



KATE BROWN
Governor

January 20, 2016

The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

The Honorable James B. Comey
FBI Headquarters
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535-0001

Madam Attorney General and Director Comey:

Earlier today I spoke with Mr. Comey to share my issues with the handling of the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by armed radicals.

The citizens of Harney County are resilient and diverse and include members of the Burns-Paiute Tribe. Like most Oregonians, those from Harney County have a history of resolving difficult issues through a collaborative approach. They have worked hard through the years to develop the Malheur Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the Harney County Wetlands Initiative, the Harney County Restoration Collaborative, the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative, and SageCon. It is for this work that they should be recognized, and yet the national focus has instead been fixed on outsiders seeking to exploit and manipulate a local matter for their own agenda.

As you are both aware, for more than two weeks now, these radicals have been allowed to stay unlawfully in the refuge approximately 30 miles to the south of Burns, Oregon, in Harney County. While it is easy to assume that an occupation in such a remote location does not threaten public safety and does not harm any victims, that perception is far from accurate.

Even before the events of January 2, 2016, the local community was put under strain by the presence of outsiders who made unrealistic demands and began harassing law enforcement and their family members. While all were prepared for a tense but lawful protest on January 2 in the town, few were prepared for what would follow.

The unlawful seizure of the refuge by criminals seeking to advance a misguided agenda is in and of itself a strain. What adds to the tensions felt by the community is the reality that multiple "supporters" of these individuals have joined, staying in local motels in the City of Burns, and the criminals on the refuge are allowed to travel on and off the premises with little fear of law



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enforcement contact or interaction. The residents of Harney County are being intimidated in their own hometown by armed criminals who appear to be seeking occasions for confrontation. The harm being done to the innocent men, women and children in Harney County is real and manifest. With each passing day, tensions increase exponentially.

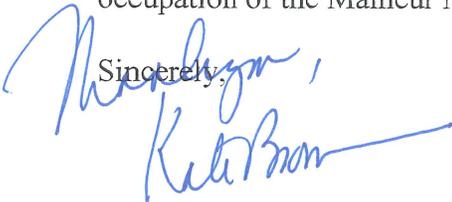
In addition to the federal agents deployed in town, the Oregon State Police and counties and cities from around the state are continuing to deploy additional officers to enhance local patrol and community safety. The reality is that this is not a sustainable law enforcement model for any extended period of time.

Because this occupation has occurred on federal land, it is appropriate that the FBI and other federal law enforcement entities are the leaders on any response to it, and we appreciate the recognition of their responsibility in this situation. They asked state officials, including me, to limit our public comments, which I have done, with considerable difficulty.

However, for the citizens of Harney County and indeed all Oregonians, I must insist on a swift resolution to this matter. Efforts to negotiate have not been successful, and now it is unclear what steps, if any, federal authorities might take to bring this untenable situation to an end and restore normalcy to this community.

I request on behalf of my fellow Oregonians that you instruct your agencies to end the unlawful occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge as safely and quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Governor Kate Brown

KB/HM/sb