

Season of change comes for OFB's Dave Dillon

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — If changes in leadership are comparable to shifting seasons, Dave Dillon reckons he's had a "very long, full season" at the Oregon Farm Bureau.

After 20 years at the state ag group's helm, Dillon has taken a job at Food Northwest, a regional organization representing food processors.

"The hardest time to leave can also be the best time to leave," he said.

Dillon figures the organization is in solid shape for whoever replaces him as executive vice president — financially strong, with a "fantastic" roster of staff members and elected leaders, he said.

As Food Northwest's executive director, he expects to deal with "ag-adjacent" issues, such as labor shortages and environmental regulations, that are substantially similar but one step downstream in the food supply chain.

"There's a real opportunity to take something good and build it up to something better," Dillon said of his new job.

An overlapping challenge facing both organizations is the current political environment, which he's watched become increasingly belligerent and divisive over the past couple decades.

"Politics in Oregon were a lot more centrist in those early years," Dillon said. "There was a lot more collegiality among the elected leaders, even if they were from a different party."

When the state Legislature was more evenly divided between conservative and liberal lawmakers, compromise was typically necessary to get anything done, he said.

Now that the House and Senate are dominated by left-leaning super-majorities, though, there's no longer much incentive to reach across the aisle.

For agriculture, that's translated into a steeply mounting regulatory burden, he said. "It's the toughest political climate I've ever seen for farmers and ranchers."

The Oregon Farm Bureau will surely encounter numerous important problems in the years to come, but Dillon advises its members to focus on those that most endanger their livelihoods.

"Is this something that will impact my ability to be farming or ranching next year?" Dillon said. "Does it affect my ability to keep producing?"

Dillon isn't entirely pessimistic about the prospects for agriculture and natural resource industries in the political arena, however.

If people realize the state's policies aren't improving their lives or resolving serious problems, they'll likely make their dissatisfaction known at the ballot box, he said.

"I do believe there's a potential for the pendulum to move back toward the middle," Dillon said. "At some point, voters will make a decision to try something different."

In the meantime, the staff and members of the Farm Bureau are capable of defending against damaging laws and regulations, as they've proven in the past, he said.

"Countless times, we've stopped bad legislation or bad rules, or at least made them less harmful," Dillon said.

The Farm Bureau is also better equipped to fight such battles due to the reliable coalition it's built with other crop, livestock and irrigator groups, he said.

Agriculture and natural resource advocates have set aside their differences to cooperate on common interests, amplifying their influence over the years, Dillon said.

"They're more cohesive now than they have been at other times," he said. "I'm proud to see that happen."

Beyond the Farm Bureau's state-level successes, Dillon is encouraged by the group's victories at the national scale during his tenure.

For example, the organization prevailed against the U.S. Department of Labor's "hot goods" tactics during the Obama administration.

The federal agency accused farmers of underpaying alleged "ghost workers" who weren't represented in employment records.

If pickers harvested more fruit per hour than the agency believed reasonable, it assumed they'd been helped by unauthorized "ghost workers" receiving less than the minimum wage.

Crops grown by targeted farmers were declared "hot goods" by the federal agency, blocking the perishable fruits from sale unless the employers paid hefty settlements.

The Oregon Farm Bureau represented farmers in federal court, ultimately recovering those financial payments and exposing the "ghost worker" charges as baseless, Dillon said.

See, Dillon/Page B6



Dillon



Photos by Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

From left, Louis Villagomez, Kevin Kurfurst and Tia Villagomez string lights Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022, in the restaurant area of Boggans Oasis. The Villagomez family recently purchased the business and hope to have it open by Labor Day. Kurfurst is a friend who moved there with them to help out.

Under new ownership

Familiar Boggans Oasis restaurant getting new look inside, but staying the same

By BILL BRADSHAW

Wallowa County Chieftain

ASOTIN COUNTY, Washington — It's a familiar landmark to those making the trip from Wallowa County to Lewiston, Idaho, and Boggans Oasis has new owners.

Louis and Tia Villagomez, formerly of Buckley, Washington — at the foot of Mount Rainier — closed on the purchase of the property in June and relocated to the area that month. The Villagomez family bought the property from Bill and Farrel Vail, who had owned and operated Boggans since 1984 and have now retired to Clarkston, Washington.

"I've been coming here since I was about 10," Louis said, recalling years of fishing expeditions on the Grande Ronde River that runs just across the road.

"We're turning it from plain Jane to more like a resort."

Amid all the work on the inside of the restaurant, Louis finds time to take advantage of the river access.

"I fish a lot and I'm getting ready for the guiding season," he said, adding that he's a licensed fishing guide.

The restaurant

Tia said it's the licenses and other government red tape that are delaying Boggans from reopening.

"I think people think we're choosing to not be open right now, but ... we aren't legally allowed to quite yet," she said.



The Villagomez family are the new owners of Boggans Oasis on the Lewiston Highway just north of the Oregon border. They are revamping the interior of the restaurant and hope to be open again by Labor Day. From left are Louis, Graciella, Gabriel and Tia.

"That's been the longest process since we moved here is all the licenses and permits."

Louis said the health department wants to see the restaurant just how it will be when it's operating before conducting an inspection. Thus, they're taking the time to revamp the interior by painting, redecorating and doing a bit of remodeling.

They are keeping many of the mounted big-game heads and fish that adorn the walls of the restaurant, a testimony to outdoor activities of the restaurant since it

opened in the late 1940s. They're also keeping the name.

"We had to keep the name to honor everyone's past memories, all of the past guests and hopefully, the future guests," Tia said. "The name's really important. ... I was really adamant about keeping the phone number, too. ... It's kind of like a pit stop for people driving through. We're going with the idea of making it an oasis for people."

Louis said he wants to make it a real oasis.

See, Oasis/Page B6

Survey: Disrespect, more than low pay, drives resignations

Quit rate for Oregonians was at or above 3% for seven straight months

By ANNA DEL SAVIO

Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — More than a quarter of Oregonians have quit a job in the past two years, a new survey from the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center found.

Among Oregonians who quit their jobs, the most common reason why was that they felt disrespected at work.

Some Oregonians said the pandemic pushed issues with their employers — or with work — under a spotlight.

"It's a corporate entity, they don't really care about any of their employees beyond their productive ability, what they can produce for the company. I'm not a fool, I know that's just how it is," said one survey respondent in his 30s.

Shannon Richardson quit her job with the state after 11 years and moved to the nonprofit sector during the pandemic.

"It was like this period of upheaval was also a little bit of a reckoning," Richardson said. "I think we're all a little bit afraid to disrupt our daily lives, and then suddenly, our lives are disrupted for us and we see the possibility in that."

Richardson lives in Linn County with her partner and two children.

When the pandemic hit,

Richardson felt her workplace didn't adequately respond to the need for increased flexibility, which "disproportionately impacted working parents and particularly working mothers."

When school closed for Richardson's children "that support system of the education system — and all of the social benefits that are packed into our public education system — were suddenly absent."

"Recognizing a misalignment of values is one thing, and then having it become like a very real part of your everyday professional life is kind of next level," Richardson said.

"All of a sudden, these low-level value misalignments or dissatisfactions are very present and very immediate."

Though she wanted more flexibility in logistics and expectations from her employer, Richardson "still thought that it was a change that I could help achieve within my workplace." But when her current position opened up, "I decided to just take the leap."

"In hindsight, it was past time," Richardson said.

The quit rate for Oregonians was at or above 3% for seven straight months in late 2021 and early 2022, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Pre-pandemic, the monthly quit rate had only reached 3% or higher a handful of times since at least 2001, and never for more than two consecutive months.

See, Survey/Page B6