



June 20, 2020

Statement Regarding Commissioners Order

I'll explain why myself and members of my family have joined some of the protests that have happened in the past few weeks in Oregon, including my hometown of Pendleton.

I was raised to believe that I should help those in need. I remember being taught a passage from the bible that said "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." -Matthew 25:40. I was also taught that I had a right and an obligation to speak up when our government or its representatives don't extend the protection of the law equally to all of us. The right to equal treatment under the law is spread throughout our Constitution; and is specifically mentioned in the 14th Amendment.

What millions of Americans saw when they watched that Minneapolis police officer kneel on the neck of George Floyd was our Constitution being ignored. They saw a man who was not so equal under the law and that his very existence was extinguished.

That is why so many Americans are as angry as they are and it's why we've seen demonstrations even around the world. Americans are starting to recognize what it means to be black in America.

Umatilla's County Commissioners say they're troubled by these protests and that it's an effort to "disregard and disrespect the 800,000 sworn officers who have taken an oath to protect the citizenry and preserve the peace."

I AM TROUBLED THAT THEY ARE TROUBLED.

What protesters are doing is asking for the "Justice" in our justice system, and they're asking for it in a fundamentally American way: By gathering together and protesting. That's how several different movements brought us the 40-hour workweek, the vote for women, paid vacation time, the end of child labor, workplace safety and many other benefits that we now consider as rights that we are owed. All of those protests were met with similar language as used to criticize the protests of today.

There's something fundamentally American about seeing a wrong, trying to right it and getting criticized for it. So be it. That's the cost of progress.

In the meantime, I would like to remind our commissioners not to forget what our forefathers put in the First Amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law ... abridging ... the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Myself, my family, and hundreds of thousands of other Americans are peaceably assembling and petitioning the government for a more perfect union.

Respectfully,

Nolan Bylenga
Candidate for HD58 State Representative