

OUR VIEW

Optimism on the trade front

Over the last three years we’ve learned to be cautious with our optimism on matters of trade. But, it looks as though there was some positive movement on that front last week.

After more than a year of dithering, the House of Representatives approved the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. USMCA replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement.

NAFTA has received mixed reviews from farmers since the first President George Bush negotiated it and President Bill Clinton signed it.

Making good on a campaign pledge, President Donald Trump reopened talks on the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. The product of those negotiations was the USMCA. Those terms were formally accepted Nov. 1, 2018, and the deal was put before Congress.

And there it has sat.

Although ag interests were happy with the new deal, Democrats in Congress said it didn’t go far enough to protect Mexican workers or the environment. Raising standards for Mexican workers makes U.S. manufacturing, particularly that staffed by union labor, more competitive.

House Democrats and the White House have been working behind the scenes to make the necessary tweaks to the pact. Despite the rancor over the House’s attempt to impeach Trump, or perhaps because of it, a deal was reached. Democrats representing districts in the industrial Midwest need a trade deal just as much as the president.

The Senate still has to pass the deal. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell anticipates that the Senate will have to consider articles of impeachment pending in the House, and says a vote on the trade deal will come after the Senate trial.

Also last week the administration and Chinese officials announced a deal to de-escalate the 17-month trade war between the two countries.

The U.S. agreed to suspend a new round of tariff hikes on \$160 billion worth of Chinese goods that were to go into effect last weekend and to reduce tariffs on \$112 billion in goods that are already in place. China agreed to buy \$40 billion worth of agricultural goods from the U.S. a year for the next two years.

The Chinese also agreed to reduce barriers to beef, poultry and animal feed, and to increase protections for intellectual property.

The president told farmers last week that they’d need to buy bigger tractors because they will be selling so much to China.

We suspect most farmers will hold their orders until the ships start leaving the dock. The announcement was light on the operational details. China’s commitment to \$40 billion in ag purchases is ambitious, given its purchases have never topped \$26 billion a year.

As we said, we’ve learned to be cautious because we’ve seen these deals fall through or stall just as quickly as they are announced.

But in keeping with the yuletide season, we are willing to believe possible a Christmas miracle or two — at least for now.



Your views

Howell: Quiet Zone a terrible waste of our tight tax dollars

To the Editor:

I have read/watched with deep concern and disappointment about La Grande's move to silence railroad horns. There are several problems with this new policy. I would challenge the logic in priorities that the city seems to have. If this issue had been put to a vote by citizens, I suspect it would not have passed.

The actual cost in terms of dollars: I understand the city council approved nearly \$200,000 from the general fund to obtain permits, pour concrete and use city worker time.

So, in contrast we apparently have forsaken good funding policy to maintain our crumbling streets by instead raiding the general fund to spend hard-earned tax dollars for inconvenience abatement. I object to noisy mud tires or poorly maintained vehicles loudly moving around town in the early mornings. Should we do something about that?

We got the token repaving this summer on part of Cove Avenue, Washington Avenue and Balm Street. What about finishing Washington from Fourth to at least Walnut? Or, Jefferson from Walnut to Greenwood? There are plenty of other candidates too.

We have had railroad activity here since 1884. It is part of the fabric of the community. Generations of railroaders have contributed to the community. Changing the community in this way will not be of interest to those people who could bring more/better jobs to the area. In fact, these actions may be seen as a sign of how “sensitive” the community is and possibly cause investors to pass us by.

Dropping a clear safety tool and penning motorists into lanes till a train passes is not an improvement. If the track circuit fails and gates don’t rise, motorists are completely stuck. And what of the many pedestrian trespassers over the UP lines? Will a Quiet Zone jeopardize their unlawful moves while traumatizing a train crew seeing disaster coming?

In all, I think this is a terrible waste of our tight tax dollars and will not change the livability of the community. I pray there are not accidents as a

Write to us

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result of misunderstanding the new rules.

Curt Howell
La Grande

Dougherty: If Trump is innocent, let him prove it

To the Editor:

Trump is trying to take control of our government. We are a democracy, not a monarchy. We, the people, deserve an honest look at the Trump administration.

Trump’s staff must testify, Trump may if he chooses, but we cannot allow our three branches of government to merge into one or two branches. We cannot have our representatives declaring the outcome of a trial before hearing

from all witnesses involved. The reason Congress proceeded with impeachment is because Trump is acting like a monarch by refusing to allow his administration to provide staff, documents and recordings for Congress.

We know that Russia was allowed to meddle in our 2016 election. We know Trump attempted to bribe Ukraine to meddle on his behalf toward the 2020 election. We heard Trump invite China to meddle. Now the Trump administration and GOP senators are cooperating as one branch for a hearing. Innocent people do not behave as Trump, his administration and the GOP are.

If the Trump administration is innocent, they need to provide us with the requested people and documents to prove it. Any representative that has stated the trial outcome prior to the trial must recuse from the process. Trump needs to be impeached.

Janice Dougherty
Pendleton

Fritz: Abuse of power is not OK

To the Editor:

It is not OK for a president to abuse the power of his office for personal gain. It is not OK for a president to lie. It is not OK for a president to encourage others to commit crimes with the promise that he will later pardon them. It is not OK for a president to bribe a foreign government. It is not OK for a president to ask a foreign government to interfere in our elections.

It is not OK for a president to obstruct a Congressional investigation. It is not OK for a president’s actions to threaten our national security. It is not OK for an elected representative, such as Rep. Greg Walden and his Republican colleagues, to pretend that any of the above are OK.

It is not OK for an elected representative, such as Rep. Greg Walden and his Republican colleagues, to ignore his/her sworn duty to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law in this country. It is so not OK.

Daniel Fritz
Mosier

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