

# Schroeder campaigns against Palouse militia

By Brandon Macz, Daily News staff writer

Barrett Schroeder said Thursday that he had considered running for the Idaho Senate for a while, but learning about the militia group here on the Palouse spurred him into action.

The candidate for Senate District 5 explained his concerns about the 57th and 75th battalions of the Lightfoot Militia in detail in a news release this week that has riled the group and resulted in a back-and-forth of animosity.

Schroeder said, "I care that they have a role of authority. They believe that the Constitution gives them authority over me, or they have an agenda to make that happen."

While the militia claims it is apolitical, Schroeder focuses on the political leanings of its commanding officer, Jeff Williams of Pullman, who is also a member of a local libertarian group, Palouse Liberty Project, and a tea party activist.

Schroeder said the militia's formation is part of a "manifesto," "Articles of Freedom," signed by Williams while he was a delegate at the so-called 2009 Continental Congress in St. Charles, Ill., where the document was drafted. The event was held by the We the People Foundation for Constitutional Education.

Schroeder's release says that the Articles of Freedom call for the formation of militias that will run their own candidates to replace sheriffs. After that, he says the Articles call for an indictment of elected officials through "citizens' grand juries" and no longer paying income taxes.

The "Articles of Freedom" can be downloaded at this shortened Web address:  
<http://goo.gl/zpFc2>

But Williams said Thursday Schroeder's allegations are false, and he would like to see proof.

"He brings up a lot of stuff, and he throws a lot of stuff against the wall to see if it sticks," said Williams. "We don't have any political agenda. We don't endorse political candidates."

He said his involvement in the tea party movement and the Palouse Liberty Project are separate from his affiliation with the Lightfoot Brigade.

"His assertion that people can't do things that have overlap ... it's a spurious argument and it's fallacious at best," said Williams, adding he does not talk about the Palouse

Liberty Project with the militia and vice versa. "You need to have some basis in fact to make a statement like that."

Schroeder said the militia is endorsing Rick Henderson for Latah County sheriff, and that he is either a former or current member.

"The fact that they have a sheriff's candidate tells me that they are political," he said.

Henderson, who filed his candidacy Thursday, denied the allegation.

"(Schroeder) asked me about it and I told him, 'No.' " said Henderson. "I know Jeff, and I've talked to Jeff about (the militia)."

Henderson said if elected he would not be opposed to using the militia as a community response group for certain tasks.

"For natural disaster stuff like that, I absolutely don't have a problem with that," he said. "As far as firearms stuff goes, which is what Mr. Schroeder wants to focus on, absolutely not."

Schroeder said it is concerning that the militia's membership is kept secret, adding that secrecy also means voters won't know if a political candidate is a member.

"There's nobody in our group that's running for office, period," said Williams. "Anybody that would think about running would shy away from us just because of stuff like this."

Schroeder co-owns Moscow Hide and Fur with his father, Gary Schroeder, a former state senator who lost the Republican primary in 2010 to Gresham Bouma of Viola. Democrat Dan Schmidt of Moscow ultimately won the election.

Schmidt has filed for reelection to the Senate in the newly formed District 5, which includes Latah and Benewah counties.

Bouma said Thursday he will be running again this year, and his candidacy documents are in the mail. He added he only recently learned there was a militia on the Palouse.

"I'd never heard of them before until Barrett brought it up," he said. "I didn't know I had something to fear. ... I wasn't worried before, I'm not worried now."

Williams said the Palouse Liberty Project has never endorsed a political candidate, but briefly considered Ron Paul this year. He said individual members will likely favor Bouma because he's "constitution-oriented."

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