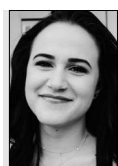


Coming back to work at hometown newspaper

Hello Readers, My name is Francisca Benitez, but most people call me Frankie. I recently accepted a job at The Observer as a news reporter. I was born here and lived in La Grande for most of my life.



FROM THE NEWSROOM
FRANCISCA BENITEZ

After graduating from La Grande High School I earned a degree in journalism at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I worked on the news desk at the Daily Emerald, UO's student publication, for two years. I was the senior news editor when I graduated, and I learned so much about journalism and newspapers there. I got the opportunity to write many exciting stories about a variety of topics, and I got to work with many talented and hardworking student journalists. I also interned last summer in Portland at Willamette Week, where I honed my news skills in the professional and fast-paced setting of the city.

I came home to be with my amazing family for a while after graduating from UO in December and began planning my next move, but much to my surprise, a news reporter position opened up right here. I am thrilled to be bringing my skills home to serve the community that helped raise me.

I'll be reporting on EOU, the City of Cove and general news. I am very excited to be here, and I can't imagine a better place to start my career than home. La Grande is such a special community. There is something so heartwarming about reporting in a community that I know so well.

Cheers,
Francisca Benitez

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

State Sen. William S. Hansell (29th District/Pendleton): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., S-423, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1729. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/hansell. Email: sen.billhansell@oregonlegislature.gov.

State Rep. Greg Barreto (58th District/Cove): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-384, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1458. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto. Email: rep.gregbarreto@oregonlegislature.gov.

State Rep. Greg Smith (57th District): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-482, Salem, OR, 97301; 503-986-1457. Heppner office: P.O. Box 219, Heppner, OR 97836; 541-676-5154; Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithg. Email: rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

City of La Grande: Mayor Steve Clements, City Manager Robert Strobe; P.O. Box 670, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-1309; fax 541-963-3333.

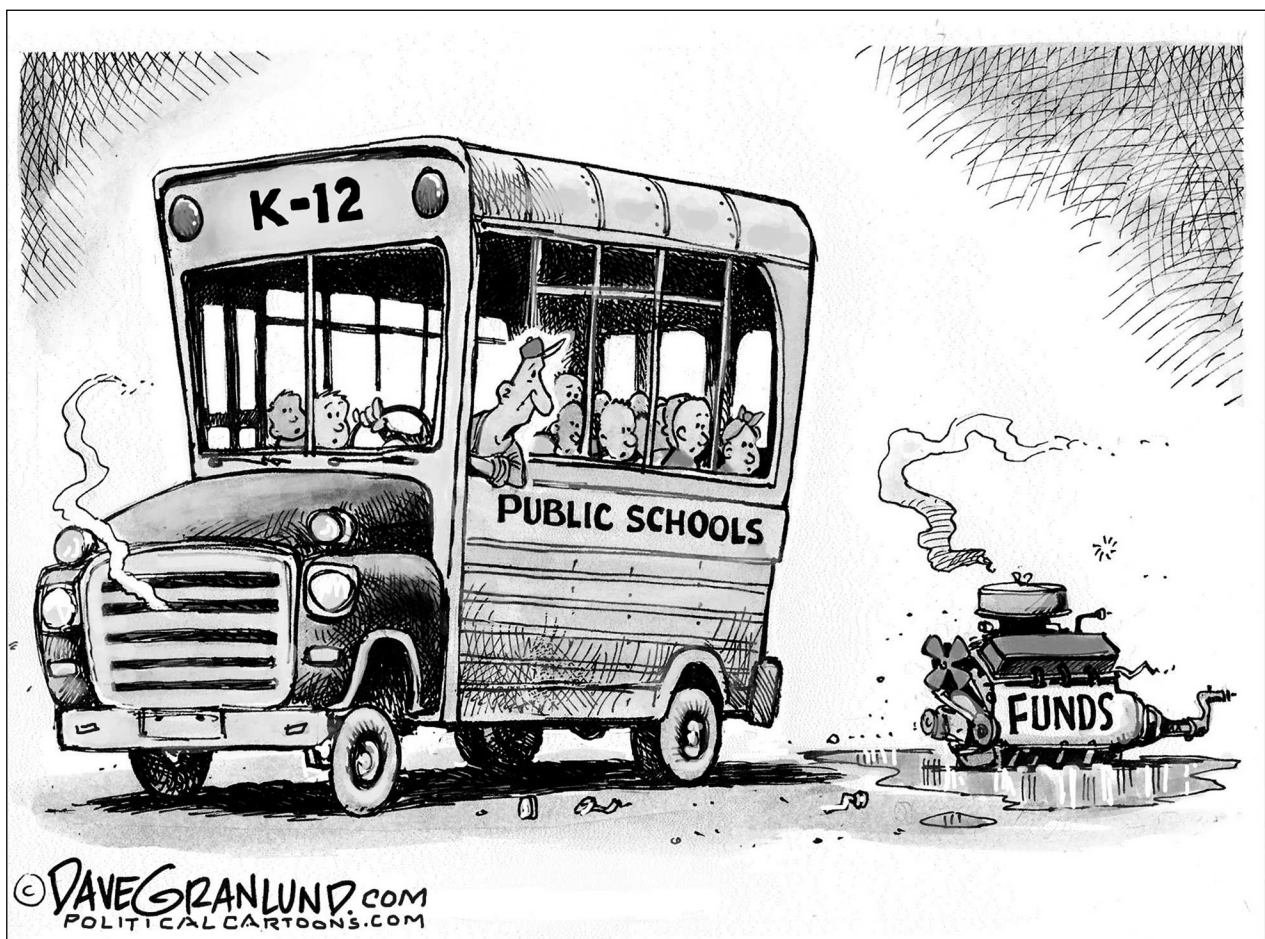
Union County Commissioners: Donna Beverage, Matt Scarfo and Paul Anderes; 1106 K Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-963-1001; fax 541-963-1079.

Wallowa County Commissioners: John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts; 101 S. River St., Room 202, Enterprise, OR 97828; 541-426-4543, ext. 11; fax 541-426-0582.

Egin City Councilors: Mayor Allan Duffy, 501 N 11th St., 541-437-1016, mayor@cityofelginor.org; Mary West, 260 N 5th Ave., 541-805-0443, councilor3@cityofelginor.org; Kathy Warren, PO Box 697, 541-786-9611, councilor6@cityofelginor.org; Risa Halgarth, PO Box 525, 541-437-9462, councilor2@cityofelginor.org; Rocky Burgess, 800 N 14th St., P.O. Box 854, 541-786-2417, councilor1@cityofelginor.org; David Reed, 1011 Detroit St., PO Box 368, 541-975-3306, councilor4@cityofelginor.org; Ryan Martin, councilor5@cityofelginor.org

Enterprise City Councilors: Mayor Stacey Karvoski, mayorofenterprise@gmail.com; Jenni Word; Dave Elliott; Ashley Sullivan; Micah Agnew; Larry Christman; Chris Pritchard; 541-426-4196; mail to City of Enterprise, 108 N.E. 1st Street, Enterprise, OR 97828

Imbler City Councilors: Mayor Mike McLean, Corrine Wilfong, Herman Ortmann, Mark Howell, Rick Vicek, Joan Harding, Jason Berglund; 180 Ruckman Ave.; P.O. Box 40, Imbler OR 97841; 541-534-6095



Nothing to gain, everything to lose: B2H transmission line is obsolete and devastating

The B2H transmission line is a 20th century solution in search of a modern problem that doesn't exist. It's wasteful, obsolete and potentially devastating.

As of late, the City of La Grande's official position on the B2H Transmission Line project has been "No Position" or at best "Move B2H." During my campaign for city council this past fall, I studied this issue and I can absolutely understand why the city has taken that stance. "We don't have a dog in that fight" is a phrase we often hear at council meetings and work sessions, and the city's attitude about this issue is no different — but this time, it's due to a lack of understanding and a failure to fully appreciate the devastating consequences of this obsolete and completely unnecessary project. Consequences that absolutely give the city a number of reasons to join the effort to stop the B2H project.

Here are some truths: Not a single tower will be built on city property, and not a single dollar of increased property tax revenue will benefit the city.

(Speaking of taxes, we've also found that the proposed, approximately \$600,000 tax benefit to Union County is merely a guess by Idaho Power and cannot be corroborated by anyone at the County Assessor's office or Oregon Department of Revenue — but that's a story for a later time.)

It's also true the city

no longer has a "seat at the table" when it comes to working with Idaho Power, the county, state, BLM and other agencies that have a stake in this project.

However, that doesn't mean the city government and residents can't take action to help stop this project while there's still time.

Idaho Power is planning to utilize Morgan Lake Road, as well as the Modelaire/Hawthorne Loop during construction. I understandt Morgan Lake Road is a county road, so hopefully they're negotiating with Idaho Power, but who will pay to repair Gekeler Lane or Walnut Street? Modelaire and Hawthorne? I promise you the private corporation will not simply volunteer those funds.

The citizens of La Grande will be stuck footing a bill that could reach up to several hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The city government should also request that Idaho Power gives us the funds to more effectively respond to a fire, be it additional equipment or salary. These are not pipe dreams — local municipalities around the country have experienced successful negotiations in similar situations.

If you enjoy hunting, you'll probably be mad when some of our most cherished local hunting grounds are destroyed. If you enjoy afternoons at Morgan Lake, you'll be upset when Morgan

My Voice

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashley O'Toole is a local real estate agent. He sits on several boards and committees in La Grande and Union County. In 2018 he was a candidate for La Grande City Council, and he recently joined the STOP B2H coalition's outreach team.



My Voice columns reflect the views of the author only. MyVoice columns should be 500-700 words or as space allows. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author.

Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We do not fact check. We reject those published elsewhere. Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to news@lagrandeobserver.com.

Lake Road is completely jammed every day for more than a year with cranes, D8 Dozers, timber trucks and other equipment during construction; and you probably won't enjoy the view of those 180-foot towers when they're finished (nearly twice the height of the Sac Annex Building).

If you're a history buff like me, you'll be angry to find out that miles of Oregon Trail ruts will likely be destroyed. If this transmission line causes a fire (like the one responsible for starting the Camp Fire outside of Paradise, California, in 2018), you'll probably be upset when your house burns down.

La Grande has nothing to gain from this project and everything to lose. It will ruin our surrounding ecosystems, our hunting and recreational grounds, our historical sites, our property values, our view of the sur-

rounding mountains and our ability to effectively protect ourselves from devastating fires. All of this, to help a private corporation's customers in Sun Valley, Idaho, receive hydro-power originally intended for us in Oregon and Washington. ("Sun" Valley, where solar power would be a much more modern, effective and cheaper energy solution for those customers.)

Since 2009, at least 11 proposals for new, high-voltage transmission lines around the country have been replaced by more cost-effective solutions.

Now it's our turn. There is still time to stop B2H, but it will require all of us getting mad and taking action. If you'd like to find out more information, or how you can join the effort, please email stopB2H@gmail.com. Our website, www.stopb2h.org, is coming soon.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE
NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50

You can save up to 34% off the single-copy price with home delivery. Call **541-963-3161** to subscribe.

Stopped account balances less than \$5 will be refunded upon request.

Subscription rates per month:
By carrier.....\$10.50
By mail, all other U.S.....\$15

THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by Western Communications Inc., 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

COPYRIGHT © 2019 THE OBSERVER
The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

Phone:
541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon):
1-800-422-3110
Fax: 541-963-7804
Email:
news@lagrandeobserver.com
Website:
www.lagrandeobserver.com
Street address:
1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Observer, 1406 Fifth St.,
La Grande, OR 97850
Periodicals postage paid at:
La Grande, Oregon 97850

STAFF

Regional publisher.....Karrine Brogoitti	Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick
Regional audience development director.....Kelli Craft	Customer service rep.....Mollie Lynch
Editor.....Cherise Kaechele	Advertising representative.....Karen Fye
News clerk.....Lisa Lester Kelly	Advertising representative.....Juli Bloodgood
Sports editor.....Ronald Bond	Advertising representative.....Amy Horn
Reporter.....Dick Mason	Graphic design supervisor.....Dorothy Kautz
Reporter.....Francisca Benitez	Graphic design.....Cheryl Christian
Reporter.....Amanda Weisbrod	
Classifieds.....Devi Mathson	
Customer service rep.....Sharon Magnuson	



A division of
Western Communications Inc.