

Guest Opinions “Related” To Primary PSS Tax Measures

April 11, 2012. Jack Alan Brown Jr. *Suggested charter not crazy or illegal* (Guest Opinion)

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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. (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.