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President Pardons Jailed Ranchers

By Mark Anderson

President Donald Trump on July 10 signed presidential pardons for 76-year-old Dwight Hammond and his son Steven, 49—the embattled Oregon ranchers who suffered gross injustices after they were forced to serve consecutive prison terms despite being found innocent by a jury of the most serious charges. Their jailing eventually spurred the respected Bundy ranching family to protest the men’s plight at the Malheur nature preserve.

“The evidence at trial regarding the Hammonds’ responsibility for the fire was conflicting, and the jury acquitted them on most of the charges,” a White House statement said. “Justice is overdue for Dwight and Steven Hammond, both of whom are entirely deserving of these Grants of Executive Clemency.”

The Hammonds, sentenced to five years in 2012 for that conviction, became the focal point of ranchers and others who oppose the federal government’s notoriously wasteful and costly mismanagement of mas-



This photo of the Hammond family shows Steven (second from left) and Dwight (fourth from left, now 76 years old) before they were put in prison for setting controlled fires on public land on which they graze their livestock. A statement from the White House said in part: “Justice is overdue for Dwight and Steven Hammond, both of whom are entirely deserving of these Grants of Executive Clemency.” We at AFP agree.

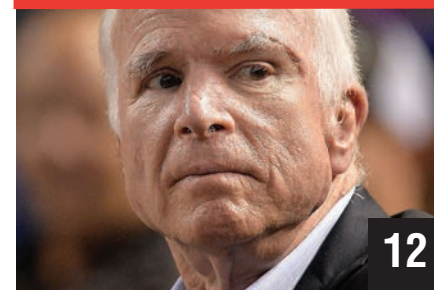
sive tracts of Western lands to which it claims “ownership.” While mainstream media have simplistically claimed “they had set a series of fires on their ranch that spread to federal land,” in reality, the Hammonds started a “backburn” on their grazing

land in Harney County, Ore. The controlled burn was lit, without malicious intent, to mitigate the impact of a totally separate fire on adjacent federal land that was headed their way.

In response to the Hammonds’ jailing, protesters, including the sons of famed Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County in early 2016. The mainstream media were quick to call it an “armed standoff.” However, the only use of firearms came when one of the occupiers, soft-spoken Robert LaVoy Finicum, died with his hands in the

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