

Recent communications from the Benton County Democrat Party Chair Gabe Shepherd calling for "resistance" and "defense" against Donald Trump, are deeply concerning (<https://bentondemocrats.org/>). Such rhetoric fosters unnecessary division and risks creating an atmosphere of fear and hostility within our community, particularly toward the one-third of Benton County residents who support Trump and align with his priorities and values.

The people in Benton County who voted for Trump are not extremists or threats, but law-abiding neighbors, friends, and coworkers—people who care about this community. The Republican party has become the party of common-sense advocating for the working class and peace, values that resonate deeply with many in Benton County. We stand for practical solutions, protecting freedoms, and representing the needs of “all” hardworking Americans.

Yet this language of “resistance” implies otherwise, suggesting that political disagreement makes us enemies. Trump is not here, and Democrats control every level of government in Oregon. So, who then, is Mr. Shepherd asking his followers to resist? Whom are they defending against? Are these calls aimed at members of our own community who simply hold different views? Such rhetoric unfairly maligns a large segment of our population, fueling their mistrust and fear of Mr. Shepherd and his followers.

Let’s also consider what this messaging means for our broader political system. Trump won the popular vote with 74.2 million votes. To trivialize his priorities and policies as ramblings of a fascist is to call the majority of American voters fascists. Rejecting the will of an inclusive and diverse majority simply because the “right” party is not in power is not only dangerous, but obscenely fascistic. Calls for “resistance” to lawful governance undermine the values that bind us together as both a community and a nation.

Mr. Shepherd is, quite literally, "shepherding" his followers to organize "mass protest marches," fueled by mistrust of the elected national administration. How long before local Republicans become the target of his ire? Peaceful protest is an essential part of our democracy; however, language that frames fellow citizens and elected leaders as threats or enemies is not constructive.

Additionally, Mr. Shepherd, the newly elected County Commissioner, stated in a recent city council meeting that the government’s role is to decide what is “best” and then “find a way to pay for it”—regardless of public opinion or cost. I fundamentally disagree. I wonder if Mr. Shepherd would think the same if it were his money he was spending? The city intends to pay \$200,000,000 on infrastructure without considering where the money will come from. Inevitably this will force taxpayers to bear the load. This is not only irresponsible but is also disrespectful to our citizens who are already struggling financially.

Our government exists to function "by and for the people," a cornerstone principle of our nation and one that has been emphasized throughout Trump’s presidency. The people of Benton County—regardless of political affiliation—deserve leadership that promotes dialogue, understanding, and cooperation, not conflict, division, or lack of representation. Shouldn’t we focus on solutions that unite us as neighbors rather than rhetoric that pits us against one another or instills unfounded fears of our neighbors?

It’s time to focus on what truly matters—**common-sense governance, working-class priorities**, and a shared commitment to building a stronger future for our community and our nation.

Sincerely,

Keith Lembke
Chair, Benton County Republicans

Welcome Benton County Democrats!



Together, let's work towards a shared goal of creating a more equitable future for all residents of Benton County.



My fellow Democrats,

The first thing I want to do is thank you for the work you put in locally. Our voter returns were so commanding in Corvallis, Adair Village, North Albany, Benton County, Oregon, and Val Hoyle's Congressional District. You knocked on doors, dropped literature, staffed the office, and did so much to support our candidates for office. Thank you.

We all know there is more to this story. I write this letter after the Associated Press and other news organizations have called the presidency for former President Donald Trump and Democrats have lost at least three US Senate seats.

Our local Democratic Party leaders will be gathering within the week to strategize and plan for what comes next and how we will keep doing the work: electing good candidates to local boards, like School Boards in May, and working together to stand up to tyranny on the national stage.

First, we can never give up. What makes us Democrats is our inability to accept inequality, our determination to stand up to injustice, and our willingness to fight and advocate for those who do not look, think, pray, or love as we do. These core tenants of our shared identity are going to be tested. We will become exhausted. Our fortitude and our endurance will be tried. But, for the sake of the progress we have made, and for the love of our communities and neighbors, we can never give up.

Second, we must go together. We will disagree on policy, on tactics, and on strategy. That is to be expected. But what we can never do, is turn those disagreements into fights that draw our attention away from our country's lurch towards fascism and seeming ambivalence towards dehumanizing rhetoric. We MUST be arm in arm against hatred, violence, and persecution. If we allow ourselves to be divided, our resistance will be meaningless and without power.

Third, we must protect. President Trump has made many statements indicating that fundamental human and constitutional rights are at risk during a second term. We must protect each other, and the most vulnerable among us, from violations of those rights. We must advocate, protest, lobby, and demonstrate. We who are able must put ourselves, emotionally and likely physically, between a government comfortable with violating personal liberties, and those who are most at risk in our communities.

There will be opportunities to get involved. More information will be shared with you as plans form and develop. The most important thing is to stay connected. If you haven't already, join the Benton County Democrats' email list; go to bentondemocrats.org and sign up at the bottom. If you want to be at the table, making decisions about how to move forward, email bentondemocrats@gmail.com to learn how to become a Precinct Committee Person, aka a voting member of our County Party's Central Committee.

We cannot do this alone.

Onwards. Together.

Gabe Shepherd
Benton County Democrats, Chair