

OUR VIEW

# Increase budget for ranchers' wolf losses

The Oregon Legislature has acknowledged that the state has a responsibility to partially compensate ranchers for livestock killed by wolves.

Lawmakers created the wolf compensation grant program a decade ago.

It was a necessary step. Ranchers, after all, aren't responsible for wolves returning to Oregon — indeed, many of them objected to the state allowing wolves to migrate into Oregon from Idaho, starting in 1999. (Oregon never transplanted wolves into the state.)

But some ranchers, unlike the vast majority of Oregonians for whom the presence of wolves has no direct effect, have sustained financial losses due to wolves.

The money the Legislature has allocated to the program is a paltry sum that hasn't been sufficient to cover the actual losses of livestock as well as other costs ranchers have borne, including installing fencing and taking other steps to prevent wolves from attacking cattle, sheep and other domestic animals.

During 2020, for instance, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which administers the wolf compensation program, distributed \$130,164 among 12 counties, including Baker. That was just 37% of the amount requested. In 2019 the state awarded \$251,529, or 58% of requests.

For the period Feb. 1, 2020, through Jan. 31, 2021, Union County received \$1,330 for death/injury to livestock that occurred in 2019. This was the total requested for these categories based on applications received from local producers. An additional \$20,000 was requested for depredation measures. The county received \$17,330 of the requested amount. All received funds were distributed to local ranchers.

In Baker County for the same period, the county requested \$47,708 from the state and received \$32,708 — 68%. The county distributed almost all of that to local ranchers (the county kept \$495 as an administrative fee).

One Eastern Oregon lawmaker wants to boost those percentages. Rep. Bobby Levy, a Republican from Echo, in Umatilla County, plans to introduce a bill when the Legislature convenes Feb. 1, 2022, allocating \$1 million for the compensation program for the next two-year budget cycle.

Statewide in 2021, ODFW has confirmed 87 animals killed or injured by wolves: 51 cattle, 28 sheep, six goats and two guard dogs. That is up by more than double over 2020, when 32 animals — 28 cattle, two llamas and two guard dogs — were attacked or killed by wolves.

Compared with Oregon's state budget, the million dollars Levy is proposing to spend for wolf compensation barely qualifies as a pittance. And it's almost certainly not enough to fairly compensate ranchers for the loss of their livestock and to help them deter wolf attacks — which everyone, those who want wolves in Oregon and those who don't, agree is the ultimate goal.

But boosting the compensation budget by \$1 million is a solid start to better addressing a problem that, based on 2021, is growing rather than receding.

EDITORIALS

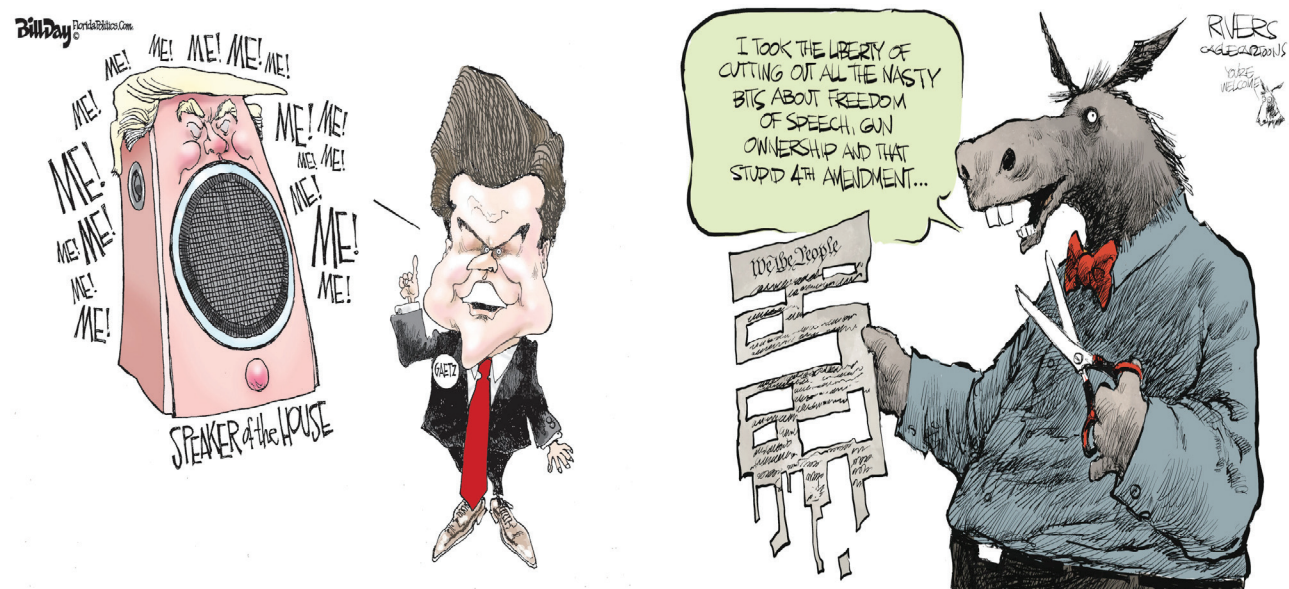
Unsigned editorials are the opinion of The Observer editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of The Observer.

LETTERS

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish consumer complaints against businesses, personal attacks against private individuals or comments that can incite violence. We also discourage thank-you letters. Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's name, address and phone number (for verification only). We will not publish

anonymous letters. Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks. Longer community comment columns, such as Other Views, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot and a one-sentence biography. Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Submissions must carry the author's name, address and phone number. Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

**SEND LETTERS TO:** letters@lagrandeobserver.com or via mail to Editor, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850



## Where have all the Republicans gone?



**GEORGE MEAD**  
OTHER VIEWS

I am a progressive Republican, a rare breed, one who “favors or advocates progress, change, improvement, or reform, as opposed to wishing to maintain things as they are.”

This harkens back to Teddy Roosevelt.

Albert Quie, former governor of Minnesota, Jan. 4, 1979, to Jan. 3, 1983, and, member of the Congress House of Representatives, Feb. 18, 1958, to Jan. 3, 1979, said: “We are willing to let the federal government assume primary responsibility for defense and other priorities for which states are not equipped. The problem in the last 15 years or so is that well-meaning federal officials have not recognized the distinction between ‘federal’ and ‘national.’ They have often forgotten that education is a partnership.”

The rub, of course, is that more and more federal involvement comes by way of mandates without the dollars to comply. Or, dollars are provided with so many strings attached that unique state and local circumstances get ignored. Laws and regulations are written to apply to a mythical “average” state.

The Declaration of Independence states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalien-

able Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

The Constitution of the United States says: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Where have all the Republicans gone? They certainly do not appear to be interested in almost all the things the two documents state. Listening to the Republican career politicians speaking in all manner of venues, I haven't heard comments from them about “domestic tranquility” or “the general welfare.” I have seen the equivalent of plastic bobblehead dolls nodding violently to their quasi-deity as if that matters. Nothing they are anxious about, or advocate, seem to have anything to do with forming a “more perfect union” or “establishing justice.”

Public schooling started very early in colonial times by the citizens. This was then followed by the states, counties, cities and towns long before any politician sitting around in Washington, D.C., decided they knew better than those folk what primary education ought to be. Somehow, the folk in Wash-

ington, D.C., felt they knew more about creating public schooling than all the folk in the original colonies, the states, counties, towns and cities who did that. Instead, the public school systems had to be homogenized like the milk we currently buy, instead of letting the cream float to the top.

At the same time all the aspects of higher education were created by the same folk outside of Washington, D.C. The total of institutions created are 1,714 — trade schools to doctorate universities.

Unfortunately the private and public institutions have allowed greed to overwhelm their good sense as they accepted massive amounts of Pell grants and jacked up the their tuition because of the massive inflow of dollars. The program was planned as a feel-good program with no strings attached vis a vis the cost of tuition. The usual lack of not asking what the unintended results might bring became the ever higher costs for education. Congress is still willing to add ever increasing dollars into the program with the same lack of planning. Where have all the Republicans gone?

It would appear that the national party is more interested in the creation of zombie-politicians, infected by the T-virus, who wander about moaning and groaning rather than addressing those actions stated in either the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution.

*George Mead, a retired anthropologist, lives in La Grande.*

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50

You can save up to 55% off the single-copy price with home delivery. Call 800-781-3214 to subscribe.

Subscription rates:

Monthly Autopay .....\$10.75  
13 weeks.....\$37.00  
26 weeks.....\$71.00  
52 weeks.....\$135.00

# 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)

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.

COPYRIGHT © 2021

Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

POSTMASTER Send address changes to: The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850

STAFF

Regional publisher.....Karrine Brogotti Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick  
Interim editor.....Andrew Cutler Advertising representative.....Kelli Craft  
News clerk.....Lisa Lester Kelly Advertising representative.....Amy Horn  
Reporter.....Dick Mason National accounts coordinator.....Devi Mathson  
Reporter.....Davis Carbaugh Graphic design.....Dorothy Kautz  
Multimedia journalist.....Alex Wittwer Page design.....Andy Nicolais

