

**GUEST EDITORIAL
FROM THE BEND BULLETIN**

Fixing pot inspections and pot law for medical marijuana

Oregon's system for tracking medical marijuana is a mess of the state's own making. It will take the Legislature to straighten things out. Doing so should get high priority in the 2019 legislative session.

The Oregon Health Authority, which oversees medical marijuana, has been unable to inspect growers enough to deter those growing weed illegally. In fact, according to an article that appeared in the July 27 Bulletin, of some 20,000 registered medical marijuana grow sites in the state in 2017, only 58 were inspected. Given those numbers, a would-be illegal grower might well assume the changes of being caught are minuscule.

In a report issued in May, OHA makes no attempt to gloss over its problems keeping up with medical marijuana growers. It does not have enough money to hire enough inspectors to give registration requirements teeth, and its current data systems are not up to the task of keeping up with legislatively ordered licensing requirements.

It's even difficult for law enforcement to know what is a legal grow and what is not. Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson and District Attorney John Hummel have both complained the state won't provide a list of legal medical grow sites in the county. That means county law enforcement needs to make an individual request for each case.

The Oregon Health Authority says confidentiality provisions in the law prevent them from releasing a list. Medical growers — unless they have medical marijuana licenses of their own — are growing pot for specific individuals. Each of the individuals has had to disclose personal information about themselves and the medical conditions that make them eligible to use medical marijuana. Oregon law prohibits the release of any of that information unless it's been subpoenaed by a law enforcement agency, and without it, law enforcement has no way of knowing what's legal and what is not.

Each of those problems can be fixed. It's the Legislature that doles out money to the OHA, and if it hopes to have the state's medical marijuana laws enforced in any serious way, the agency must be given the money to do so. And lawmakers can no doubt find a way to rewrite existing marijuana law so that law enforcement agencies can obtain lists of growers without unnecessary hassle. Fix the inspections and fix the law.



Your views

Ebbert: How is your economy?

To the Editor:
On July 2, Fox News reported: "Trump's birthday gift to America — A booming economy."

Whose "economy is doing great"? The Bureau of Economic Analysis currently lists the economy up one-tenth of one percent after inflation. Unemployment is down, and nearly everyone who wants a job is employed. Family income is only up two-tenths of one percent after inflation, mostly due to working longer hours. This does not seem like a "booming economy" for family incomes.

Family finances have not improved for wage earners. Vacations have not been upgraded. Larger payments have not been added to savings, and retirement resources seem in greater jeopardy. Expenses increase at alarming rates. Housing, food, utilities, schooling, transportation and health care all contribute to these expenses, and many are not included in the government's basket of inflation rate categories. Homelessness has increased.

This is the first generation in the U.S. where children cannot expect a more rewarding life than their parents. The Congressional "Republicans" (as opposed to Republican Party) are responsible for this as much as the current president. It is the voter's duty to stay informed and elect representatives with the health of the country foremost in their considerations.

Trump says the new GDP (his economy) numbers are up, at 4.1 percent. How is your economy?

Believe what they do, not what they say.

David Ebbert
Enterprise

Coote: Wolf recovery has no value to the citizens of Oregon

To the Editor:
The Observer story published June 29 titled "Wolves continue to drive debate" by Stephen Hamway deserves a response based on facts. In that story, retired Forest Service Hydrologist Suzanne Fouty expressed the opinion that wolves would act as "security guards" for

streamside vegetation by keeping the deer, etc., from grazing willows and shrubs along the banks of streams to oblivion, thus allowing the shade to cool the water for the fish.

Fact #1: A four-inch-diameter tree consumes 40 gallons of water per day. If the streams were choked with willows, etc., what water would be left for fish, particularly during the hotter late summer and early fall when flows are already low?

The story also stated that a 2006 study indicated that Oregon had enough territory to support 1,450 wolves.

Fact #2: According to the International Wolf Center, a wolf needs seven pounds of food per day to flourish and reproduce. So, 1,450 wolves would need more than 10,000 pounds per day, or more than three million pounds per year. If the average prey weighed 150 pounds, that would be more than 24,000 kills per year.

Fact #3: According to the 2017 ODFW Survey, total deer population is 33 percent below the management objective at 226,000 deer. If the wolves preyed only on deer, they could easily decimate the deer population in a few years, but deer are not their only prey.

Fact #4: Wolves are pack predators. If there are eight to 12 hungry wolves near livestock, fladry and range riders are not going to stop them from taking livestock. The wolf is a smart predator and has figured out that a beef calf does not flee as fast as other wildlife.

I will now state my opinion based on fact. Increasing wolf numbers will create more predation on livestock. The Wolf Recovery program has cost more than \$8 million with zero benefit other than creating a subset of bureaucrats that are employed in the program. This program is a sick joke that has no value to the citizens of Oregon.

John Coote
Island City

Barry: Rare sightings: Bigfoot, Yeti, Walden

To the Editor:
Fake news in The Observer? An FCC press release was printed on page one of the July 20 Observer as if it were a news story, report-

ing that Greg Walden, our invisible congressman, "recently visited Eastern Oregon," at an undisclosed place and time, taking credit for new FCC programs. That isn't front page news. An earthquake occurring at an undisclosed place and time isn't front page news, either; but it would be more interesting. "Greg Walden announces a town hall meeting in La Grande." That would rate a banner headline.

Greg Walden is a delicate congressional house plant. He flourishes in the low light of his secluded niche in D.C., surviving on regular attention and appropriate nutrients from special interest lobbyists. He obviously fears exposure to the harsh climate of Eastern Oregon where his constituents have every reason to question why their concerns are no longer important to him.

Oregon's entire 911 system was updated in 2017, but Walden is proudly announcing a new FCC 911 program, even though it is unfunded and likely to cost Oregonians \$15 million. Doesn't sound like good news to me.

The new Rural Health Care Program will improve health care to patients by providing access to telecommunications and broadband services. The press release fails to mention any specific involvement Walden had in this legislation. He is just piggybacking on the FCC Commissioner's news release. It's ironic to see Walden, who led Republicans' efforts to destroy the Affordable Care Act, mentioned in the same sentence as "improving health care." If he'd been successful in dismantling Obamacare, one of every five residents in this district would have lost their health insurance, and thus had no access to these improved health care facilities.

If Walden's staff were familiar with La Grande, the FCC press release would have featured the Ray Baum Act, designed to "boost development of next generation wireless broadband." Ray, born and raised in La Grande, was well known and respected in Union County, but how would they know that? Walden is so seldom in his district.

It's time for a change in November!

Lois Barry
La Grande

Write to us

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