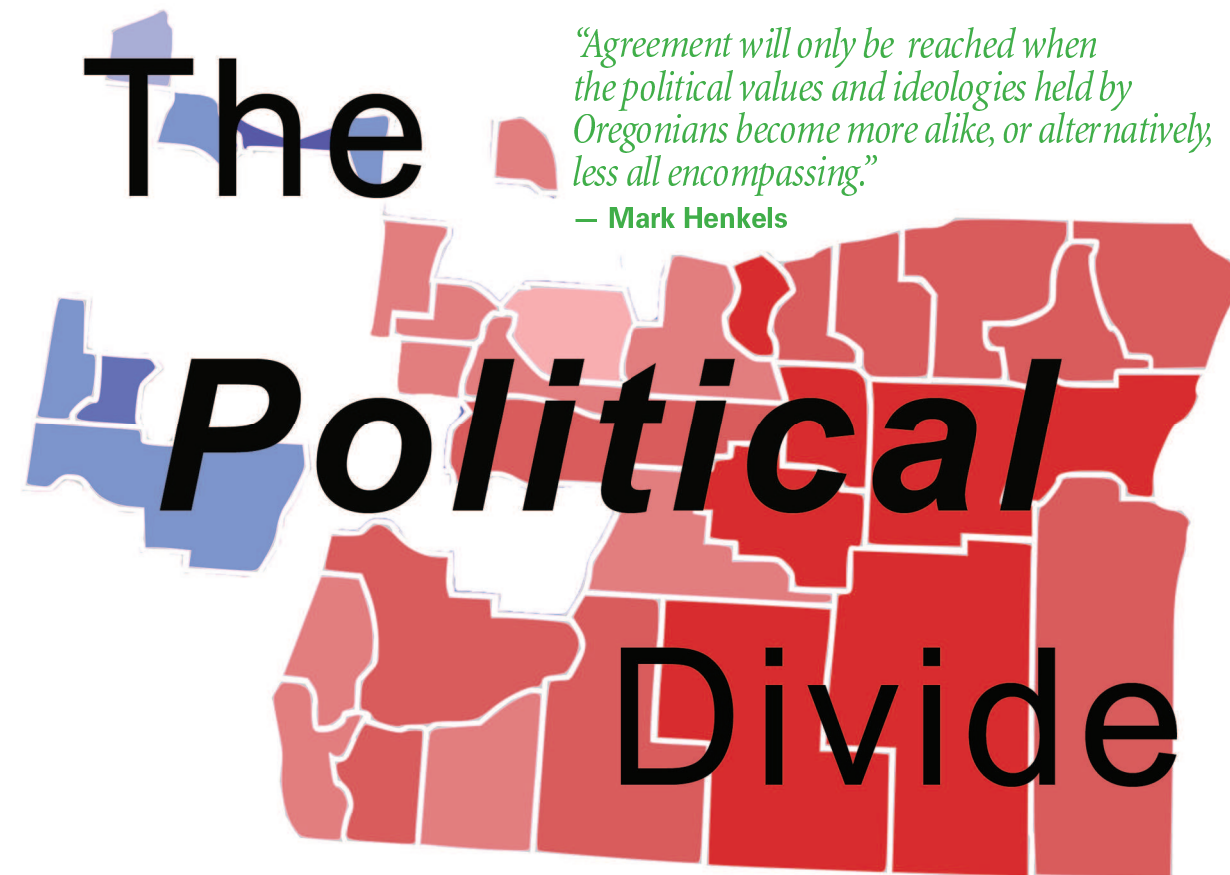




THE OBSERVER SERVING UNION AND WALLOWA COUNTIES SINCE 1896

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Good day to our valued subscriber Jeff Kropf of Cove



"Agreement will only be reached when the political values and ideologies held by Oregonians become more alike, or alternatively, less all encompassing."

— Mark Henkels

By Max Denning, The Observer

In 1966 in Multnomah County, 59 percent of voters were registered Democrats. In the Eastern Oregon region, 56 percent were registered Democrats. Each region of the state was at least 50 percent Democrat. But, Republican Tom McCall handily won the 1966 gubernatorial election with more than 55 percent of the vote, losing only three counties.

More than 50 years later, Oregon's political landscape has changed dramatically — and the urban-rural divide couldn't be more apparent. Multnomah County is more liberal than ever with 71 percent of voters registered as Democrats. Eastern Oregon has gone the opposite way, with only 41 percent of voters registered as Democrats.

Portland State University, Western Oregon University and Oregon State University delivered a paper at the Toward One Oregon Conference in Salem. The paper, titled "The Politics of One Oregon: The Causes, Consequences and Prospects of Overcoming the Rural-Urban Divide," explored the dramatic political polarization in the state.

urbanization as just some of the factors affecting the state's divide in 2008.

The state's rural and urban split has deepened with the growth of Portland, the state's only metropolitan area with a population in the country's top 120 — Portland ranks 25th. Salem, the state's second biggest metro area, is 126th.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1960, Oregon had a population of 1.772 million, while the Portland metro area had a population of 881,961 — 49.6 percent of the state's population. In 2017, the census bureau estimated Oregon had a population of 4.143 million, and the Portland metro area's population was 2.435 million — 58.77 percent of the state's population.

This urbanization of the state's population is part of a nationwide trend. In 1960, 69.9 percent of the U.S.'s population lived in urban areas. In 2010, that had climbed to 80.7 percent of the population.

With the population growth in Portland has come an influx of jobs and wealth in the state's marquee city. Over the past 30

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What once was only a 3 percent political registration gap between Eastern Oregon and Multnomah County has now skyrocketed to more than 30 percent.

With the state's population becoming more concentrated around Portland, and Eastern Oregon and Multnomah County becoming so politically disparate, the political voices of East Oregonians have become increasingly silenced. A state that at one time was politically homogeneous has become as polarized as anywhere in the country.

So, what happened?

In 2008, three professors from

Mark Henkels is a professor of public policy and administration at WOU and co-authored the 44-page paper. He told The Observer the growth of the divide can be boiled down to two major causes.

"One is the economics and the second is cultural," Henkels said, adding the divide has broadened due to "the polarizing political climate right now, where because of gerrymandering and other reasons we are driven to more extremes if you're a Democrat or a Republican."

Henkels and his co-authors, Richard Clucas, professor of political science at PSU, and Brent Steel, professor of political science at OSU, identified globalization, differing views on the environment, demographic changes and

the nation and earned \$30 per month.

One CCC camp was established in Halfway, about 52 miles east of Baker City. Whit Deschner, who lives in Baker City, saved the memorabilia of his father, Howard, who was stationed at the Halfway CCC camp.

Whit believes his father helped build what is now the Nordic center at Anthony Lakes — it was originally a Forest Service guard station — and worked on a Forest Service building in Halfway. The CCC crews mainly

built trails in the Wallowa Mountains, but members also fought wildfires.

Among the documents that Whit Deschner inherited are letters Howard wrote to his parents back in Portland. In his cursive hand, the young man told tales of his time in Eastern Oregon.

In his letter dated "9th Sunday (Easter) 1939," Howard recounts how he and a few friends headed out, on foot, to the Snake River 12 miles away.

"We had one pack sack with 1 can of beans, 1 of

corn, a loaf of bread and 1 lb. of cheese and a small fruit cake that Grandma sent me and a small can of jam. Just hardly enough for one meal."

After reaching the river, the boys decided to visit Copperfield, a mining town 16 miles to the north.

"We hiked from 2:30 to 8:30 straight and hiked 16 good long miles of the most deserted God-forsaken worthless ornery piece of country I have ever laid my two eyes on," Howard wrote.

Along the way they caught and milked a cow to supple-

ment their meager rations. Finally, in the "pitch blackness," they came upon Copperfield.

(The town no longer exists, but it was near the current site of Oxbow, where Highway 86 reaches the Snake River.)

"No post office, no store, no nothing, just 3 or 4 houses strung out over about 2 miles along the Snake," Howard wrote.

He and his CCC buddies took refuge in a horse stable "without hay or straw or nothing except horse

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1966 56

The percentage of Eastern Oregonians who were registered Democrats in 1966

59

The percentage of Multnomah County voters registered as Democrats in 1966

2006 41

The percentage of Eastern Oregonians who were registered Democrats in 2006

71

The percentage of Multnomah County voters registered as Democrats in 2006

* The Eastern Oregon region includes Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco and Wheeler counties.

"The decline of the timber industry created much stronger differentials between the rural areas and Portland. At one time, Portland was a timber town and a really blue collar town. It wasn't that much different from all the mill towns in Oregon."

— Mark Henkels, professor of public policy and administration at Western Oregon University

Federal shutdown limited in Union County

By Dick Mason The Observer

The partial shutdown of the federal government, which began Dec. 22, is having a limited impact in Union County.

Union County residents are still receiving essential services from the federal government. These include mail delivery from the U.S. Postal Service and services from the Social Security Administration office in La Grande.

Services from some U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, are being curtailed, however. Both Forest Service offices in La Grande, the La Grande Ranger District and the Forestry and Range Sciences Lab, are closed due to the shutdown. Signs posted at the public entrances to both Forest Service offices state: "This U.S. Department of Agriculture office is currently closed due to the lapse in federal government funding. The office will reopen once Congress restores funding."

The closures mean the public cannot purchase Forest Service maps and permits in La Grande. However, some public services are still being provided, including law enforcement and snow removal in public use areas, according to a Forest Service spokesman.

The impact of the partial government shutdown is also being felt in the Union County offices for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency and Rural Development, all located in an office building on the 1900 block of Adams Avenue in La Grande. A total of eight employees work at the offices, two of whom are now on involuntary leaves of absence, also known as furloughs, according to Mike Burton of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Burton is not one of the two furloughed, but he knows what it is like. He was furloughed during government shutdowns in 1995-96 and 2013. Burton said it is a frustrating experience because you must stay away from the office, even when you have important work to do.

"You can't do the things you need to, and your timelines do not change. You just end up with fewer days to get things

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Baker City man talks about the history of the CCC

By Lisa Britton WesCom News Service

To help ease rampant unemployment during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps for unmarried men in 1933.

Known as the CCC, its members planted trees, built flood barriers, fought forest fires and maintained roads and trails.

Most of the workers were between the ages of 18 and 25. The men lived in military-style camps across

INDEX table with categories like Classified, Comics, Crossword, Dear Abby, Horoscope, Lottery, Record, Obituaries, Opinion, Outdoors.

WEATHER table with forecast for Friday (Low, Cloudy, late rain), Saturday (41/31, Bit of rain, snow), Sunday (35/20, A little snow).

CONTACT US table with phone number 541-963-3161, email news@lagrandeobserver.com, and address in La Grande, Oregon.

