

Our View

The road to unity is a two-way street

Recounts and legal challenges notwithstanding, it appears Joe Biden will be president on Jan. 20.

In declaring victory, the former vice president made the obligatory call for unity. That’s always a tall order, particularly in a deeply divided country after such a bitter campaign.

As the victor, it falls to Biden to reach across the divide. He has his work cut out for him.

Farmers and ranchers largely supported President Trump, but that support in rural areas was not unanimous or homogenous. Even among supporters it’s not uncommon to hear frank discussions of the president’s shortcomings — both in policy and manners.

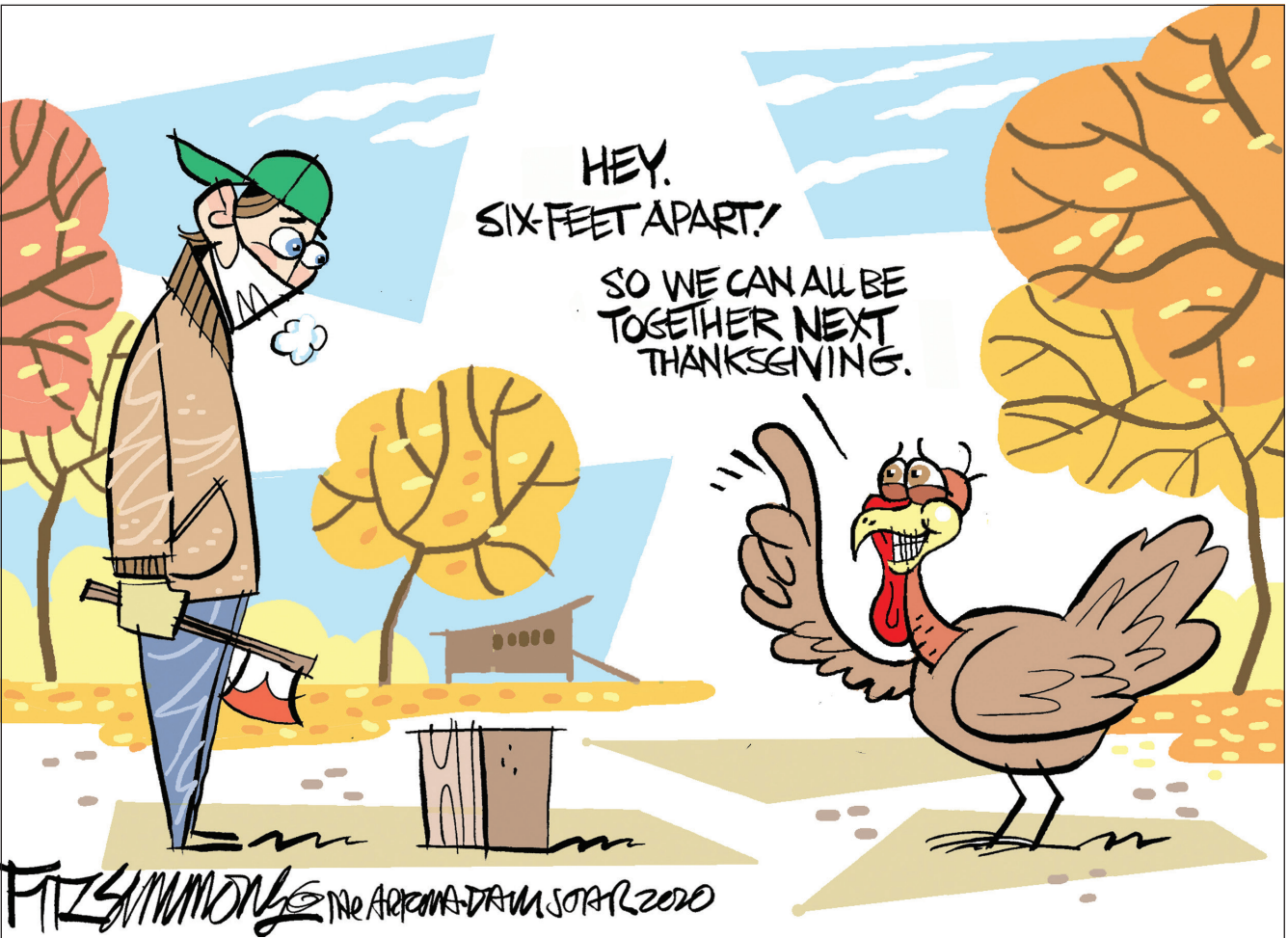
The president delivered on his promise to reduce government regulation, most notably in reversing the controversial “Waters of the U.S.” rule. Farmers and ranchers have mostly benefited from the 2017 tax reforms.

His record on trade was a mixed bag. His on-again, off-again trade war with China had a huge impact on farmers, but eventually there came an agreement that at least in spirit benefits ag. His imposition of punitive tariffs on Mexico and Canada even as he announced a replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement led to retaliatory duties on farm products. There are bilateral agreements with Japan and South Korea.

Many in agriculture are wary that Biden’s election will signal a return to policies that gave them pause during the Obama administration. They have not been comforted by environmental and economic policies promoted by the more radical factions of his party.

What can the former vice president do to calm farmers and ranchers in the red interior? We have a couple of suggestions.

- **Show up.** Trump addressed the American Farm Bureau Federation’s national convention three times during his term and addressed the FFA’s convention once. Three previous administrations had let surrogates handle these events.
- Whether the next gatherings are virtual events or live, farmers and ranchers will want to hear about policy proposals directly from President Biden.
- **Listen.** Trump’s critics say he doesn’t listen to people with opposing views. During the Obama administration, farmers and ranchers didn’t think they had a seat at the table and didn’t think they were being heard. They did think they were being spoken down to.
- In such a deeply divided country, Biden can’t repeat the mistakes of his predecessors.
- **Reject** the demonization of those with different views. It has become too easy to dismiss those with whom we disagree with pejorative and inflammatory labels — bigot, homophobe, socialist, commie, misogynist, Nazi.
- Most of us, right or left, hold no animus towards our fellow citizens. Name calling is no substitute for discussion.
- Biden recently struck the right tone.
- “To make progress, we must stop treating our opponents as our enemy,” Biden said.
- “We are not enemies. We are Americans.”
- We agree.
- We urge Biden to deliver on his promise to bring the country together. But that will also require those who opposed his election to give him the benefit of the doubt. Judge his actions, not the campaign rhetoric.



My Voice

Make the right choice for health and safety



ANNE MORRISON
LA GRANDE

One morning last July, I awoke to excruciating stomach pain. When it didn’t subside, I woke my husband and told him I needed to go to the hospital. The nearest emergency room was at Wallowa Memorial Hospital in Enterprise. Following tests and scans, the emergency department doctor determined I needed emergency surgery. I waited, partially sedated, for the surgical team to be called in and awoke hours later with a 6-inch belly scar.

I was in the hospital for two days. I received the most attentive medical care. I was grateful for the skill and the kindness of all the people who cared for me during one of the most vulnerable moments of my life. While I rested under the watchful eye of hospital staff, I thought about the COVID-19 outbreak from the perspective of my hospital bed.

The admitting staff, my surgeon and surgical team, my nurses and nursing assistants, the administrators

and launderers and cooks and janitors, all doing their daily job of caring for the members of our community when we are injured or ill — all the people attending to me — also are the people whose very work puts them at risk of contracting COVID-19 when it spreads through our community. Thinking of them, I find it amazing that many people in our community still resist such small sacrifices as wearing masks, social distancing or limiting the size of our Thanksgiving gatherings for this one single year.

What if the people who oppose such restrictions are right, and the measures are useless or the dangers of COVID-19 are overblown? We would be inconvenienced, for no real reason.

But what if the people who oppose such restrictions are wrong? What if masks and social distancing or household-only Thanksgiving gatherings really will slow the spread of COVID-19? What if (as the now more than 250,000 dead Americans indicates) COVID-19 is both extremely contagious and the potentially deadly illness that the nightly news shows it to be?

If for this one year we refuse to bother ourselves with inconveniences

or small sacrifices such as masks or social distancing or household-sized Thanksgiving dinners, or insist that we have a “right” not to make such short-term changes to our routines — if we’re wrong about whether the measures are effective or whether the virus is really that dangerous — we put ourselves and our families and the rest of our community at risk of getting a potentially deadly illness. We’re staking the health and lives of the medical professionals who serve all of us on that belief.

Choosing between the possibility that our short-term sacrifices are unnecessary and the alternate possibility that people may become ill or die because we can’t be bothered or forced to act is not a hard decision. In the middle of the worst pandemic in over 100 years, we should all be willing to make the very small sacrifices requested of us — to protect ourselves, our families, our communities and the medical professionals who care for us all.

Anne Morrison is a La Grande resident and retired attorney who has lived in Union County since 2000.

Letters

Calling Walden to step in for American democracy

If you are a supporter of President Donald Trump, there is only one thing worse than losing the election: losing American democracy. There is nothing more American than free and fair elections followed by a peaceful transfer of power. Trump’s relentless attacks on the most fundamental American value is damaging our country.

The only evidence of voter fraud is made up by President Trump in his Twitter feed. He has lost 22 of 23 cases in the courts. Elections officials across

the country have confirmed the 2020 election as the most secure of their career.

It’s time for leaders in the Republican Party to step in. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden of Oregon is one of those leaders. He can end a long career serving Eastern Oregon with the most American and patriotic act: help save our democracy.

Congressman Walden, join other Republicans in calling on President Trump to acknowledge the election results and begin transitioning to a Biden administration. Losing an election hurts. Losing our American democracy is far worse.

*Zachary Lauritzen
La Grande*

A Thanksgiving prayer for residents of La Grande

This year 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic has been very challenging. We all have been through a lot. As we look for the good in all this as well as the blessings and giving thanks to our loving heavenly father for helping us, this Thanksgiving we give him all the praise and glory that he solely deserves.

May our loving heavenly father be with each of you in our beautiful community of La Grande and surrounding areas, and give each of you a blessed and Happy Thanksgiving — that is my prayer.

*Janice Roberts
La Grande*

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