



Across the Fence

What can be done to protect rural Oregonians' way of life?

Be selfless, generous and steer clear of the love of money

It is the wonderful week between Christmas and a new year, a time for spiritual renewal including for many of us pondering the words of Jesus, as well as commitments to ourselves of something better in the next year. As we get older our thoughts are less and less about ourselves and more and more about others and our commitment to community. It is in this light that we might reflect on what rural Oregon needs to protect itself from storms ahead.

It is hard to imagine a finer place to live than Union County and the same could be said for much of rural Oregon. The reasons for this are numerous and familiar to the readers requiring only a quick glance out the window, a slow conversation over coffee with a neighbor or a ride in the mountains. I would live no where else. However, there are problems that have the potential to spread like weeds.

The problems are not unique to rural areas in Oregon but take on particular characteristics here. The answer to these problems can be found in the words of Christ that favor selflessness over selfishness, generosity over greed and productivity over the love of money.

Rural areas are more dependent on entrepreneurship and small businesses than urban or suburban areas. It is important the tax structure and state and federal rules and regulations support small business, especially if they contribute to the community generously through the provision of jobs or services such as low-income housing. Businesses that contribute to their community need to be rewarded.

Ruralites do not live as long nor as healthily as urbanites. We need to incentivize the health care system to provide health care to our community in its entirety and see the community as its most important patient. No residents should be allowed to go without care. All children should be vaccinated. All patients should be treated. This prevents the spread of disease and poor health through unhealthy lifestyle contagion.

More ruralites live in poverty than urbanites. We need to make sure all our



JOEL RICE
UNION COUNTY
PROGRESSIVES/ DEMOCRATS

people have reasonable shelter and food, especially families with children. Failure to do so will just create more problems for future generations as the chickens come home to roost. It is the trauma often associated with poverty that is so damaging.

We need to excel at educating our children. Along with reading, writing, coding and arithmetic, both work ethic and a hands-on familiarity with building things are important. Without a work ethic productivity will stagnate. Without an ability to build things the next generation will not be able to build their future. We could consider year-round schooling with the summers devoted to specific building skills such as welding, coding, carpentry, cooking and textiles.

Perhaps to instill a true sense of service in our young adults we need a mandatory year of service prior to college based on the depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, in which young people of all backgrounds live and work together to make their community a better place.

Finally, we can recognize that multinational corporations are playing us for fools. They are selling us "goods" intentionally designed to be highly addictive including food, actual addictive drugs like nicotine and alcohol, movies, video games, consumer goods, etc. When they get us "hooked" they suck us dry of our financial resources, feeding the extraordinary wealth of the few. We need to educate our community and immunize them against the need for more. After all, people were just as happy and free as we have ever been in the time of Jesus when he threw the moneychangers out of the temple.

We need to get over partisanship and stop dividing ourselves into Democrats versus Republicans, liberals versus conservatives.

We need to get on with taking care of our neighbors and our community.
A divided house falls.

Stand firm in your convictions, live freely and vote

Remain steadfast in your convictions. Live freely. Increase knowledge. Vote.

The first thing we can do to preserve our way of life is to be bold in our convictions and true to our beliefs, values, history and traditions. There is an increasing pattern across the country of people with large metro backgrounds, big city views and leftist values relocating to rural areas, and once there, over time, supplanting or radically altering the existing rural way of life with their values. Not everyone who relocates here does this, nor should it be construed that we don't want new people becoming part of our community. We should however, remain steadfast in our values and not be so willing to change key parts to appease a loud, emotional, minority view that typically masquerades itself as a morally superior majority view similar to what we see happening at a national level.

Next, live freely and exercise your established rights, commonly accepted behaviors and traditions. Continue to hunt, fish, go to church, believe in objective truth, utilize water rights, run cattle, farm, maintain private property rights, look out for one another and our respective kids and grandkids, be patriotic (it's OK to love America), celebrate our history, honor our ancestors, uphold what is right and wrong and stand against actions or ideologies that set themselves up against these things. Continuing to exercise our free will without being belligerent, disrespectful or ostracizing others, particularly leftist liberals, is a strong way to maintain our way of life while protecting us from weak arguments that would be much stronger in the absence of this activity.

Equally important is increasing and vocalizing education and knowledge. Especially pertaining to our local education system, existing and proposed local/county/state legislation, and the available mechanisms to voice our opinions. In a larger context, speaking about citizens, education and our Republic in 1817, Thomas Jefferson stated: "An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. Self-government is not possible unless the



BRIAN MCDOWELL
UNION COUNTY REPUBLICANS

citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight. It is therefore imperative that the nation see to it that a suitable education be provided for all its citizens."

This does not mean indoctrination into socialism, communism, Marxism or other failed collectivist ideologies. Further, understanding we established a republic with a peculiar form of democracy, not a pure democracy, is critical. We can argue this system has produced the most successful and prosperous nation on earth and in history for the greatest number of people. Not a perfect system by any means, but better than all other systems based on results and outcomes. Interestingly, pure democracy is a form of collectivism not representative government. James Madison in the Federalist Papers in 1787 made this point:

"Pure democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property; and have, in general, been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths."

It is imperative we get more educated ourselves and pay better attention to what is and is not being taught in our local systems of education. The less educated we are, the less we are able to counter destructive proposals or actions. We also could find ourselves in a situation where we are not aware of what we are about to give up or have taken from us.

And it is critical we all engage at some level and always exercise the right to vote. Get on a local committee, run for elected office or take the time to get informed on an issue, action or candidate. In many instances legislation, policy and local candidates are decided by dozens or hundreds of votes when hundreds or thousands of people did not vote at all. To preserve our rural way of life, we must vote and make our viewpoint heard at every available opportunity.

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.....\$11.80
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 EO Media Group, 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

Publisher.....Karrine Brogotti	Classifieds.....Devi Mathson
Regional circulation director.....Kelli Craft	Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick
Editor.....Phil Wright	Customer service rep.....Mollie Lynch
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.....Sabrina Thompson	Graphic design.....Cheryl Christian

Chris Rush, Regional Publisher

