ADVERTISEMENT

Many sense there is something terribly amiss. We may not know what it is, nor what happens next. We have little idea how to fix things, except to do what's best for our families. We can feel helpless in the face of huge and overwhelming forces.

Some have gone to "tea parties," or written a letter or called a talk show. Some are stockpiling food or ammo - just in case. Many have just thrown up their hands and turned off the news.

The Jackson County Local Action Coalition (JCLAC) believes that the principles that made America great are still alive, though buried and under siege. Our local government has untapped legal power to counter dominance by the federal government - power already being applied elsewhere around the country. We are committed to restoring local control of our natural resources and developing a plan of action that will promote greater community self-reliance and a healthy local economy.

Jackson County Local Action Coalition (JCLAC) - Founding Statement

It is long past time to recognize that the federal government has usurped much of the authority and responsibilities of state and local government, in the process greatly diminishing the liberties and economic opportunities of the American people. Under administrations of both parties we have witnessed a relentless march toward arbitrary centralized power, growing and often unreasonable regulation, and an unsustainable tax burden upon the average family. In response there has arisen an outcry of concern, exemplified by the "Tea Party" and "Tenth Amendment" movements, or by NICFA's (National Independent Consumers and Farmers Association) campaign against the NAIS (National Animal Identification System).

During the current financial crisis, these trends have reached a tipping point. We conclude that we can no longer remain passive.

We are issuing a call to our fellow citizens to join together to protect the welfare of our communities and families, to defend our legacy of liberty, and our very way of life. However, rather than expending our energy against a distant and unresponsive Washington, we believe we can achieve these goals most effectively by focusing our efforts at the county and regional levels.

The crisis that began with the sub-prime mortgage bust in the U.S. has now affected the global economy. We face challenges unlike any experienced in generations. Our region's economy is especially vulnerable, because of the loss of so many quality family-wage jobs over the last two decades and our recent dependence upon the once-in-a-century real estate bubble. In the future, wise county leadership will strike a bold new course to address this crisis and its impact on us.

We are focused on educating the public and developing action plans in three primary areas:

1) **Restoring Local Authority:** Under federal law, states and counties possess significant authority to limit the power of the central government and to influence the impact of its regulatory authority. This process is referred to as "Coordination." Federal law requires these authorities to work with state and local entities to reflect the interests and priorities of those communities. This powerful tool lay unused for years until counties in Idaho and California successfully stopped potentially devastating federal regulation in their communities. Jackson County needs leadership that understands the processes by which we can reassert significant control over our destiny and mitigate the burden of an arbitrary and all-powerful federal government.

While it is true that Jackson County is in reasonably sound fiscal shape, we believe that county executives have missed opportunities to prepare for the types of challenges we now face. Our leaders must now go beyond mere defensive stewardship to develop plans for protecting the well-being and economic health of our communities in light of current and projected economic conditions. This is made more urgent because of the impact the recession has had upon Oregon's economy and the level of funding the state can be expected to provide for vital county services.

We call upon those who would lead us in the future to develop and implement creative strategies to optimize their authority on our behalf. These steps need to be taken despite probable lack of cooperation, possibly even obstruction, from our own state government.

Therefore, we encourage future candidates for public office in Jackson County to pledge their commitment to policies that will minimize our dependence on distant bureaucrats and achieve maximum local autonomy so that Jackson County can lead the movement toward regional self-reliance. With this unique and creative vision, supported by a majority of the voters, our elected officials could then focus on two themes for the preservation and revival of our economic base.

2) **Natural Endowment:** Jackson County and the counties in our region enjoy immense natural resource assets. Yet because of the arbitrary imposition of inflexible one-size-fits-all environmental regulations, our communities have almost completely lost one of the principle industries upon which our prosperity was long founded. The legislative and regulatory juggernaut, primarily at the federal level, has gutted our natural resource economy. This has often been based on questionable and politicized science, or upon an undue emphasis on the preservation of an abstract ideal of a natural world, with inadequate consideration for the needs of our communities. We believe we speak for a majority of Jackson County residents who share our conviction that we can live in harmony with nature while also enjoying its rich endowment.

By employing the powers inherent in local government under law, we must work to restore the fundamental wealth-producing industries that gave rise to the health of our region's economy. This is our home, and we have all the means necessary to evaluate the wise use of the bounties with which we have been blessed. Why accept the yoke of a de facto colonial status when both federal and state governments could hardly be more irresponsible in their spending, or more harmful to our economy through oppressive regulations?

3) **"Small-Is-Beautiful" Economic Development:** With unemployment among the highest in the nation, Jackson County's future leaders have a heavy burden. Will our best and brightest continue to leave because of limited opportunities?

Local government must do all within its reinvigorated powers to remove the obstacles to success of groundbreaking and creative endeavors. By building on principles outlined above, our next generation of leaders will be able to foster a resilient, locally interdependent economic base. It is essential that our county implement well-conceived action plans in such areas as:

Securing Water Rights: Unless sensible mitigation measures are developed, implementation of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) will have a very damaging impact on the Rogue Valley. By some estimates, Talent Irrigation District (TID) will lose over 35% of current resources. This threatens those dependent on TID for commercial irrigation, and the viability of many domestic wells in the southern half of the Rogue Valley. A significant loss of this resource will make expanding local food production all that much more challenging.

Jackson County has been largely passive in the face of this looming threat. We need leadership that will take an active role to develop long-range strategies that will secure the Rogue Basin's access to water.

Toward Food Independence: Presently Jackson County produces only 3% of the food we consume. We are therefore dangerously dependent upon the supply chain along the I-5 corridor. What if one of the passes were to close due to a major earthquake? What if war, currency devaluation, or some unknown crisis were to drive diesel prices over $10/gal? Or if infestation or drought were to devastate crops to the south?

Much of the Rogue Valley's remaining agricultural land is ideal for small to modest scale food production. Local officials should exercise all their available authority to remove obstacles to the natural growth of this promising industry.

One urgent concern is represented by the USDA's proposed National Animal Identification System (NAIS), which would require every single livestock animal in the United States to be identified and micro-chipped. Under NAIS the smallest farmers would have to report the birth of every animal within 48 hours, while factory farms would be less heavily impacted. These regulations would apply even to families with a few chickens in the backyard. They would devastate Jackson County agriculture, diminish our food choices, and drive small farmers out of business.

NAIS is an example of runaway authoritarian regulation emanating from the federal government. It can and should be resisted by our local officials through application of the Coordination process, complemented by courageous and visionary leadership and effective lobbying efforts.

Sustained Harvest: Over 435,000 acres, approximately one quarter of Jackson County's total area, have been designated "O&C Lands." Federal law explicitly requires that these BLM-administered forests be managed for sustained yield. (See O&C Act, 43 U.S.C. § 1181a). In fact, there are examples in the Rogue Valley of private lands which have been continuously harvested for 75 years. Through a combination of selective harvest, thinning of immature trees, and clearing of forest-to-floor fuel, wealth-producing jobs can be generated, a renewable energy source can be developed, and the threat of catastrophic fires can be reduced.

We believe that truly effective leadership will apply every available avenue of authority, including the process of Coordination, to assert sufficient control over our county's forestlands so this endowment can once again make a major contribution to our economy. This would revive our lost tax base, and promote the creation of jobs that will restore dignity and prosperity to thousands of Jackson County families.

Small-scale Secondary Wood Products Manufacture: Global economic trends suggest that the loss of domestic manufacturing capacity could have a severe impact on the quality of life of most Americans. With forward thinking and initiative, the Rogue Valley can play a role in moderating some aspects of these global sea changes. As we regain access to our forests, and grounded upon our legacy of wood products manufacture, we can witness a revival of the local secondary wood products industry.

This is clearly the province of the private sector. However, visionary local government leaders can assist by minimizing red tape, which could serve to spark a business and investment climate in which the critical mass necessary for success becomes possible. For example, tax incentives can foster a secondary wood products incubator, while possibly involving the resources of Rogue Community College to develop high-tech applications in manufacturing processes.

The right leadership can inspire an atmosphere of creative community cooperation. Within our midst, there is no shortage of capital for innovative investing and prudent risk-taking. The talent of our neighbors is immeasurable, and the quality of the workforce awaiting challenging opportunities is second to none. All it takes is a catalyzing vision joined with committed action. We believe that local government can play a vital role in jump-starting scores of new local businesses.

The United States is at a fundamental and historic crossroads. Will we become more and more dependent as a people upon a self-proclaimed benevolent federal government? Or will we continue the American experiment of self-reliance, individual initiative, and creativity - always tempered by sincere and just concern for our neighbors and the larger community?

We have highlighted three major themes that we believe should guide Jackson County government in the years immediately ahead. We have suggested targets for action that represent reasonable priorities. In the present environment there is little we can do to influence decisions in Washington. However, by marshalling the resources and talents within our own community we can accomplish a great deal for the welfare of the people of Jackson County.

With Coordination, we have a proven strategy that is already being used in 70 counties. Why not here? Attend our August 10th meeting to learn more. Working together, we can preserve our liberty and rebuild our local economy. Join us!

"It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather a tireless minority keen to set fires in people's minds." — Sam Adams

Jackson County Local Action Coalition
2640 E. Barnett Rd., Ste. E-207, Medford 97504
More Info, Volunteer, Donate: www.jclac.org

Public Meeting:
August 10, Hosting - 6:30; Business - 7:00 pm
Medford Main Library, The Large Room