

**GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE NEWS-REVIEW**

## Short-term government funding is just a start

That big gust of wind you likely felt on what was an otherwise calm and sunny Friday last week didn't have anything to do with the weather.

That big gust of wind was likely caused by the collective "WHEW!" from thousands of Douglas County residents and millions of Americans when news the partial government shutdown had ended.

It couldn't have come at a better time.

Here in our own back yard, outdoor enthusiasts and loggers were probably doing cartwheels with Roseburg's Bureau of Land Management office reopening. After all, the office oversees more than 400,000 acres of Southwest Oregon, which annually yields more than 36 million board feet of timber each year, according to the bureau. Not to mention it manages the North Umpqua Wild and Scenic River and the North Umpqua Trail that goes into the Cascade Mountain Range.

Anyone who is an avid hiker who has the recent rains earlier this month found out how much the BLM was missed when restroom facilities were shuttered and trash cans were overflowing.

And if the shutdown would have continued, food-stamp benefits would have been in jeopardy. That would have been a huge blow to people here. A 2013 count done by the U.S. Census Bureau showed 28,435 people — approximately 26.3 percent of Douglas County's population — benefit from an Oregon Trail EBT card.

Oh, and let's not forget how tax returns could have been delayed for a long, long time, especially with much of the Internal Revenue Service processing mountains of tax refunds without seeing any kind of monetary compensation.

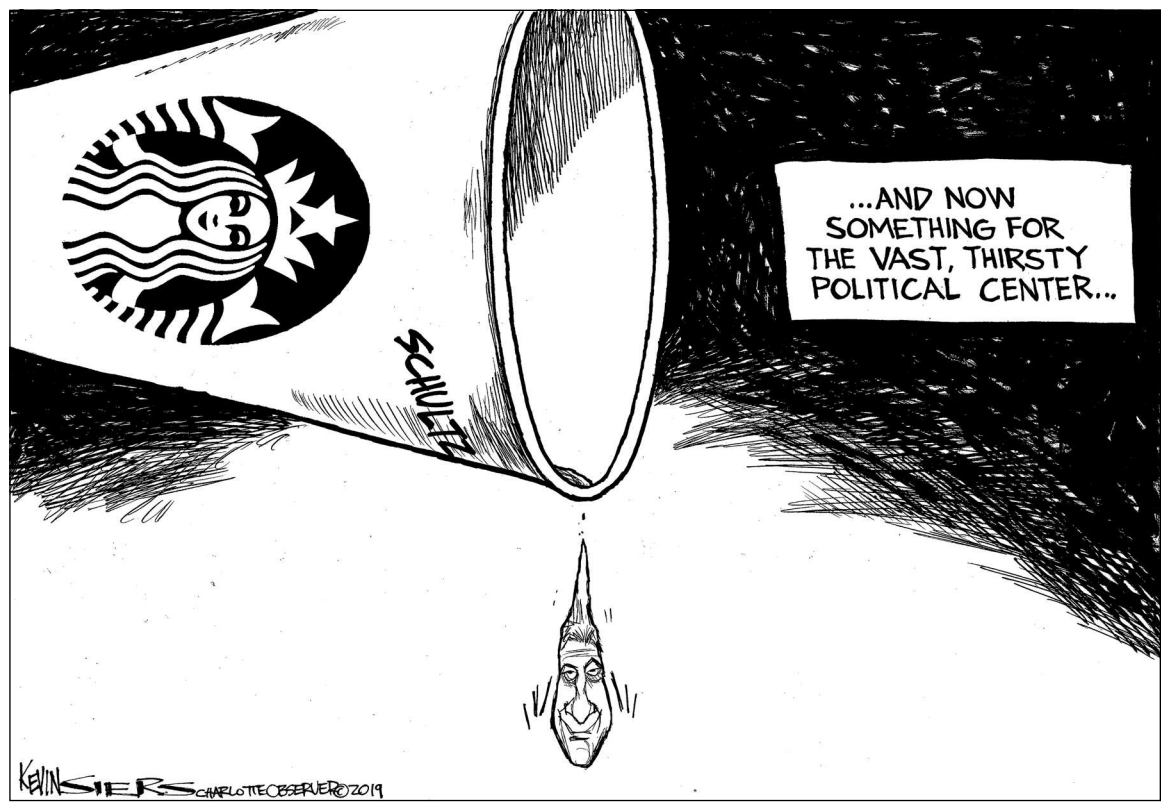
So yeah. The torches and pitchforks would have been out in full force, but that would have been the least of the government's problems.

This time of year, for lack of a better way of saying it, was probably the best time for a shutdown to happen. Not a lot of people travel, not a lot of people buy houses, and not a lot of people spend a lot of money on stuff other than their heat and electric bill in an effort to stay warm.

But things wouldn't have gotten any better had the shutdown prolonged.

It opened back up Friday thanks to what essentially is a three-week bandaid, one that allows lawmakers to hammer out some kind of compromise for the border-security debate that started this whole mess. If it's not done, we could wind up right back where we were a few days ago.

Now, not later, is the perfect time to get things done, and knowing there's even a remote possibility we could move backward is unacceptable.



## Federal hydropower delivers value for consumers

Recently, including in a column in The Observer, some have asserted that purchasing power from the Bonneville Power Administration is an "outmoded" model that should be jettisoned in favor of other sources. In fact, BPA and its utility customers are evolving with the dynamic electricity industry, and it is local utilities like Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative that are best able to determine the precise mix of power for future needs. With respect to the federal hydropower system, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the demise of this flexible and renewable source of electricity have been greatly exaggerated.

BPA offers some of the cleanest and lowest priced power in the country. But, in order to retain this enviable position it will need to continue to address the challenge of increasing costs and reduced revenue. This is not an issue unique to BPA or even to the Northwest. Low natural gas prices and other factors have reduced market prices for selling surplus power. At the same time, an onslaught of regulatory costs — including fish and wildlife mitigation, physical security, cyber security and the need to maintain aging infrastructure — have taken their toll.

Just as during a similar threat from a dip in market prices in the 1990s, BPA and agencies that own the generation assets are implementing a strategy to strengthen financial health through cost and debt management. Part of this plan is to modernize to meet industry change and better provide competitive power and transmission services.

Some assertions about a failing federal power system appear to

be motivated by long-held advocacy positions against dams. These arguments are misguided in their presumption the needs of fish (impacted by many factors) should mean dismantling dams through which the fish already see 96 to 98 percent survival rates. There has even been fear mongering about sediment buildup, ignoring that the Army Corps of Engineers very effectively provides any needed dredging in the river.

These claims also tend to ignore the enormous value and unique aspects of power from BPA that is safe, reliable, flexible and 95 percent emission free. Including the market purchases that could contain coal or gas generation, BPA's power still enjoys a level of 27 pounds of carbon for each megawatt hour of electricity, compared to the national rate of 998 pounds. Studies have shown that to replace just one-eighth of BPA's power with highly efficient gas generation would increase CO2 emissions by more than 2 million metric tons each year, the equivalent of adding more than 400,000 cars to the roads.

In addition, hydropower's flexible capacity enables more use of generation from wind and solar. With large, cost-effective battery storage not yet available, intermittent renewable sources have added operational need and cost of being integrated into the grid using other generation such as hydropower that can ramp to meet immediate demand.

The regional power planning entity, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, stated, "The federal hydropower system has been, and continues to be, the found-

### My Voice ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Corwin is the executive director of the Public Power Council, a not-for-profit



association that represents consumer-owned electric utilities in the Pacific Northwest

with respect to power and transmission from the Federal Columbia River Power System. Corwin has more than 20 years of experience in Northwest energy policy.

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ation of the Northwest's economy." As BPA and its utility customers evolve to meet future needs, this valuable federal power system is a far cry from being outmoded.

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