

Our View

Alliance offers exciting potential

Last month a coalition of agricultural and environmental groups announced an historic alliance to recommend proposals to the Biden administration to address climate change.

The new Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance, or FACA, brings together groups typically pitted against one another.

It's exciting stuff, and the participants have reason to celebrate.

FACA was formed in February by four groups that co-chair the alliance: the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, Environmental Defense Fund and National Farmers Union.

It was later joined by the Food Industry Association, National Alliance of Forest Owners, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and The Nature Conservancy.

"We're proud to have broken through historic barriers to form a unique alliance," American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said at a virtual press conference Nov. 17.

The goal, FACA's leaders say, is to have a hand in climate policy on the front end rather than just fighting on the back end. This way, they say, farmers are less likely to get hurt.

"Our goal from the start was to be at the table with the policy development process, not sort of reacting after the fact," Chuck Conner, president and CEO of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, told the Capital Press.

Environmental groups that signed on were similarly impressed with the newfound fellowship and the progress that has been made.

"It's been surprisingly cordial. There's a lot more we could agree on than any of us thought we could," Callie Eideberg, director of government relations at the Environmental Defense Fund, said.

FACA members have developed more than 40 climate policy recommendations to hand over to the Biden administration and Congress.

The coalition says the policies are all voluntary, incentive-based programs designed to simultaneously slow environmental degradation and support farmers.

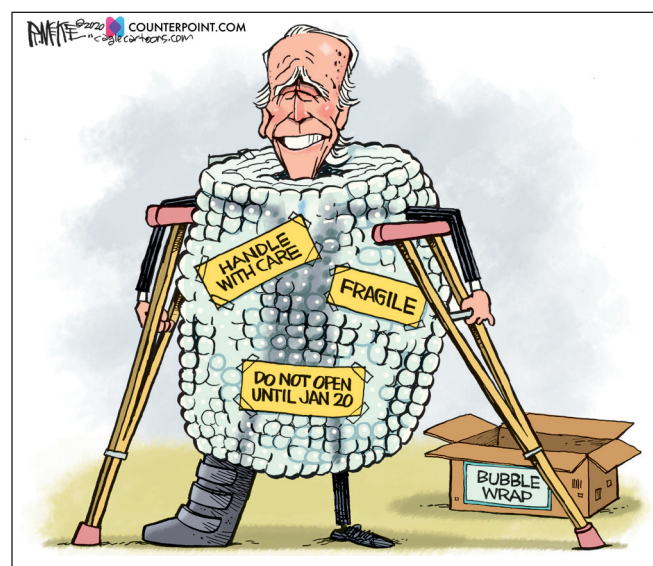
That sounds good, and there's no doubt that this is an unprecedented alliance. If ag interests can have a hand in crafting policy proposals before they become law, then the effort will be worthwhile.

A bit of skepticism might be in order.

No matter how many environmental groups join the alliance, there will always be one more that's a little more hardcore outside the group that's ready to file a challenge. The real test of a friendship will come when the lawsuits start flying.

Nonetheless, we support any effort that seeks common ground and better understanding between traditional adversaries. Dialogue is most often preferred to debate.

New friendships always require a leap of faith. But we suggest all parties enter the alliance with arms, and eyes, wide open.



Our View

Gov. Brown's funding delay for Measure 110 raises same old questions

Oregonians passed Measure 110 by a wide margin in November. It means decriminalization of personal possession of small amounts of illegal drugs, including cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and oxycodone as of Feb. 1.

That's going ahead as planned. But something else is missing.

Measure 110 was also supposed to kick off more funding for drug treatment options for Oregonians. Gov. Kate Brown's budget delays that for more than a year.

The measure approved by voters clearly says things such as: Addiction recovery centers "within

each coordinated care organization service area shall be established and operational by October 1, 2021." Brown's budget doesn't allow the money part of the measure to start until July 2022.

What's Brown's game? Thwarting the will of voters?

It could be read that way. She does have her reasons. They aren't bad ones.

The way the measure was written, it swipes all the money from marijuana tax above \$11,250,000 quarterly and puts it toward addiction services. That money currently goes to things like schools and state police. The measure didn't create

new money for treatment. It took money away from other worthy causes. That's one of the reasons we editorialized against the measure.

And so Brown decided to delay the funding switch.

"In the Governor's budget we have found ways to fill the funding gaps created for schools, public safety, and existing health services in the second year of the biennium," Charles Boyle, a press secretary for the governor, said in a statement to OPB. "It wasn't possible to fill those funding gaps immediately while still maintaining critical services during the

COVID-19 pandemic."

Legislators could step in and change the governor's plan. Her budget is just a starting point for debate. They also could rewrite Measure 110 by passing a bill that changes how it works or find another way to fund it.

Elections have consequences, as they say. And no matter how you may feel about the wisdom of decriminalization of some illegal drugs and taking money from schools for drug treatment, Brown's move again raises questions about her use of power. Even the pandemic may not make it OK for the governor to undermine the will of the voters.

Letters

Remember those who perished at Pearl Harbor

Dec. 7, 1941 — the attack on Pearl Harbor — was a day that has remained in infamy. Very few servicemembers who personally remember that day are still among us. The American Legion Auxiliary encourages everyone to do what they can to keep Pearl Harbor a part of our national consciousness.

Many brave servicemembers were asleep or going about their morning routines when the Japanese bombers delivered a blow that would seal

America's involvement in World War II. More than 2,400 servicemembers died during the attack.

I invite you, along with the members of the American Legion Auxiliary La Grande Unit 43, to take a moment and remember the men and women who lost their lives that fateful day.

The American Legion Auxiliary is a community of volunteers serving veterans, military and their families. Our members also support the mission of the American Legion in improving the quality of life for our nation's veterans. Proud sponsor of

ALA Girls Nation, National Poppy Day and recognized for advocating for veterans on Capitol Hill, the more than 600,000 ALA members across the country volunteer millions of hours annually and raise millions of dollars in service to veterans, military and their families. Founded in 1919, the ALA is one of the oldest patriotic membership organizations in the country. To learn more and to volunteer, join and donate, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Maggie LaMont
President, ALA La Grande Unit 43
La Grande

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THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except postal holidays) by EO Media Group, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

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911 Jefferson Ave.,
La Grande, OR 97850

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