

**GUEST EDITORIAL
FROM THE EAST OREGONIAN**

Ag trade needs long-term plan

As Eastern Oregon farmers reap their year's worth of work from its fertile soil, national and international pressures are tugging and tearing at their bottom line.

President Donald Trump said this week his administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture will use a Depression-era law to provide up to \$12 billion in aid to farmers hurt by its trade policies.

Those policies — which include placing taxes on imported goods — have been reciprocated by foreign governments. That has damaged the American farmer's ability to compete at a level playing field on the worldwide market.

Thus the \$12 billion bailout. Sure, it's much cheaper than the \$700 billion Economic Stabilization Act that American taxpayers paid to bail out the banking and auto industries in 2008. But the deal for farmers is good for just one growing season, and includes few details on how exactly the money will be dispersed.

If President Trump has not solved our trade war by next year, American farmers will either see depressed prices, or taxpayers will once again be on the hook for another bailout. And China, which holds much of America's debt, will hold the final call.

There's a political irony in this too, given that the political movement that catapulted Trump to the White House was partly inspired by understandable disgust in the American heartland over the 2008 federal bailouts.

This is a serious issue in Eastern Oregon, perhaps one of the most important in a generation. For us to survive on the east side of the Columbia Basin, we must make money from agriculture. It's the linchpin of our economic system and our region depends on it.

Even the rather pro-Trump, pro-business Wall Street Journal wrote the administration "is trying to fix an economic problem of its own making by putting the victims on the federal dole."

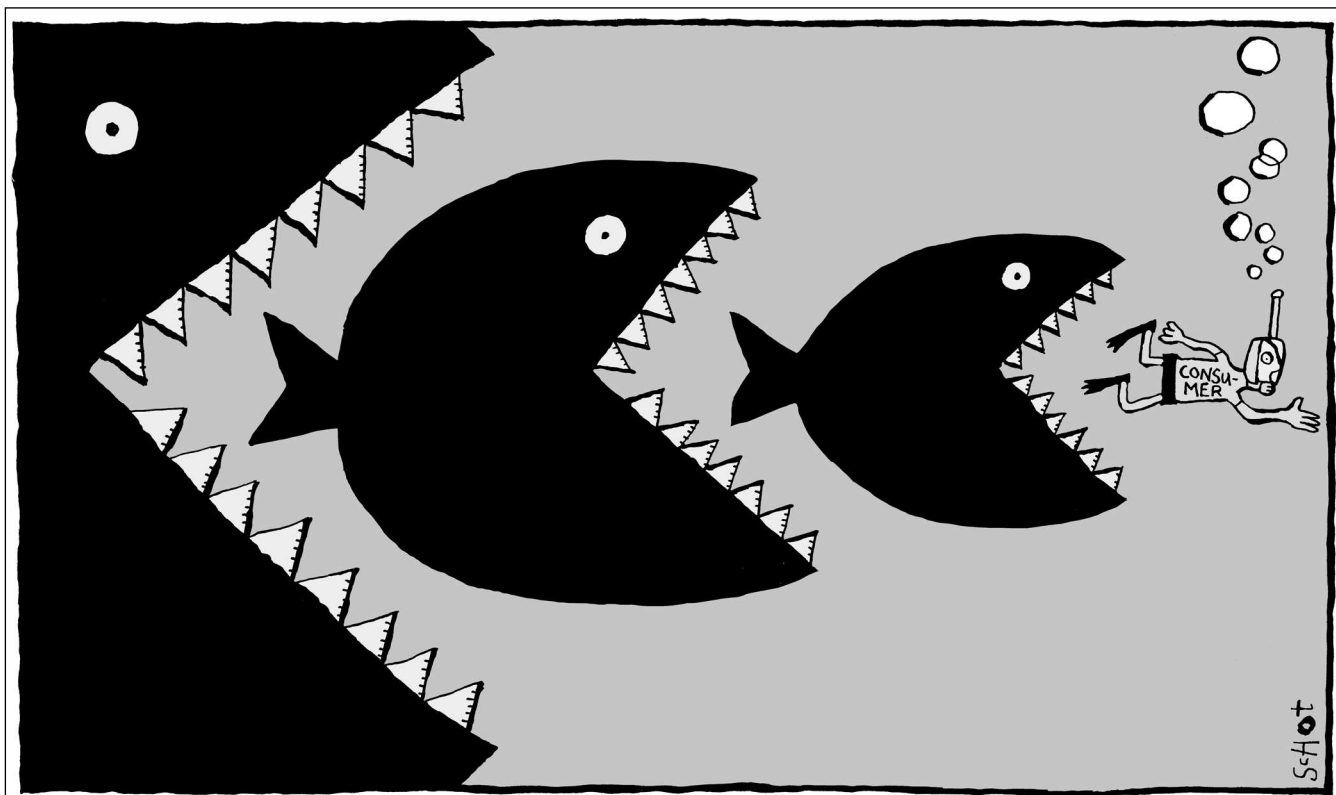
This issue has everything to do with policies, not politics. Like most Western farmers, we remain convinced that the Trans-Pacific Partnership was the right way to lead on international trade and get a leg up on China. Its demise is a missed opportunity for fair and free trade.

We understand there are emergencies where federal involvement is necessary, but spending \$12 billion to get back to where we were prior to government action seems wasteful and inefficient.

Trump disagrees, and thinks he will pull the country out on the other side with a better trade deal.

"Negotiations are going really well, be cool," Trump tweeted this week. "The end result will be worth it!"

Maybe Trump is right and the deals get done. But it's hard to "be cool" with an economic linchpin in the balance.



American flag represents right to vote

On June 7, when I arrived at my office, I discovered the American flag hanging on my door had been trounced. It had footprints all over it.

At that moment, I thought about my late father (Douglas L. Berley), who served in the Navy on the aircraft carrier USS Shangri-La. I thought about my maternal grandfather (Paul A. Curry), who served in the Army, in Burma, in World War II. And I thought about my paternal grandfather (Dr. Harry M. Berley) who also served in WWII as an Army doctor in Germany.

Each day, when I open my office door, I see the American flag hanging in the window, and it ensures a day doesn't go by that I don't think about the sacrifice they made for the American flag. Seeing it reminds me to respect and to be grateful for the American way of life.

Being curious, saddened and naturally upset, I had to investigate for myself what happened to my American flag.

Since there were fresh footprints, likely from the evening before, it didn't take me long to discover both who and why. I found video footage of the event. Yes, it was the night before, June 6.

With patience I watched the video and listened to why they did it. I heard them say that the last vote against allowing marijuana was 52-48, that it was the "democratic process" and we should "follow the process," and that if "it gets to the people, and it gets voted down, it gets voted down."

I also listened to the bystanders who made some good points, but nevertheless they encouraged six people to remove my rights as a La Grande and U.S. citizen. None of those points though, mattered to my little flag.

I could go on about the statistics of deaths in this country due to opioids, alcohol and self-inflicted harm, and those alone add up to well over 100,000 per year, per the CDC vital statistics. But, I did read on the DEA's website the number of deaths attributable to marijuana was an astonishing number: zero. Yes, zero deaths attributed to marijuana, to cannabis.

In further having an open mind, since that is what America represents, I see that New Jersey (with Pennsylvania likely to follow) will allow marijuana as a gateway drug. A gateway drug approved by the state. Why? To address the opioid crisis, they are experimenting with the approach to get these seriously addicted people to convert to marijuana instead. I guess those states read the same DEA drug fact sheet I happened to find.

And, to dispel the argument that getting everyone off of drugs is counter to human nature: When humankind no longer exists, only then will drugs stop being an everyday part of life, good, bad or indifferent.

Sure, people can get a medical marijuana card, or go to another town. Point taken.

But, when it was said and done — after all of the discussion about Ameri-

**My Voice
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Steven Berley is a local business owner and a resident of La Grande.



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can democracy, and contradictory to not one but five U.S. Constitutional amendments that address the right to vote — six people in La Grande voted no against the American flag.

There are now three American flags hanging on my office door and windows. One for each of my forefathers. And they will never come down until freedom, the right to vote and a respect for the American system are realized in La Grande.

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