farmers. Passing these measures would mean buyers could have confidence that all Rogue Valley products are GMO-free.

GMOs are not going away. Spraying is often cheaper than cultivating, especially at larger scales. Bigger monocultures are possible with less labor using pesticide tolerant plants. A farmer can farm thousands of acres. GMO farming has been profitable, at least in some crops and in some places.

The Rogue Valley doesn't have farms with thousands of acres. Our valley cannot compete in the market for low price commodities. What we do have is a dedicated core of specialty or organic farmers and smaller farms that are able to produce the highest quality of food, wine, seed and other products

The demand for GMO-free food is not going away. It will be a long time before we know which, if any, genetic modifications are of real value and which carry risk or cause harm. In the meantime, the Rogue Valley can provide quality GMO-free products to those who want them. A premium price for Rogue Valley products would be the silver lining of the GMO cloud.

New GMO plant types are being released each year. Soon, restricting them from our valley will be impossible. Now is the time to say "not here" to GMO crops.

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Jonathan Spero grows vegetable seed in the Applegate Valley.

**Mar. 25, 2014. Barry Bushue, GUEST OPINION, p 4A, TGPDC. *Ban brings costly, unintended consequences - The GMO Debate***

## **BARRY BUSHUE**

Josephine County voters will cast ballots in May on an agricultural issue with costly implications for farmers, local taxpayers and everyone who relies on county services.

Measure 17-58 proposes to ban genetically modified crops. In reality, it is an unfunded mandate that diverts scarce county funding for public safety and human services to enforce an unnecessary ban on one method of farming.

The Oregon Farm Bureau is opposed to Measure 17-58 because of this guiding principle: No one should tell a farmer what to grow or how to grow it.

To be clear, if this measure banned organic farming, we would work just as hard to defeat it. To have a thriving agriculture sector and safe and healthy food supply, we must embrace all forms of agriculture and promote a spirit of cooperation and communication among farmers.

We come to these conclusions based on consensus from a full range of voices. The Farm Bureau is a nonprofit organization that works to improve public policy for farm and ranch families. You have to be a farmer or rancher to participate in our policy-making discussions. There are no seats at the table for government officials or other special interest groups or corporations. No organization embodies more breadth of geography, crops produced, or variety of production methods — from biodynamic and organic to the most cutting-edge technology — than the Farm Bureau.

We are the voice of agriculture. The Oregon Farm Bureau, your Josephine County Farm Bureau and other local farm bureaus across the state stand united and against Measure 17-58.

We believe no one is better equipped to decide which method to use on each farm or ranch than the family who does the farming and ranching. But Measure 17-58 takes farm regulation to scary new heights.

It empowers government inspectors to access private property when they suspect non-compliant farm practices. Further, it allows them to remove and destroy crops and impose expensive abatement that could wipe out entire farms.

In neighboring Jackson County where a similar measure is on the ballot, a detailed analysis by the county administrator revealed enforcement of the ordinance would drain \$250,000 from the county's budget in the first year. In Josephine County, budget constraints are so tight that the county doesn't have money for a thorough fiscal impact analysis.

What we do know is that Josephine County can't afford a single cent to be diverted from law enforcement to establish an unnecessary new government function. A recent article in the Oregonian newspaper noted three violent deaths that have gone unsolved in the county because

of lack of criminal investigation resources, and quoted Sheriff Gil Gilbertson: "We're in crisis mode ... Our county has become a magnet for criminal activity." When public safety is already underfunded, Measure 17-58 is the wrong use of dangerously scarce county resources.

The budget implications could be even more severe because the proposed ordinance violates two state laws that protect farmers from government over-reach. Measure 17-58 is in violation of the state's long-respected Right to Farm and Forest law that's been honored since 1993, and it contradicts Senate Bill 863, which was passed by the Legislature last year to protect communities from unfunded mandates just like this one. If Measure 17-58 passes, it would become wrapped up in costly court battles that Josephine County cannot afford.

The budget implications and unintended consequences are practical matters that affect the entire community. But on matters of agriculture, the Farm Bureau is especially concerned. Small and large, organic and conventional, north, west, south, and east, we all believe this measure makes awful public policy. And we urge Josephine County to vote No on Measure 17-58.

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Barry Bushue is president of the Oregon Farm Bureau and runs a family nursery stock and berry operation near Boring, Ore.

**Jan. 28, 2014. Brady Adams, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Libraries a big part of a vital community***

**BRADY ADAMS**

When I was a kid growing up in Oregon, we didn't have much. My family worked hard, and we moved several times, all over the state. Every town we moved to had a library — a safe place for me to go as a kid. Libraries are the great leveler in our society; personal wealth and influence make no difference when you walk through those doors.

Nowadays, libraries offer more than just books. They are community hubs and technology centers. I hear a lot of people talk about how the Internet has replaced libraries. That might be true if you are talking about the libraries of the past — nothing more than a building with books. Our libraries provide technology and Internet access, giving the people of Josephine County access and opportunity to connect with each other, connect with the world, and expand their prospects. And, libraries have librarians to help you use the technology. You may have heard the saying, "The Internet can give you a million answers to your question, but a librarian will give you the right one." Libraries have changed, and I encourage people to visit the local library to see what's really going on.

What about people who don't own a computer or have Internet access? In 2004, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce joined the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to endorse closing the digital divide by providing access to computers and the Internet at local libraries. In Josephine County, that's even more necessary today. According to a recent Pew study I read, about one-third of Americans still do not have access to the Internet. It's probably a higher number in Josephine County due to the lack of Internet providers in rural areas. Even if you can afford it, about 12,000 households in our community cannot receive access. I think about that, and wonder what it would have been like for me as a kid, moving all over and not being able to afford an Internet connection or a computer. Life is different now, and the Internet is essential to our daily lives, to do research, connect with family, learn new skills, and apply for jobs.

Libraries help build the foundation of productive economic development in a community. That's why I've decided to support a library district measure on the November 2014 ballot, and I encourage you to as well. We need a sustainable library system, with more hours and resources to serve families, especially those engaged in workforce training. Libraries are the most efficient way to maximize taxpayer return on investment — estimates from the Library Research Service verified that for every dollar spent on public libraries, taxpayers realized \$5 of value. I'm living proof of this fact. Libraries are part of the solution, and a wise Yes-vote for everyone in Josephine County.

Another suggestion I've heard recently is to charge for library cards. Some people believe libraries should be a fee-based service, with those that use it paying for services. Firstly, it's just not fair to the kids in our community whose families cannot afford to pay for books. I want those kids to have the same opportunities I did. Secondly, it doesn't pencil out. If we charge, we'd lose legal standing as a public library under Oregon law, and the additional funding that goes with it.

Library staff tells me that equates to about \$150,000 annually, but it's actually more if you add promised state grants and the online services including the 30,000 or more eBooks that are part of a state consortium called Library2Go. We'd lose more money than we'd gain — penny wise and pound foolish.

The library staff and volunteers have raised an increasing amount of money with each passing year. According to a board report I read, over the last three years, they've increased the overall revenue by 24 percent. But the customer base has grown 100 percent in that same time with over 25,000 library cardholders. Although Josephine Community Libraries raises money for library operations through donations, private business sponsorships, and many grants, public demand for library services has increased beyond what these can support. I recognize that to continue providing basic library services, a stable source of revenue is required. We are so happy that people are using the libraries to improve their lives. Now let's take it to the next level with the stable funding that would be guaranteed by a library district.

In closing, I want to quote former U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander when he said, "If a child gets to kindergarten having never held a book ... there is probably nothing the education system can do for that child." I want all the children in our community to develop their minds and imaginations, and to get the support needed for lifelong learning. Reading opens up a window to the whole world, and the library is what helped me love reading. Anything you can imagine can happen when you are inside a library. Without libraries, I just wouldn't be the same person I am today.

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Brady Adams is former president of Evergreen Federal Bank and a former Oregon state senator. He is also honorary chairman of the group Keep Our Libraries Open.

## 2013 Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

- Nov. 15, 2013. Simon Hare, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. Restore balance to timber approach
- Oct. 30, 2013. Jack Shipley, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *O&C counties need to pay own share*
- Oct. 24, 2013. Dan Fowler, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Levy opponents put out misinformation*
- Oct. 16, 2013. Jim Boston, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Back GP’s top-notch police, firemen*
- July 5, 2013. Amy Wels, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC: *Levy’s failure uproots another family*
- Jun. 5, 2013. By Jennifer Sherman Roberts for the Daily Courier, TGPDC, *GUEST OPINION: You determine future of library, JoCo*
- May 10, 2013. By Connie Roach for the Daily Courier, *GUEST OPINION: Assessor Office is fiscally responsible*

**Nov. 15, 2013. Simon Hare, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. Restore balance to timber approach**

### **SIMON HARE**

In his recent Guest Opinion, Jack Shipley accurately describes the mandate of the O&C Act and the consequences of the federal government's failure to honor this law ("O&C counties need to pay own share," Oct. 30, 2013). It's true that as timber sales on federally managed lands have dropped dramatically — by more than 90 percent — our communities have suffered and county governments have struggled to fund services. While he accurately framed the situation, the rest of his comments deserve a response.

The O&C Act requires federal agencies to manage 2.4 million acres of forestland to provide a permanent, sustainable source of timber for local mills while providing vital revenue to western Oregon counties. As part of an effort to block active management of O&C lands, Shipley and others criticize decisions made by county commissioners decades ago. He and his cohorts find it easy to blame voters for refusing to vote for increased county taxes, but attacking the citizens of Josephine County will not solve the problems plaguing federal forests nor will it help create jobs and more economic activity for small businesses. Shipley's policy prescriptions certainly won't assure adequate funding for services we all expect local government to provide.

Our forests' abundance has been part of our economic and cultural heritage since statehood. Through modern forest management, this renewable resource can provide an essential cornerstone for our rural communities' prosperity and self-sufficiency. The federal government owns some 67 percent of the land in Josephine County. This was not our decision to make, but, for generations, under the O&C Act, the arrangement worked and citizens benefited from these resources. It also wasn't our decision when the federal government opted to renege on its promises to O&C counties and choke the economic lifeline of our communities, the situation we find ourselves in today.

Citing bank deposit statistics as "proof" that Southern Oregonians are awash in cash, Shipley argues that our citizens are wealthy and thus capable of paying property taxes at levels similar to our urban counterparts. The majority of the hard-working people I talk to don't feel rich enough to blithely pay more in taxes when year after year a renewable revenue resource is burning up in our backyard.

If Shipley cared to dig a little deeper, he would find that Oregon's low per-capita personal income is due largely to the decline of our forestry sector. Josephine County has one of the lowest median household incomes in the state. Many young professionals and working families are leaving the area and more citizens are living on fixed incomes — in fact, more than half of personal income within the county is from non-wage sources. It's ironic that Shipley denigrates our county's "dependence" on federal timber receipts when the decline of federal harvests has actually contributed to growing dependence on social services. His suggestion that timber receipts should be connected to a "minimum base level" of higher property taxes would only put a further strain on vulnerable citizens and the services they need. We need Congress to fix the mess that it created and allow more of our people to find jobs and benefit from the resulting economic activity.

Shipley proudly claims success in limiting timber harvests, and his preferred policy recommendations would perpetuate the thinning-only approach of recent years. How has that approach worked for us during the past two decades? Has it made our federal forests any healthier and less vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire? Has it prevented the closure of our last remaining sawmill, and has it replaced the family-wage jobs we've lost? Has it reduced litigation or resolved the "analysis paralysis" that drives federal management today? We all know it has not. Under the auspices of the Northwest Forest Plan, the objectives of the conservation community have been met — at 300 percent of their goal. Conversely, just 8 percent of timber-industry goals under the plan have been achieved. The situation is out of balance.

Fortunately, we have congressmen in Washington, D.C., who understand the issues and are committed to securing a legislative solution. Reps. Peter DeFazio, Kurt Schrader and Greg Walden have moved balanced legislation forward that would place much of the O&C land back into active management for the benefit of our rural communities. Although imperfect, their bipartisan solution offers a high level of financial certainty to our communities while protecting vital services such as public safety.

Unfortunately, Sen. Ron Wyden doesn't favor this approach and is guilty of foot-dragging with respect to providing his own plan. His prescription for federal payments is not an adequate solution to providing public safety services or a robust rural economy. The current approach will only bankrupt counties and doom our citizens to continued poverty.

Please join me and encourage Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden to pass an O&C solution that allows Oregonians to once again make use of our greatest renewable resource.

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Simon Hare is chairman of the Josephine County Board of Commissioners.

**Oct. 30, 2013. Jack Shipley, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *O&C counties need to pay own share***

## **JACK SHIPLEY**

The O&C Act of 1937 set aside approximately 2.4 million acres of federally owned lands in 18 western Oregon counties for the economic benefit of those counties.

This act helped satisfy a post-war demand for wood fiber and helped build the American dream. At the same time, O&C receipts from these timber harvests paid to the 18 O&C counties formed an essential part of county budgets, helping pay for many services. Declines in timber harvesting and federal payments have brought Oregon timber counties to the brink of insolvency and prompted several congressional proposals aimed at increasing harvests on O&C lands to bolster depressed county economies.

Some counties such as Jackson County were responsible and prepared for such an event by setting aside "rainy day reserves." Josephine County, on the other hand, couldn't spend receipts fast enough. The Josephine County commissioners were admonished in the early 1970s to use O&C receipts only for capital improvements or "rainy day reserves," because someday O&C revenues might dry up. When it was announced that O&C receipts would be decoupled from timber harvests, the O&C receipts plummeted and commissioners were scrambling to cut expenses.

The O&C Act was both a blessing and a curse for many of these O&C counties. Josephine County had become addicted to federal support and poorly managed those "easy come, easy go" timber receipts. Josephine County voters also became spoiled and chose to rely solely on O&C receipts, rather than diversify with much needed alternative support. Josephine County currently has a 57 cents per \$1,000 of true cash value (TCV) in property tax support. The state's average property tax support for county government is \$3.15 per \$1,000 TCV.

I find it odd that many Josephine County residents have an independent "State of Jefferson" reputation for disliking government of any sort, but at the same time can't live without the much-coveted O&C bonanza.

We often hear how poverty stricken Josephine County is while our leaders are crying to "get the cut out" to reinvigorate county revenues. Why should we support Josephine County or any other O&C county with federal resources when the residents of these counties are not willing to support themselves for a reasonable portion of the expense?

In 2011, Jackson County ranked 6th, Douglas County 8th and Josephine County 9th, which places them in the top 25 percent of counties, in total bank deposits statewide. In 2011, Jackson County residents were ranked 12th, Douglas County 9th and Josephine County 7th in per-capita bank deposits statewide. I find it unconscionable that our federal forest resources are being used to support my county when a majority of Josephine County voters have been consistently

unwilling to support these necessary county services by developing alternative revenues for a reasonable share of the pie.

I am concerned that our legislative leaders are willing to develop simplistic political solutions for very complex social and economic problems that are nested within complex forest ecosystems. The proposed division of O&C Lands into sacrifice and save categories overlaid with exemption of federal environmental protection is not an acceptable alternative for increasing county revenue or for supporting our local timber industry. I don't support any legislative fix that establishes a trust to hold and manage our publicly owned federal O&C forest lands.

We have successfully worked with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to no longer use clear-cuts as their primary harvest practice on the unique dry forest within the Applegate watershed. I believe our political leaders have unrealistic expectations that our publicly owned O&C forest lands can be the "silver bullet" solution for all our county economic problems.

I am not willing to sacrifice a portion of our public forest ecosystem because some of our counties are unwilling or incapable of diversifying their revenue base. Our forests are fire-adapted ecosystems that are dynamic and should be actively managed to keep them resilient and reasonably fire safe. We should be managing our forest resources in a way that provides both wood to our mills and also sustains the functioning biological systems.

I propose that before any form of legislative fix is established to support our counties with O&C receipts from increased timber harvests, that the proposed political fix require a minimum base level of local taxpayer support to qualify for federal O&C timber receipts. I also propose that we recognize and monetize the ecosystem values such as clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and recreation resources that are provided from our federal lands.

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council has requested, in our testimony to the current BLM resource management plan, that the Applegate watershed be retained as an Adaptive Management Area as designated in the Northwest Forest Plan and used as a demonstration site for ecosystem values accounting.

I would also encourage our legislators to take time to extend the "stewardship authority" to include BLM lands along with the USFS lands. This simple action would provide the agencies with a much-needed management tool and provide financial incentive to the O&C counties to support such work.

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Jack Shipley lives in the Applegate, is a small woodland owner, a founding board member of the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council and on the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative board.

**Oct. 24, 2013. Dan Fowler, *GUEST OPINION*, TGPDC. *Levy opponents put out misinformation***

**DARIN FOWLER**

Public safety is the core responsibility of government, and the city of Grants Pass is no exception. In just two weeks, we'll know the results of a vote on a renewal of the city of Grants Pass' police and fire levy.

It's simple: the City Council voted unanimously to place a levy renewal on the ballot at the very same rate it has been for the past five years in order to maintain our high quality police and fire services. Due to unique state laws, we have to vote on renewing this levy every few years. Levies have been used to provide our Public Safety services since the 1980s, so this is nothing new.

However, for the first time in my long history of living in this city, there seems to be a few voices out there that would rather tear down this success by spreading untruths about the levy and are actively campaigning against it using false information.

They call themselves Citizens for Open Honest Government, yet in researching their organization, I found them to be neither open nor honest. You might have received a bright, colorful mailer from them last week advising you to vote against the city levy. It was full of misinformation, which I feel is important to correct. Despite them spending thousands of dollars campaigning against this measure, I was not able to find much about them, because their blog hasn't been updated since 2010 nor has their state campaign filing information been updated since 2010.

I would like to set the record straight for those interested in the truth. The Grants Pass City Council, city officials and I have received many questions from fellow citizens since this mailer went out, so please consider these facts:

First of all, the Citizens for Open Honest Government states that "less than half of the levy goes to Public Safety." This is absolutely untrue. Oregon state law requires that 100 percent of levy revenue must fund Public Safety. All property taxes received by the city (not property taxes received by the county) go to providing Public Safety services or Public Safety infrastructure.

They also state that voting "no" will not remove a single cop or fireman. Again, this is not true. If the city had to operate without this levy, which provides approximately 25 percent of the Public Safety budget, this gap would not be able to be covered by all other general fund dollars put together. In other words, we could stop every single general fund service that we don't have to provide by law and it still would not divert enough revenues to Public Safety to cover this gap. Therefore, it is a mathematical certainty that going without this levy would require a reduction in Public Safety services.

There is also a claim that the city has built up excessive reserves. The majority of the city's cash on hand is the result of legally restricted resources waiting to be used for major infrastructure

projects in the water, wastewater and transportation departments. We have major obligations to make sure we continue delivering water, treating wastewater and maintaining our roads. These funds could not be used for Public Safety, even if we wanted to. It would be robbing Peter to pay Paul and, therefore, fiscally irresponsible.

This group also made false claims about the "average" salary package for city employees today. They overstated the average by a huge amount. What you will not hear from them are facts such as how, for example, the city saves money by partially staffing fire engines with intern students from Rogue Community College and saves with the police reserve program as well.

Our city shows financial responsibility in many ways. While other cities across the nation are struggling to provide basic services, and some even filing for bankruptcy, the city of Grants Pass is financially strong, thanks to honest and intelligent handling of its funds.

I have been an active volunteer for the city for many years between the planning commission, the City Council and now as mayor. I have a responsibility to help make sure that citizens' input is heard and the city provides services efficiently.

As you go to cast your vote, I encourage you to seek the truth. Once the truth is seen, I am confident you will vote yes for the police and fire levy renewal. But above all, please exercise your greatest right as an American and vote.

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Darin Fowler was elected Grants Pass mayor in November of 2012.

**Oct. 16, 2013. Jim Boston, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC. *Back GP's top-notch police, firemen***

## **JIM BOSTON**

Once again we are asked to renew funding for police and fire services in the city of Grants Pass. Although I very much want to see the public safety issues of the county addressed, they are not the subject of this levy. Rather, the citizens of Grants Pass are being asked to do what we have done for almost 30 years: provide the funds needed to maintain quality police and fire services to the citizens of Grants Pass, not to mention to those who work and shop with us.

What difference does it mean to have a good fire and police departments? Lots. When you call 911, help will be on the way in seconds and arrive in minutes. You will not be told, sorry, no police officers are available. You will not be told that although a fire crew will come, you may get a heavy bill if you neglected to pay in advance with a commercial firefighting company.

When help arrives in Grants Pass, you will know that it comes from agencies dedicated to the highest standards, agencies that have submitted themselves to rigorous self-evaluation and review by others, departments that meet and exceed professional standards.

Our police division has had national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies since 1993. Only two other Oregon police agencies have it. They are the Corvallis Police Department and the Washington County Sheriff's Office. Thirty-one other Oregon police departments are accredited by a state group started in 2001. The only local ones in that group are the Medford and Ashland police departments. Looking at both their websites, the CALEA program looks more challenging, although the state organization is tough enough that most police departments in Oregon are still not accredited.

Our fire department has an excellent Insurance Services Office rating of 3. Doing a little research, I found that the 3 is the third-highest level on a 10-point scale. A 1 is very rare, and only 3.6 percent of fire departments even attain the 3 rating. I discovered that fire departments serving outside the city of Grants Pass have ratings of 5, 6 and 10.

I understood having a well-rated fire department lowers my home insurance bill. But how much? I did some more research through my own insurance company. We could not compare rates with much of the county, because my company does not insure homes with wildfire hazards. But we could get a comparison with Cave Junction. Their fire department has an ISO of 6. My homeowner's insurance for an identical house in Cave Junction would cost \$860 per year. In Grants Pass, it costs \$713 per year. That means that my savings cover half of my police/fire levy bill. Not bad. Not bad at all.

Are you afraid that all governments cost taxpayers more and more? Not true, at least not in the city of Grants Pass. The proposed periodic levy is exactly the same as the one it will replace. No more, no less. How can they do it with rising costs? I am not sure. But I like it. Maybe it's good management?

Of course, it is good management, from the City Council on down. I got to see the quality of our leadership firsthand during my short time as a city councilor. They are not perfect, and they benefit from having accountability to a vigilant and thrifty City Council, but they are top-notch professionals. They are rightly proud of the work they do, and they deserve thanks from all of us in the city.

I have personally experienced the professionalism of the men and women of our fire and police department. The fire department saved the house next door to mine, and most of the fence in between. The police reminded me, at moderate cost and with real courtesy, to drive more slowly. I just heard of a life saved last month when the fire department reached a man suffering a heart attack in a minute after 911 had been called. I could go on.

To sum up, we in the city of Grants Pass have a good thing. Let's keep it. Vote "yes" to renew our city's levy police and fire services for four more years.

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The Rev. Jim Boston was rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church for 22 years before retiring and a member of a temporary City Council that served for six months in late 2009 and early 2010 following the recall of several councilors. A four-year Public Safety levy of \$1.79 per \$1,000 of assessed property value is on the Nov. 5 ballot, which is due to be mailed out Friday.

**July 5, 2013. Amy Wels, GUEST OPINION, TGPDC: Levy's failure uproots another family**

**AMY WELS**

The time has come for me to say goodbye to the community I have considered home for the past 11 years. I did not choose the circumstances that have led to my family and I relocating from Josephine County. The voters have.

With the failure of the criminal justice levy, my position was eliminated.

I have been employed by Josephine County for the past 11 years as a juvenile probation officer, a job that I have loved throughout my tenure here. I have worked closely with my colleagues in my agency, as well as community partners, in order to serve the troubled youth in our county. I work with children most people choose to ignore: sexually offending youth, drug-addicted kids, kids who steal and burglarize others.

I have been passionate about helping the youth and families I have worked with in order to try to improve their life outcomes. I have seen some amazing things in my time here, and I have at times felt honored to witness the transformation of these young human beings.

These last several years in our county have been horrific to witness, mainly because I lack any power to change the course of what this place has become.

A little over a year ago, we closed our detention and shelter program. The youth served by these programs are a vulnerable population.

The shelter youth came from horrific home environments where unspeakable things were done to them. The shelter was just that, a safe place where the youth could live, be cared for and receive the services they so desperately needed. Many of the youth served in that program now live on the streets. Many I have met with have been repeatedly victimized since the closure of the shelter. Their future is bleak.

Closing the detention center has deeply affected the work that the Juvenile Department can do. It is very difficult to convince delinquent youth to change their behaviors when there is no consequence awaiting them — and they know it.

By the generosity of Jackson County, we are allowed to rent three beds to house our youth, and we have for the most part kept those beds full, with kids waiting to enter should a vacancy occur.

One of the worst moments of my career in this county came when I was forced to choose between releasing an Illinois Valley methamphetamine-using homeless youth or an Illinois Valley heroin-using youth, because we had only one bed available. Under the current budget constraints, we cannot serve the most vulnerable youth in this community, and honestly, part of me is relieved to be moving to a county that values the job that I do, in which such gut-wrenching decisions are unnecessary.

While living here, my husband and I have welcomed two beautiful daughters into our lives. The older will begin kindergarten in September. Local schools, especially those in the Three Rivers District, are not well-funded, nor do they seem to be supported by the majority of voters in this county. Critical programs continue to be cut to the bone, making me grateful to be taking my children away from this place.

One of the most embarrassing casualties of the last few years has been our library system. The closure of the library was truly unbelievable. Kudos to the director and volunteers who keep it open currently. My family members have always been huge supporters of libraries. My husband has even volunteered there over the last couple of years. Unfortunately, the library system here is gasping for air and needs a permanent funding solution. It is a critical component of a civilized society.

This community is losing doctors, highly trained law enforcement and professional people and currently seems to attract only professional transients. This is no longer an enjoyable or a safe place to live. The criminal justice system has been ravaged and will be in a significantly worse place next year.

There are fantastic people trying to devise a solution, but their efforts have not yet been successful. The answer is a simple one: If a community wishes to have basic services, those services must be paid for.

Of the 36 counties in this state, we pay the lowest rate for county services and would've continued to be among the lowest even if the levy had passed. This continuing situation is ridiculous. The naysayers point to "government waste" and their examples generally include state and federal issues, not local ones. I wonder if they need a basic civics lesson.

Suing the government for logging rights is another ridiculous "answer." Not only do we not have the funds to pay for legal counsel to do this, it would take decades, and the odds of a win are certainly not in our favor. I am hopeful that the state Legislature will come up with a solution to fund basic services in this community. Their solution will likely be much more expensive than the last levy request, but something must be done.

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Amy Wels is now a probation officer for adults in Polk County after her Josephine County position was eliminated Monday.

**Jun. 5, 2013. By Jennifer Sherman Roberts for the Daily Courier, TGPDC, GUEST  
OPINION: You determine future of library, JoCo**

## **JENNIFER SHERMAN ROBERTS**

In August 2007, a group of Josephine County citizens, myself included, met to discuss the fate of our closed libraries. From that meeting, Josephine Community Libraries was born.

When we reopened the libraries in 2008, we were pragmatic. We did what we had to do out of necessity: volunteers, donations, governmental partnerships, out-of-the-box thinking and, above all, compromise. What we didn't know was that we would be doing all this while the county crumbled around our feet.

We had no idea that our community would vote against a levy that would ensure an adequate public safety net. We assumed that at some time in the future, the turmoil surrounding the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, which reimbursed counties for reduced logging on federal lands, would be resolved and we could again ask the public to fund its library.

Now, after the second failure to pass a public safety levy, we are very nervous about the future of libraries in Josephine County.

Some people try to pit libraries against police. Librarians and public safety advocates know it doesn't work that way. Public services work in concert to provide a livable community. A failure for one critical public service is a failure for them all, especially at the level of dysfunction this county faces.

Our library is a community hub and a social crossroads for the free exchange of knowledge and access to information. The heroic efforts of citizens to reopen and operate all four libraries in Josephine County as a nongovernmental nonprofit over the past four years is inspiring. It is not, however, a long-term, sustainable solution.

After the first full year of nonprofit library operations in 2010, it became clear to JCL's board of directors that donations alone could not fund full-service operations. At that time, the board officially declared its support for the formation of a library district.

By almost every measure — number of hours, budget for materials, trained librarians — we trail the rest of the state woefully in levels of service. And every year, we dip into funding reserves to pay for what we can offer. Currently, our libraries are open fewer than half the number of hours they were before the countywide closure in 2007, and our new materials budget is a fraction of those in neighboring county-library systems.

Thankfully, residents who care about libraries continue to donate annually about \$210,000. Our staff also raises funds through grants and seeks alternative ways to bring in new dollars.

The library's future, just like that of the criminal justice system, is up to you. If you don't contribute, then our public services won't survive. The bottom line is this: If we want to have a community worth living in, one that attracts new business and new jobs, ensures a safety net for even its poorest and weakest citizens and provides access to the wider world through libraries and schools, we will have to pay for it.

We would be telling a different story if no one ever used the library, but that's just not true. We serve 22,000 cardholders in as many different ways as there are questions to be answered. From Internet access and computers to children's literacy programs to outreach to seniors, we support free access to information otherwise too expensive for most families. We've gone from zero to 22,000 customers in four years — that's a robust local business by anyone's definition.

We don't like to picture our community without public services like libraries or prosecutors and a jail, but we are dangerously close to that future. And if we can no longer recruit people and businesses to relocate here, if families move away to live someplace safer, if parents stop sharing books with their children, if the crime rate continues to rise, then our little community will become too grim to imagine.

Josephine Community Libraries is a bridge. What we've done and continue to do is incredibly inspiring, but it's not a long-term solution. Our libraries exist within the context of our community, and right now, that community is in crisis.

We will never apologize for seeking long-term, sustainable funding for our public libraries. The library volunteers who donate more than 27,000 hours of labor a year inspire all of us. They give me hope, even when I'm exhausted by the naysayers. But when will we, as a community, step up to relieve them of this burden of providing public services for free? What will it take to inspire everyone to contribute?

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Jennifer Sherman Roberts is board president of Josephine Community Libraries. People can get more information about JCL or make a donation by visiting [www.josephinelibrary.org](http://www.josephinelibrary.org) or calling 541-476-0571.

**May 10, 2013. By Connie Roach for the Daily Courier, *GUEST OPINION: Assessor Office is fiscally responsible***

## **CONNIE ROACH**

An argument has been made in the Voters' Pamphlet that taxpayers should vote no on any ballot measure to increase property taxes for the funding of our criminal justice system based on the fact the county purchased a replacement assessment and tax software package for \$600,000. The implication is this is an irresponsible expenditure of taxpayer dollars when the criminal justice system is so drastically underfunded. I would like to respond to this error in critical thinking.

The Josephine County Assessor's Office has drastically reduced staff over the past 15 years, from 25 full-time equivalencies in 1997 to 14.85 FTE in 2012.

We have been very responsible in budgeting and sticking to that budget so as much of our public safety system can be retained as possible, while meeting the statutory mandates required by the state of Oregon.

Often government is criticized for not acting like a business, and quite often, this has been proven to be true. But we don't think that is the case in this instance.

The software currently used for assessment and taxation was installed in 1997. Although it has served us well, it is built on soon-to-be-obsolete technology. This is a problem every business that relies on databases comes up against. Knowing that one day the company that supplied the software would stop supporting this product, the Assessor's Office began saving for the day when we would need to replace it.

We received a grant from the state Department of Revenue, and each year set aside money for the project. The county received 25 percent of the eventual cost from the state grant. This money cannot be used to support the hiring of deputies.

Currently, there are seven counties on the software we use. Three of the largest are Multnomah, Marion and Washington counties.

Multnomah had already contracted for new software from a different company. Marion and Washington counties were both in the process of seeking bids for new software.

As the large counties stop using our current software system, it is anticipated that the annual costs to the remaining counties will increase and eventually (in three to four years), the company will cease to support our current software system.

When Marion County put out its request for proposal (RFP), we were able through an intergovernmental agreement to save the cost of having to do our own RFP.

Through that process, Marion, Josephine and Yamhill counties all selected the same software. We have made an additional intergovernmental agreement with Marion to share much of the preliminary work they are doing, once again saving expenses for Josephine County.

Marion and Jackson counties have signed contracts for new software at approximately \$1.8 million each. Klamath County signed a contract for \$2.3 million. Our cost is significantly less, because we are doing as much of the conversion work as possible ourselves, are accepting a system that another county will configure and had good business timing. If we had waited until our software was no longer functional, we would have paid significantly more.

In our planning for the future, we leveraged otherwise unavailable state funding, partnered with other counties for buying power, compromised on configuration and were as fiscally responsible as possible.

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Connie Roach has been Josephine County assessor since 2009.

## 2012 Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

Apr. 11, 2012. By Jack Alan Brown Jr., for the TGPDC, Guest Opinion. *Suggested charter not crazy or illegal*

### JACK ALAN BROWN JR.

I am responding to Stacy Stumbo's April 7 article in the Daily Courier regarding my charter initiative. It was laced with what some would call wild accusations and misstatements. That article began with a four-part characterization of Josephine County as it is purported to be under my proposed charter revision:

First, it would be, and I quote, "a place where addictive drugs and toxic substances are legal." I hate to say it, but that is true under the charter we have now. Society currently profits by taxes on the sale of tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, both of which are legal, addictive and toxic, leading to premature death.

Doctors prescribe and pharmacies compound many addictive and toxic substances with long lists of horrible possible side effects. Doctors treat people for cancer with chemotherapy and radiation. If that isn't toxic, what is? People consume foods on a regular basis that some consider addictive or toxic — coffee, chocolate or charbroiled hamburgers, anyone?

My revision doesn't declare illegal items to be legal, no matter what the district attorney says in his summary statement regarding my initiative. In any event, we need to remember that alcoholic beverages were made illegal for nearly 24 years by an amendment to the U.S. Constitution and then another amendment made legal what had been illegal previously.

Next charge: It would be a place "where the sheriff has the final say in all county business." That is not what "chief executive officer" means. The legislative branch of government, i.e., the Josephine County Board of Commissioners, has the final say, unless properly overruled by a judge. This accusation is based on the false premise that presidents or governors being chief executives in their levels of government have the final say, which they do not.

Third charge: It would be a place where "only property owners can vote on property taxes." To this I say, "Guilty as charged!" I'm sure that might excite some property owners and upset some who are not, but the Oregon Constitution states in Article II, Section 2(2) " ... provision may be made by law to require that persons who vote upon questions of levying special taxes or issuing public bonds shall be taxpayers."

Final charge: It would be a place where "a resident's right to harm himself is 'recognized without qualification.'" Since this and the first charge both originate in one sentence, I think it is only fitting that I quote it in its entirety so those reading this can see the context: "The right to harm oneself is recognized without qualification, whether by suicide, failure to use safeguards such as seat belts and helmets or the use of addictive or toxic substances, but the right to harm oneself

shall not be construed to allow harm to those under one's care or to those who are bystanders, whether by accident or design."

This controversial provision establishes accountability for behavior, rather than punishing the possible cause of a detrimental action, as I explained to Stumbo when she interviewed me by phone to supplement information she gained from my website, [www.jackbrown.org](http://www.jackbrown.org). (In her article, my web page hyperlink continued to a second line and acquired a hyphen, which should be ignored.)

Later in the article, a concept is attributed to me, but without quotes, regarding the public works director. Stumbo says that his position was "becoming overseer of all the county's departments -- in essence a county manager who is elected and accountable to voters."

I will be charitable and merely clarify that he would only oversee functions that are not under the management of other elected officials, i.e., he would not oversee the county clerk or those working under the county clerk. He would oversee all the functions that currently are directly administered by the Board of Commissioners, such as the fairgrounds, parks, airports, roads, etc.

In closing, I have not advocated nor does the proposed revision say anything about doing away with permit charges and fees, as Stumbo's article states. I use the phrase "Do away with outrageous permit charges & fees" in my promotional literature, with emphasis on "outrageous."

The same is true of recalls. I don't advocate eliminating them, and the proposed revision certainly doesn't eliminate them. I do say, "Stop the recall and appointment 'madness,'" because the proposed revision would require special elections to fill vacancies on the Board of Commissioners, instead of giving the remaining members the power to appoint their new colleague(s) after helping to recall their old ones.

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Jack Alan Brown Jr., a Grants Pass resident, is chairman of Oregon's Constitution Party and a frequent candidate for public office. He has until Feb. 28, 2014, to collect the 2,664 signatures necessary to get his initiative containing his proposed Josephine County Charter on the ballot. He hopes to collect enough by August so it can be on November's ballot.

**Appendix A. Guest Opinions On Primary PSS Tax Measures: 2012 - 2015**  
**Web Published As Of November 2015**

**2015 Guest Opinions On Grants Pass, Oregon City Sales Tax**

- Sept. 13, 2015. Dan DeYoung. Should Grants Pass Implement A Sales Tax: Low Rate Would Fund Public Safety (Guest Opinion)
- Sept. 13, 2015. Dave Thomason. Should Grants Pass Implement A Sales Tax: Tax Would Burden Businesses (Guest Opinion)
- Nov. 3, 2015. Grants Pass City-wide Special Election Measure 17-67 2 Percent Sales Tax for City Public Safety and Criminal Justice Services

**2015 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy**

- May 1, 2015. Bill Hunker. How Should You Vote On Measure 17-66? No on Levy: Too Many Questions Linger about Made-up Crisis, Proposal (Guest Opinion)
- May 1, 2015. Scott Draper. Yes on Levy: Citizen-driven Levy Creates Safety Funding with Oversight (Guest Opinion)
- May 19, 2015. JO CO-wide Special Election Measure 17-66, For Patrol, Jail, Shelter of Abused Youth; Five Year Levy (i.e., \$1.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value)

**2014 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy**

- April 26, 2014. Jim Rafferty. CON: Proposal Would Cost More But Doesn't Add Patrols, Reduce Crime (Guest Opinion)
- April 28, 2014. Jay Meredith. Pro: Citizen-Driven Tax Initiative Would Restore Safety During Funding Crunch (Guest Opinion)
- May 20, 2014. JO CO-wide Primary Election Measure 17-59, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Three Year Local Option Tax (i.e., \$1.19 per \$1,000 of assessed value)

**2013 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy**

- May 3, 2013. Jim Rafferty. County Must Learn To Live Within Means (Guest Opinion)
- May 3, 2013. Pat Fahey. Let's Control Our Destiny And Vote Yes (Guest Opinion)
- May 21, 2013. JO CO-wide Special Election Measure 17-49, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Three Year Local Option Tax (i.e., \$1.48 per \$1,000 of assessed value)

**2012 Guest Opinions On Josephine County, Oregon Levy**

- April 27, 2012. Josephine County commissioners Simon Hare, Don Reedy and Harold Haugen. Passage of levy crucial for county
- April 28, 2012. Patricia Sitze. No justification for property tax levy
- May 15, 2012. JO CO-wide Primary Election Measure 17-43, Criminal Justice System Operations Four Year Local Option Tax (i.e., \$1.99 per \$1,000 of assessed value)