

**Toll Brothers New Homes**

View photo tours of new luxury homes  
& design your dream home!



**U.S.**

# Opposing Factions Take to Facebook in Oregon Wildlife Refuge Dispute



LaVoy Finicum at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns, Ore., last week.  
JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

By **JULIE TURKEWITZ** and **KIRK JOHNSON**

JANUARY 22, 2016

**PRINCETON, Ore.** — As more people beg the armed antigovernment protesters

who took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge here three weeks ago to go home, the protesters this week embarked on a new quest: a search for allies.

So far, few people seem to be lining up behind them. Residents of the town of Burns, the largest nearby community, turned out in force on Tuesday to demand that the protesters vacate. The governor of Oregon, Kate Brown, exhorted federal officials to roust the group, which is led by the brothers Ammon and Ryan Bundy and an ally, LaVoy Finicum. The F.B.I. tried talking to them this week, apparently with no luck.

On Wednesday, the protesters tried to enlist support from the Burns Paiute Tribe. The message — that the federally owned land of the Malheur refuge should be returned to its original owners — might seem like one that would appeal to the tribe, but it did not.

The Bundy group is also trying to recruit local ranchers. On Saturday, they plan to hold a ceremony for ranchers to renounce federal ownership of public land and tear up their federal cattle grazing contracts — an act they are calling a “declaration of emancipation.” Just one person has confirmed attendance, a rancher from New Mexico.

The conflict has spilled over into social media. One flashpoint was a trove of ancient tribal artifacts belonging to the Burns Paiute and housed at the Malheur refuge. The protesters asserted in a Facebook video that the relics were being neglected, and the government workers also took to Facebook to say they were safeguarding the items at the tribe’s request.

In one video posted to the Bundy Ranch Facebook page, Mr. Finicum is seen examining boxes that he said contained grinding stones, projectile points and other Paiute artifacts, which he said were near a rat’s nest. “This is how the Native Americans’ heritage is being treated — to me, I don’t think it’s acceptable,” Mr. Finicum said.

ADVERTISEMENT

At the refuge, Mr. Finicum agreed to take a reporter to see the artifacts. Entering one of the Malheur buildings, he climbed down a narrow stairwell into a dark basement. Then he began pulling items from boxes stacked on a metal shelf — a

flint knife, obsidian arrowheads — each one wrapped in a plastic bag and carefully labeled.

Mr. Finicum rolled his hands over a grinding stone. “Why does the federal government get to keep these things for 30 years down in the basement? Either put them out on display or give them to who they belong.”

He said he wanted to return the items to their owners — the Burns Paiute Tribe. “We want to have a powwow or a confab, and we are trying to see what we can do to help them,” he said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service’s Facebook page for the refuge immediately [fired back](#), pointing out that under federal management, the Burns Paiute Tribe had access to

collect material for making of traditional crafts like baskets, cradle boards, mats and boats. The artifacts were stored “with the full knowledge and blessing of the Burns Paiute Tribe,” the posting said.

“The illegal occupants violated the security of the refuge,” the posting said. “These artifacts have been curated and stored under lock and key.”

The chairwoman of the Burns Paiute Tribe, Charlotte Rodrique, said in an interview this week with the Indian Country Today Media Network that the tribe was “really worried about the status of the artifacts down there.”

[The article](#) said that about 4,000 artifacts belonging to the tribe were stored in buildings controlled by the protesters, and that the tribe was demanding federal action under a provision of a treaty signed in 1868 that guarantees government protection against “bad men.” The [Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979](#) also makes it a federal crime to remove, damage, deface or traffic in artifacts from public land.

Ms. Rodrique did not return telephone calls or an email on Friday seeking further comment.

In addition to their overtures to the tribe, Mr. Bundy and other leaders of the occupier group have also spoken with the F.B.I., in a visit on Thursday to the barricaded entry to the small airport in Burns, Ore., where federal law enforcement agents have established their command post. On Friday, a [new video](#) was posted to the Bundy Ranch Facebook page in which Mr. Finicum said that any speculation

about a withdrawal was erroneous.

“The F.B.I. has reached out to us,” he said in that video. But the talks did not change anything, he said, about the group’s commitment to shift control of the refuge lands into local hands.

Refuge employees, in a letter posted on the refuge website, reminded residents of Harney County that government workers are part of the community, too.

“We can have effective disagreements and either find resolution, find compromise, or simply agree to disagree,” the letter said. “But we do it with respect for the rule of law.”

#### RELATED COVERAGE



[Standoff on Oregon Land Inspires a Counterprotest](#) JAN 19, 2016



[Rural Oregon’s Lost Prosperity Gives Standoff a Distressed Backdrop](#)  
JAN 18, 2016



[Standoff in Oregon Attracts Supporters Bearing Disparate Grievances](#)  
JAN 16, 2016



[Fervor in Oregon Compound and Fear Outside It](#) JAN 12, 2016



[Protesters Rip Out Fence at Refuge in Oregon](#) JAN 11, 2016

---

**More In U.S. »**

---

## Wounded Warrior Project Spends Lavishly on Itself, Insiders Say

**11:20 AM PST** | The charity, which raised \$372 million in 2015, has embraced aggressive styles of fund-raising, marketing and management — and has spent a significant



proportion on overhead.

## Oregon Protesters Urged to Leave After Ammon Bundy Arrest

A day after eight protesters were arrested and one killed, tensions remained high at the Oregon wildlife preserve taken often by government opponents.



## LaVoy Finicum: 'I Would Rather Die Than Be Caged'

11:58 AM PST | Mr. Finicum, who de facto spokesman for the group that took over a wildlife refuge, was killed when the authorities arrested his fellow protesters.



[Back to top](#)

[Home](#)

[World](#)

[U.S.](#)

[Politics](#)

[The Upshot](#)

[New York](#)

[Business Day](#)

[Technology](#)

[Sports](#)

[Opinion](#)

[Science](#)

[Health](#)

[Arts](#)

[Photos](#)

[Style](#)

[Video](#)

[Most Emailed](#)

[More Sections](#)

[Settings](#)

[Download the NYTimes app](#)

[Help](#) [Feedback](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Privacy](#)

© 2016 The New York Times Company