



Truck driver Jeremy Stinnett of Yamhill County contends cap-and-trade bills in the Oregon Legislature are “basically a tax money grab.” He joined the convoy of around 1,000 trucks Thursday that protested against the bills at the state Capitol in Salem.

Trucker heads to Salem to fight for job

By Jake Thomas
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — When truck driver Jeremy Stinnett from Yamhill County sees kids gesturing for him to blow his rig’s horn, he’s happy to pull the cord to let out the loud blast.

“I remember what it meant to me as a kid,” said Stinnett.

After driving truck professionally for more than 20 years, he said the sound still means a lot to him.

Stinnett on Thursday was driving one of the approximately 1,000 trucks in a convoy organized by the Timber Unity Association that descended on Salem to protest a greenhouse gas-reduction bill. Stinnett worries the bill would effectively crowd people like him out of the state’s economy.

He said politicians pushing the legislation envision a future that involves him moving to the city and taking a “clean energy job,” a scenario he finds unimaginable.

For Stinnett, trucking is not just a profession but a social fabric he’s spent much of his life in.

During Thursday’s drive, his CB radio is alive with banter from other truckers in the convoy. While it’s hard to make out, Stinnett has listened to the crackly voices on the radio for so long he has no trouble understanding it.

On the radio were people from across the state Stinnett was happy to hear from, as well as his father, brother, former coworkers, friends — a community.

A husky man of 40 who wears a goatee, work boots and mesh hat emblazoned

with #TimberUnity, Stinnett remembers his first time driving a big rig. He was 14 and his father asked him to drive a dump truck to clean up their 52-acre property. He was nervous at the time.

“I decided I wanted to go make some money doing it,” he said.

Now, he seamlessly operates the 18-speed 2016 Kenworth w900 v model six-axle cab truck his employer let him use for the rally.

He said days begin anywhere from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. He drinks Rockstar energy drinks almost every day while hauling logs to companies that turn them into paper and wood products.

“I like being in the woods,” he said.

He likes the scenery and the challenge of driving in difficult weather. He works 65 hours a week on average. He listens to country stations and the “Lars Larson Show,” a conservative talk radio show.

Stinnett votes but is unaffiliated with a political party. He said he’d never been involved in politics until he heard about the greenhouse-gas reduction bill from a friend and was so alarmed by it that he decided to travel to Salem to talk to lawmakers.

Stinnett said that he keeps a third of whatever the truck makes in a day, which ranges from \$900 to more than \$1,000. He said that the legislation would dry up the demand for timber and push gas prices so high that his company might not survive.

While the legislation has been modified to delay some new costs, Stinnett said it’s just a matter of time before lawmakers push them forward. He

believes in climate change but pointed out Oregon accounts for just a fraction of the world’s carbon emissions.

“So, it’s basically a tax money grab,” he said. “And it’s not gonna help anything. That’s not gonna help climate change.”

As he drove down the highway, he passed under a banner posted to an overpass with a message aimed at the convoy: “The future is electric, good buddy.”

But Stinnett said that electric trucks won’t hold a charge and the prototypes he’s seen just aren’t suited for his job.

He passed under another banner proclaiming that kids demand “bold action” on climate change.

But he said his 7-year-old daughter loves riding in his truck.

“She loves being in the woods with me,” he said.

As Stinnett entered Salem, a grin cracked on his face. He said that the number of trucks was so large it didn’t even compare to last year’s rally. He drove his truck to the Polk County Fairgrounds and greeted a friend, pointing out a scuff mark on his truck and pulling out his phone to show off a recent mishap of his own.

After boarding a shuttle run by ecoShuttle to ferry protesters to the Capitol, he continued to banter with other truckers about their rigs. As the shuttle neared the Capitol, the sound of truck horns filled the air. For Stinnett, it was encouraging.

“You’re going to hear a lot of that today,” he said.

Elections Division: Oregon’s electoral process is secure



U.S. Attorney Billy Williams (right) addresses the media Tuesday regarding cyber and disinformation threats to the security of Oregon’s electoral process during a press conference at the Oregon Capitol. Renn Cannon (left) FBI Portland division special agent in charge, also spoke on how government partnerships are protecting the integrity of Oregon’s elections system.

By Sam Stites
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The state’s top elections official wants voters to know Oregon is doing everything possible to ensure the security of the state’s elections by working with county and federal agencies.

“There was some polling that took place a couple weeks ago that said 43% of the public don’t think elections administrators are doing anything to secure our elections,” said Steve Trout, state elections director in the secretary of state’s office. “That’s the farthest thing from the truth.”

Trout addressed Oregon’s election security at a news conference Tuesday in Salem with U.S. Attorney Billy Williams and Renn Cannon, Oregon FBI special agent in charge. They reviewed the work of Oregon’s Threat Information Gathering and Elections Resources, started a year ago to secure the state’s elections.

Election security has become a white-hot political topic in the wake of Iowa’s caucus process in the nation’s first presidential primary. Results ordinarily announced after the caucuses on Monday night were delayed because of counting issues. There was no initial indication of hacking or other intrusions, authorities said.

According to Cannon, there is a growing sophistication of cyber threats such as ransomware attacks like that of the recent breach on Tillamook County’s web systems. That left county officials without information technology for nearly

two weeks while authorities negotiate with the attackers. Trout said the attack didn’t affect voter registration systems or databases in Tillamook County because of quick action to deactivate the connection to the statewide system. Such successes have Trout, Cannon and Williams feeling confident the state’s elections system is secure.

Trout couldn’t point to new threats to Oregon’s electoral process that have emerged since the 2018 election. Instead, he said, one of the most acute dangers for voters in 2020 is misinformation.

“It also falls upon all of us individually as informed voters to be able to help make sure our elections are secure. We have to protect our democracy by not falling for misinformation or disinformation, looking at the facts and asking questions,” he said.

The briefing preceded a symposium scheduled for Wednesday in Salem, where county elections officials and candidates learned about cyber threats and how to combat disinformation on social media.

“I can’t think of a more valuable, more meaningful right than that of being able as a citizen of this country and this state to vote,” Williams said. “So that’s why what we do is so important. We’re all very excited about the symposium tomorrow evening, and what those in attendance are going to learn from the experts who will be speaking.”

Thatcher announces run for Secretary of State

By Claire Withycombe
and Sam Stites
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, announced during a massive Timber Unity rally at the Capitol Thursday that she is running for secretary of state.

Thatcher, who previously served in the House, has been in the Senate since 2015. Secretary of State Bev Clarno, the Republican incumbent, isn’t running for the office. Gov. Kate Brown appointed Clarno to replace Dennis Richardson, who died last year. Richardson was the first Republican to win a statewide office since 2002.

“I want to focus on what Dennis Richardson focused on when he became secretary of state,” Thatcher said. “He did a lot to make sure we have fair elections, make sure we have access for everyone to the ballot initiative and

referendum process, and to not use the Corporations Division to punish businesses, but help them succeed. Those are going to be my focus.”

Thatcher’s campaign website promises “Accountability. Transparency. Integrity.”

The secretary of state oversees state elections, audits government programs and registers businesses. Oregon has no lieutenant governor, so its secretary of state is second in line to the governor.

In 2014, allegations surfaced against Thatcher’s family business, KT Contracting and Highway Specialties LLC, that the company committed contract fraud while subcontracting a state highway job in Eugene back in 2005.

“Absolutely, I learned from that experience,” Thatcher said. “I’ve worked in Washington, Oregon and Idaho,

and it’s unacceptable to me that Oregon is one of the hardest places to work and be a business owner. I’d like to use the Corporations Division, especially the small-business ombudsman we opened a few years ago to help (businesses) with technical assistance and to get over the hurdles of red tape and all that.”

Thatcher is the first Republican to enter the race. The filing deadline is March 10 ahead of the May 19 primary.

Four Democrats are vying for their party’s nomination: Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, former House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson of Portland, former Congressional candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner and Cameron Smith, who most recently was the head of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.



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