

CORRECTION: It has been brought to our attention that Flathead County Undersheriff Jordan White has retracted his statement about Dave Burgert associating with members of the Flathead Liberty Bell. The only impact this has on the material below is a few quotes in the press release and one reference in the briefing paper. Undersheriff White's retraction does not change our concerns about the Flathead Liberty Bell and the content of its upcoming "Flathead Preparedness Expo."



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Briefing Paper

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“Patriot” Group Connected to Fugitive Burgert to Hold Expo

A Flathead anti-government group connected to fugitive militiaman Dave Burgert is scheduled to hold its “Flathead Preparedness Expo” this weekend in Evergreen, MT. Held at the Victory Valley Church, the event features a lineup of speakers who prophesize an imminent battle with the federal government. The expo is sponsored by the Flathead Liberty Bell.

“With militia adherent Dave Burgert on the loose after a shootout with law enforcement, people are wondering how somebody could go so far down the anti-government rabbit hole,” says Travis McAdam of the Montana Human Rights Network. “Look no further than the Flathead Preparedness Expo. These types of events have helped mold people like Burgert since the 1990s.”

Flathead County Undersheriff Jordan White told the press this week that Burgert had associated with Flathead Liberty Bell members since he was released from federal prison in March 2010. Even before the recent shootout with authorities and the ensuing manhunt, law enforcement knew Burgert very well. He led Project 7, a militia cell in northwest Montana that was plotting to assassinate local officials and overthrow the federal government. In 2003, Burgert was convicted of illegally possessing a machine gun and sent to prison.

The Montana Human Rights Network has issued a briefing paper about the Flathead Liberty Bell and the speakers it is featuring at its preparedness expo (see below). The speakers include: Richard Mack, a former Arizona sheriff adored by the militia movement; Chuck Baldwin, a failed presidential candidate for a party that combines Christian fundamentalism and themes of the anti-government movement; and Stewart Rhodes, founder of Oath Keepers.

“We hope people recognize that the Flathead Liberty Bell and its speakers this weekend do nothing but put communities at risk,” said McAdam. “Their agenda is no different than Dave Burgert’s agenda, and we’ve seen this past week a vivid example of what that produces.”

The Flathead Liberty Bell’s Preparedness Expo

The Flathead Liberty Bell made news earlier this week in coverage about militia activist David Burgert being wanted in Montana for the attempted murder of a law enforcement officer. Flathead County Undersheriff Jordan White told the press that Burgert had been associating with Flathead Liberty Bell members since he was released from federal prison in March 2010.¹ The connection to Burgert is hardly the Flathead Liberty Bell’s only connection to anti-government extremists.

The Flathead Liberty Bell takes its name and purpose from a system developed by militia activist Schaeffer Cox. Cox, a 26-year-old from Alaska, developed the Liberty Bell System. It’s an automatic phone system which is called and activated when someone believes their rights are being violated. In explaining it, Cox uses the example of a “patriot” being pulled over by a law officer who asks the driver to get out of the vehicle during a traffic stop. When the “patriot” refuses and the officer threatens to use force, the driver is supposed to activate the Liberty Bell. The “patriots” receiving the alert are supposed to rally to the location where the supposed abuse is happening.² While responding to a Liberty Bell alert in Alaska in 2010, Cox failed to tell an officer that he was carrying a concealed .38-caliber pistol and was arrested. Cox pleaded not guilty to a misdemeanor charge of weapons misconduct.³

Cox has just kept getting in trouble with law. In 2010, Cox was charged with second-degree felony assault for choking and punching his wife in front of their two-year-old son.⁴ He ended up pleading guilty to a lesser charge of reckless endangerment and received a suspended sentence.⁵ Most recently, in March 2011, Cox and four others were charged with conspiring to commit murder, kidnapping, arson, hindering prosecution, and possession of illegal weapons. Cox and his associates are accused of plotting to kill or kidnap judges and Alaska State Troopers.⁶

The Flathead Liberty Bell’s website has asked prospective members to watch a video of Cox talking about the system at a Celebrating Conservatism meeting in Hamilton, MT.⁷ Celebrating Conservatism is a “patriot” group based in the Bitterroot Valley that has featured many “patriot” speakers over the past two years.⁸ Celebrating Conservatism featured Cox at its [“Liberty Convention 2010”](#) in Missoula, MT. During his remarks, Cox told convention attendees:

“They [the government] only understand us if we speak in their language of force...I have a hunch that they will only see that light when it is a muzzle flash.”⁹

The Flathead Liberty Bell’s decision to sponsor this weekend’s preparedness expo is a throwback to the anti-government movement of the 1990s. The expos traditionally include a trade show of vendors selling “survivalist” wares, like food storage and home remedies, with a mix of radical right-wing political literature and speakers. During the 1990s, regular speakers at these expos included [John Trochmann](#) of the Militia of Montana; [Bo Gritz](#), a militia icon who ran on the Populist Party’s

presidential ticket in 1988 with Klansman David Duke; and [Jack McLamb](#), a discredited law enforcement officer who is a “patriot” conspiracy theorist.

The expo in Evergreen this weekend sounds like much of the same. The event is advertised to provide “resources and workshops to help you prepare for the unexpected” and cover topics such as: water treatment and storage, food growing and storage, communications, home schooling, and self-defense.¹⁰ Like the 1990s, the lineup of speakers features well-known “patriots” (see below for more).

The expo is being held at the Victory Valley Church in Evergreen. The church’s pastors are David and Jackie Beaulieu.¹¹ David Beaulieu supported an attempt to stop a gay pride parade in 2009. A petition was submitted to Kalispell City Council, and Beaulieu said he was concerned about “the [gay] agenda – the agenda that might silence voices that might want to stand up for Christ or stand up for what the Bible says about moral behavior.”¹² The church was the recent site of a meeting by the Northwest Montana Patriots, a local Tea Party group, which featured right-wing legislators recapping the 2011 Montana Legislature.¹³ The venue also hosted a presentation by [Oath Keepers](#) founder, Stewart Rhodes, during which he urged the crowd to form militias.¹⁴

Supporters of the Flathead Liberty Bell include former legislative candidates Dane Clark and Shawn Bailey. Bailey ran on the [Constitution Party of Montana](#) ticket in 2010, and Clark has run both as a Republican and Democrat.¹⁵ White supremacist, [April Gaede](#), has promoted the preparedness expo on Facebook as well.¹⁶

Speakers at the Flathead Preparedness Expo

Richard Mack

[Richard Mack](#), a former county sheriff in Arizona, became a rising star in the militia movement during the 1990s when he sued the federal government over the Brady Bill, a gun control measure. He began speaking on the anti-government “patriot” circuit in the early 1990s and never stopped. However, Mack’s lawsuit and speaking time on the “patriot” circuit became central issues during his 1996 re-election bid, and he lost in the primary.¹⁷

For the last few years, he has toured the country trying to get sheriffs to read his booklet, *The County Sheriff: America’s Last Hope*, and to adopt his brand of county supremacy. Mack’s version of county supremacy follows the tradition of the white supremacist Posse Comitatus. The Posse viewed the sheriff as the highest legitimate law officer in the land. It believed citizens were not subject to state or federal authorities. For the Posse, it was up to the sheriff to use force, if necessary, to prevent federal agencies from seizing property to pay taxes and to oppose any perceived encroachment by federal institutions.¹⁸

Mack’s statements over the years reflect the Posse tradition. “The federal government doesn’t have any jurisdiction to tell me what to do as sheriff,” he has told the press.¹⁹ While running for the US Senate in 2006, Mack stated he would “do everything in my power to abolish the income tax and its ‘Gestapo’ police, the IRS.”²⁰ In a 2009 interview, Mack said he “prayed for the day that a sheriff in this country will arrest an IRS agent” for enforcing tax law.²¹

Mack’s sympathy and support for the militia movement is well documented. In 1995 following the Oklahoma City bombing by militia adherent Timothy McVeigh, Mack said, “People get all upset when they hear about militias, but what’s wrong with it? I wouldn’t hesitate for a minute to call out my posse against the federal government if it gets out of hand.”²² In 1996, Mack told the press, “What I support

and what I see in most militias is the type of courage to stand for freedom as exemplified by the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square.” This quote was in an article about the arrest of 12 members of the Arizona Viper Militia who were accused of plotting to blow up buildings.²³

Mack has appeared multiple times at events across Montana over the last few years. He was featured at Celebrating Conservatism’s “Liberty Convention 2010” held last summer in Missoula. He told the crowd that he prays that sheriffs will stand up to the IRS. He also said that the Second Amendment is not about guns. Instead, it’s about creating militia groups. He also told the crowd he was willing to work with anyone who was “against the real enemy, the federal government.”²⁴

In 2004, Mack edited a book by Randy Weaver, who is scheduled to be at the preparedness expo this weekend.²⁵ Weaver’s standoff at Ruby Ridge, ID, was a seminal moment for the militia movement of the 1990s (see below for more on Weaver). Mack is also a favorite speaker at both Oath Keepers and Tea Party events around the country.²⁶ In April 2010, the Southern Poverty Law Center named Mack one of the 35 people “at the heart” of the resurgent “patriot” movement.²⁷

Stewart Rhodes

Stewart Rhodes, an attorney who used to be a staffer for US Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), is the founder of the [Oath Keepers](#).²⁸ The “patriot” group wants law enforcement officers and military personnel to sign onto an oath that encapsulates many of the ideas promoted by the “patriot” movement’s one-world government conspiracy theories.²⁹

Since its formation in 2009, anti-government “patriots” have flocked to Oath Keepers, and many started posting statements on organizational websites advocating warfare. Rhodes finally had to request they stop. He said such discussion might make active duty personnel “wary of participating” in Oath Keepers. He didn’t oppose such talk, but he asked that it be discussed somewhere else.³⁰

Rallying support from “patriots,” while at the same time trying to manage them, is something one of Rhodes’ mentors, US Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), has tried to do as well. Rhodes frequently mentions both his time spent as a staffer for Paul, and his work on Paul’s 2008 presidential campaign. An Oath Keepers board member has stated part of the reason Rhodes started the group was his disappointment that the Republican Party wasn’t more supportive of Paul’s presidential run.³¹

Like Paul, Rhodes has commented he “actively support[s] the revitalization of the state militias.” However, he has said he wants to keep that activity away from Oath Keepers. “We need to keep the two different missions separate,” he claimed. “We will reach more of them [potential recruits] if we don’t have official ties to citizens militias.”³² Rhodes continues to try and court the energy of “patriots,” while trying to distance his group from all the negative baggage that comes with the anti-government movement.

This is a difficult balancing act to maintain, as demonstrated by the Charles Dyer case. Dyer, a former Marine and self-identified Oath Keeper, was charged in early 2009 with the rape of a child in Oklahoma and illegally having a grenade launcher. Dyer frequently identified himself publicly as an Oath Keeper, and he attended one of the group’s first events in April 2009. In videos posted by Dyer on You Tube, he calls himself an Oath Keeper and states he will use his military training to become a domestic terrorist. Rhodes denies Dyer was a member of Oath Keepers.³³

Rhodes has spoken in Montana numerous times since starting Oath Keepers. He had history in the state even before starting his “patriot” group. Between 2005 and 2007, he practiced law in Polson, MT. Last year, he moved back to the state for good.³⁴ During a presentation to Celebrating Conservatism in Hamilton, Rhodes told the audience that Oath Keepers is “trying to buy you time...by causing strategic uncertainty in the minds of the domestic enemies of our Republic.” He said he wanted these enemies to “lay awake at night” and worry about how many police and military personnel belong to Oath Keepers.”³⁵

In March 2011, Rhodes gave a presentation at Valley Victory Church, the same venue for the preparedness expo this weekend. He encouraged attendees to form militias. He said the federal government was collapsing. “It’s not that the iceberg is coming,” he told the crowd. “We’ve already hit the iceberg. The Titanic is going down.”³⁶

Chuck Baldwin

[Chuck Baldwin](#) follows a strident brand of Christian fundamentalism, supports the anti-government “patriot” movement, and promotes neo-Confederate ideology. The Southern Poverty Law Center [lists](#) Baldwin as one of the people “at the heart” of the resurgent “patriot” movement.

In October 2010, Baldwin and his family moved to Montana after he had served as the pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church for 35 years in Pensacola, FL. In writing about his decision to move to Montana, Baldwin infused his “patriot” and Christian beliefs with apocalyptic rhetoric. He prophesized that “America is headed for an almost certain cataclysm,” which he said, “will most certainly include a fight between Big-Government globalists and freedom-loving, independent-minded patriots.” Baldwin continued, referencing a common “patriot” conspiracy theory, “I would rather die fighting for freedom with liberty-loving patriots by my side than be shuttled off to some FEMA camp.” He claims Montana “will be the tip of the spear in the freedom fight.”³⁷

Baldwin left the Republican Party in 2004 and was nominated as vice president on the [Constitution Party’s](#) ticket that year. The Party combines many tenets of the anti-government movement with an extreme version of Christian fundamentalism. In making the switch, he complained that neither major party, Democrat nor Republican, had any “intention of outlawing abortion-on-demand” and both were committed to “granting legitimacy to homosexuality.” Baldwin unsuccessfully ran for president on the Constitution Party’s 2008 ticket.³⁸

During the 1990s, Baldwin used his radio show on the Christian Patriot Network to promote the militia movement.³⁹ He has also been involved with white supremacist neo-Confederate groups, including the [Council of Conservative Citizens](#). Categorized as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Council is the modern-day incarnation of the White Citizens’ Council that supported segregation and opposed the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s.⁴⁰ Baldwin has been a contributing writer to the group’s main publication.⁴¹

In late October 2010, Baldwin and his family settled in Kila, MT.⁴² He has started a new ministry, the Liberty Fellowship, which meets at the Kalispell Red Lion.⁴³ His family didn’t wait long to make their presence known. In November 2010, his son, Tim Baldwin, presented on the topics of state sovereignty and nationalism versus federalism in both Kalispell and Ronan. The events were sponsored by two local “patriot” groups, the Freedom Action Rally and Citizens Acting for Liberty.⁴⁴ Earlier this year, Tim Baldwin ran for a seat on the Flathead Valley Community College Board of Trustees and lost.⁴⁵ In an attempt to hitch his brand of state supremacy to the current medical marijuana controversy, Tim Baldwin

is representing the Montana Caregivers Association in a lawsuit against the federal government.⁴⁶ Promotional materials for the preparedness expo state that checks and money orders should be made out to Tim Baldwin.

In January 2011 at Chuck Baldwin's first major public event since moving to the Flathead, he announced he was thinking of running for governor. He said Montana needed a governor who would be "willing to put his life on the line to defend the Constitution." He said states needed to unite to fight the "terrorists of Washington D.C."⁴⁷ At the event, an invitation and a form to join the Patriot Business Network, a project of the Flathead Liberty Bell, was distributed.⁴⁸ A month before his public presentation in Kalispell, Baldwin was a featured speaker at an event held in Helena, MT, by the [Oath Keepers](#).⁴⁹

After Baldwin's presentation in January, Kalispell white supremacist [April Gaede](#) commented on that she attended the event and has met with Baldwin numerous times. She said she thinks that the "average white nationalist" will agree with Baldwin on many things.⁵⁰ Baldwin's relocation to move to Montana has Gaede and other Flathead-based white supremacists excited. Gaede started a [Pioneer Little Europe](#) (PLE) in Kalispell with the intent of getting more white supremacists to Montana. She has stated that one of her goals is to start reaching out to people who aren't a part of the PLE, such as "white patriots," to hopefully draw them into the fold. She has commented that Baldwin moving to Montana is a reason why her racist cohorts across the country should consider moving here.⁵¹

Likewise, Baldwin hopes to draw his fellow believers to the area. He believes his move to Montana is part of a "FREEDOM RUSH" whereby people wanting to escape the "tyrannical tentacles of Washington D.C." will move to western states. He claims other "Christian patriots" have already followed him to Montana and he hopes more will follow suit.⁵²

Randy Weaver

Randy Weaver, a current resident of the Flathead Valley, was the centerpiece of the early 1990s' standoff at Ruby Ridge, ID, that helped create and mobilize the anti-government movement of the 1990s. He has seen his stock rise again as a resurgent "patriot" movement has spiked over the last two years. It's been announced that he will be at the expo signing copies of his book about Ruby Ridge.

Weaver was an Army veteran who worked at a factory in Iowa before he and his wife moved their family to a remote location in Idaho in 1983. The family home-schooled their children and began adopting tenets of Christian Identity, an anti-Semitic and racist religion, through their involvement with Aryan Nations. In 1989, federal agents attempted to make an informant out of Weaver after they confronted him with evidence of his illegal sale of weapons. Weaver refused and faced weapons charges. After failing to appear in court, the Weavers hunkered down in their remote property near Ruby Ridge. U.S. Marshals began surveillance of the property. By the time the standoff was over, Weaver's son and wife were dead as was a US Marshal. During his subsequent trial, Weaver was acquitted of murder and conspiracy charges.⁵³

Ruby Ridge provided the "patriot" movement with a vivid example for its anti-government message. The message stressed that an arrogant federal government attacks innocent citizens, solely because their beliefs and lifestyles did not conform to those of the mainstream establishment. "Patriots" claimed the federal government's actions at Ruby Ridge were manifestations of its real agenda to forcibly disarm those of its citizens who didn't accept the New World Order (variously defined as globalism or one-

world government under the control of the United Nations, liberals, socialists, communists, etc. The words are used interchangeably).

Since the standoff, Weaver and some of his family have moved back to the Flathead Valley. Weaver wrote a book about Ruby Ridge, *The Federal Siege at Ruby Ridge*, and has peddled it at various events around the country. In 2007, Weaver spoke at a press conference supporting Edward and Elaine Brown, militia activists convicted of tax fraud and evasion who were engaged in a five-month armed standoff with law enforcement in New Hampshire. In a promotional video for the couple, Weaver was featured next to Ed Brown on the porch of the home during the standoff.⁵⁴ A man convicted of aiding the Browns by supplying them with firearms and explosives was found in possession of a gun signed by Weaver.⁵⁵

While Randy Weaver continues to be viewed as a “patriot” hero and still travels in those circles, one of his daughters doesn’t. Sara Weaver has been active in recent months promoting her religious-based forgiveness of the federal agents that killed her brother and mother. At a recent event in Kalispell, she said, “fear caused Ruby Ridge.” She said she wanted “to see healing out of what happened...it breaks my heart. Please, I beg you not to use Ruby Ridge for violence, not in my name.”⁵⁶

¹ KSL TV News, June 16, 2011; Media Matters for America, June 14, 2011.

² Vision Liberty Bell, website, <http://www.nonaiswa.org/?p=4706>.

³ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 19, 2010; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 20, 2010.

⁴ *State of Alaska vs. Schaeffer Cox*, Affidavit by Police Officer, Case Number 4FA-10-762.

⁵ *Juneau Empire*, April 12, 2010.

⁶ *Flathead Beacon*, March 17, 2011; *Alaska Dispatch*, March 22, 2011.

⁷ Media Matters for America, June 14, 2011.

⁸ For more on Celebrating Conservatism, see: Montana Human Rights Network, *Network News*, [December 2009](#), p. 8.

⁹ Montana Human Rights Network, archives, notes from “Liberty Convention 2010.”

¹⁰ Flathead Liberty Bell, website, <http://www.flatheadlibertybell.com/>; Flathead Preparedness Expo, poster.

¹¹ Valley Victory Church, website, http://www.valleyvictorychurch.com/info/our_staff.php.

¹² *Flathead Beacon*, May 21, 2009.

¹³ *Daily Interlake*, May 21, 2011

¹⁴ *Daily Interlake*, March 10, 2011

¹⁵ The Liberty Bell Concept, website, http://www.nonaiswa.org/?page_id=4523; *Flathead Beacon*, April 28, 2010.

¹⁶ April Gaede, Facebook, June 6, 2011.

¹⁷ Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door* (2002), p. 309-310; Associated Press, May 26, 1999.

¹⁸ James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face* (1991), p. 109-141; Montana Human Rights Network and Coalition for Human Dignity, *Racist to the Roots: John Trochmann and the Militia of Montana*, 1995.

¹⁹ *Bismarck Tribune*, April 23, 1995.

²⁰ Freedom’s Phoenix, www.freedomsphoenix.com, March 22, 2006.

²¹ You Tube, “Oath Keeper Sheriff Richard Mack,” April 19, 2009.

²² Jack Anderson, *Inside the NRA* (1996), p. 84.

²³ Knight-Ridder News Service, July 3, 1996; Anti-Defamation League, “News About the Militia Movement,” March 5, 1997.

²⁴ Montana Human Rights Network, archives, notes from “Liberty Convention 2010.”

²⁵ *Idaho Observer*, April 2004.

²⁶ Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, *Tea Party Nationalism* (Fall 2010), p. 63-64.

²⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Meet the ‘Patriots,’” April 20, 2010.

²⁸ Anti-Defamation League, *Rage Grows in America: Anti-Government Conspiracies* (November 2009), p. 30.

²⁹ Oath Keepers, website, <http://oathkeepers.org>, “About Oath Keepers” and “Declaration of Orders We Will Not Obey.”

³⁰ Anti-Defamation League, *Rage Grows in America: Anti-Government Conspiracies* (November 2009), p. 27-28.

³¹ *The Big Sky Weekly*, July 16, 2009.

³² Oath Keepers, website, <http://oathkeepers.ning.com/>, “Oath Keepers Forum and State Groups.”

³³ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Oath Keepers Chief Denies Accused Rapist was Member,” Jan. 22, 2010.

³⁴ E. Stewart Rhodes III, résumé, as of May 2008.

³⁵ Montana Human Rights Network, *Network News*, January 2011.

³⁶ *Daily Interlake*, March 10, 2011.

³⁷ Chuck Baldwin, “The Hardest Decision of My Life,” Sept. 1, 2010; Chuck Baldwin, “Why We are Moving to Montana,” Sept. 15, 2010.

³⁸ *Flathead Beacon*, Sept. 15, 2010; *Sierra Times*, July 28, 2004.

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- ³⁹ Anti-Defamation League, "Beyond the Bombing," 1995.
- ⁴⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, map of hate groups, <http://splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map>.
- ⁴¹ Center for New Community, *Party Crashers: White Nationalists and Election 2000* (2000), p. 13-14.
- ⁴² Chuck Baldwin, "Montana Update," Dec. 9, 2010.
- ⁴³ *Daily Interlake*, Jan. 13, 2011.
- ⁴⁴ Brushfires of Freedom, Calendar of Events, <http://www.brushfiresmt.com>, Nov. 9, 2010; Flathead Events, Citizens Acting for Liberty Community Event, Nov. 9, 2010.
- ⁴⁵ *Ravalli Republic*, May 5, 2011.
- ⁴⁶ News with Views, May 31, 2011.
- ⁴⁷ *Flathead Beacon*, Jan. 17, 2011.
- ⁴⁸ Montana Human Rights Network, archives, material handed out during Chuck Baldwin presentation, January 11, 2011.
- ⁴⁹ Montana Oath Keepers, flier for "Statewide Liberty Leadership Forum/Conference," Dec. 18, 2010.
- ⁵⁰ Paul Fromm, radio show, January 18, 2011.
- ⁵¹ April Gaede, Stormfront posting, "Re: How best to grow your PLE?" Nov. 18, 2010; April Gaede, Stormfront posting, "Re: Looking for a Place to Move..." Sept. 23, 2010.
- ⁵² Chuck Baldwin, "We Hit a Nerve," Sept. 8, 2010; Chuck Baldwin, "Montana Update," Dec. 9, 2010.
- ⁵³ Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* (2009), p. 301-3335.
- ⁵⁴ You Tube, "Randy Weaver at Ed Brown's Press Conference Part One and Part Two," June 18, 2007.
- ⁵⁵ *US v. Garhard*
- ⁵⁶ Montana Human Rights Network, archives, notes from Sara Weaver presentation.