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# Opinion

## OUR VIEW

# 'Local' control would create patchwork of regulations

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office has dealt a serious blow to an effort to put a ballot initiative designed to overturn laws pre-empting local control of matters currently regulated by the state.

Though backers of the "Right to Local, Community Self-Government" initiative are considering their options, we hope this puts an end to this nonsense.

Initiative backers hoped to be able to turn back state prohibitions on local governments banning genetically modified organisms and local regulation of pesticides. They also would like local jurisdictions to be able to regulate fracking, oil and gas development, and coal exports.

In part, backers seek to allow

local jurisdictions "to enact local laws that protect health, safety, and welfare by: establishing the fundamental rights of natural persons, their communities, and nature; securing those rights using prohibitions and other means; and establishing, defining, altering, or eliminating the rights, powers, privileges, immunities, or duties of corporations and other business entities operating or seeking to operate in the community, to prevent such rights, powers, privileges, immunities, or duties from interfering with such locally-enacted fundamental rights of natural persons, their communities, and nature."

Backers collected more than 1,000 signatures on their petitions,

which gave them standing to receive a review for a ballot title — an important step in getting the measure on the 2016 ballot.

But the Secretary of State's Office rejected the initiative. It says the measure is too broad. Specifically, the initiative would "effectuate fundamental constitutional changes to the structure and division of powers of state and local governments" and alter the power of the legislative and executive branches, according to state attorneys.

The Secretary of State's Office says such a sweeping "revision" can't be accomplished with a ballot initiative.

Mary Geddry, a chief petitioner for the initiative, said that

proponents haven't yet decided on a course of action but disagree with the government's conclusions. She says her group isn't going to rollover.

"We're talking about fundamental rights," she said. "Communities don't have the right to say 'no' under the current system."

She's right, they don't. But we suspect that she's talking about things liberals don't like. In addition to banning GMOs and pesticide use, we're sure certain "progressive" communities would write their own minimum wage laws, gun regulations and environmental rules. And if they decide they don't like dry cleaners or meat packers, who knows.

But once passed, the measure would be sauce for the goose.

Officials in the more rural and largely conservative counties of Eastern Oregon might well decide that Oregon's protections on wolves don't apply, or gun regulations they believe make people less safe and trample on personal freedoms, or state land-use restrictions that violate personal property rights.

In theory, it's hard to argue against "local" control. The notion has great democratic appeal. But in reality, turning each of Oregon's 36 counties and 242 incorporated cities into an independent duchy would set up a patchwork of regulation that would make everyone's business difficult, if not impossible.

## OUR VIEW

# It's time to fix COOL label law

**A**t first blush, country-of-origin labels for meat sold in the U.S. seemed to be a no-brainer. If a steer is from the U.S., slap a label on the package of beef it produces saying so. If it's from Canada, just label it. Likewise with beef from Mexico.

But as is often the case, what sounds simple is, in reality, much more complicated than it first seems.

In the case of cattle, it is common to transport animals between the U.S. and Canada or Mexico for grazing, sometimes several times, in the 30 months before they go to slaughter. Once they reach the slaughter house, the animals and their meat must be segregated to retain their COOL identity, which is based on where they were born, raised and slaughtered.

Though much of the disagreement over COOL focuses on beef, it includes pork, lamb, goat and chicken; fish and shellfish; fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables; peanuts, pecans, and macadamia nuts; and ginseng.

But beef is at the heart of the COOL dispute. The additional work and the equipment required at slaughter houses and feedlots to keep cattle and beef separate add expenses to processors, which in turn decreases the prices they pay for cattle from Canada or Mexico.

That is the crux of the complaint Canadian and Mexican ranchers have with COOL. Their cattle, which are of equal quality, bring a lower price solely because of the U.S. COOL



Rik Dalvit/For the Capital Press

label law.

Because of that, Canada and Mexico complained to the World Trade Organization, which oversees disputes between member nations. The WTO has repeatedly sided with Canada and Mexico, which are now preparing retaliatory tariffs against beef and other U.S. agricultural products that are exported to those nations.

This could turn into a disaster for U.S. agriculture. Stubbornness on the part of some U.S. interests — including some members of Congress — has put other U.S. farmers and ranchers at risk. Though the U.S. House has voted to repeal COOL, the Senate continues to dawdle.

Since Canada and Mexico are our biggest export customers, this represents a huge problem for many U.S. farmers and ranchers, whose

crops and products could be targets for retaliatory tariffs.

Cassie Doyle, the Canadian consul general in San Francisco, recently listed some of the three dozen products that are on Canada's hit list: beef, pork, rice, corn, apples, cherries and wine. Between Canada and Mexico, more than \$3 billion in agricultural trade is threatened by retaliatory measures.

As much as COOL seemed like a simple way to show pride in U.S. beef, it has the potential to turn into a nightmare for U.S. agriculture.

It's clear that Congress needs to go back to the drawing board, repeal COOL and look for another option that won't offend Canada and Mexico. Even if it is replaced by a voluntary program, anything would be better than starting a trade war with our biggest customers.

# The spirit of the agrarian creed

By STEWART TRUELSEN  
For the Capital Press

**A**mericans are familiar with the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, but there was another set of principles the Founding Fathers held closely, although they never formally adopted them.

Those principles are the agrarian creed, also known as the agricultural creed. The creed is usually traced back to Thomas Jefferson, who placed a high value on agricultural pursuits. Jefferson felt that farming was superior to other occupations and resulted in good citizenship. Therefore, the creed expressed the belief that a high percentage of Americans should live on farms.

Other ideas incorporated in the creed were that farming is not only a business, but a way of life and ideally a family enterprise. The land should belong to the person who farms it, and the

**Guest comment**



Stewart Truelsen

farmer should be his own boss. Anyone who wants to farm should be able to do so. Lastly, it is good to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before.

According to Grant McConnell, who wrote *The Decline of Agrarian Democracy* in 1953, the tradition of an agrarian democracy was at its peak in 1890. He blamed its decline on the rise of capitalism. In any case, society was becoming industrial and urban. During the 20th century, depressed farm prices, uncontrollable surpluses and an exodus from farms made the agrarian dream seem more like a nightmare at times.

Yet, the spirit of the agrarian creed lives on and its basic tenets remain, es-

specially the concept of the family farm and the importance of private property rights. These and other parts of the creed helped form the philosophies and beliefs of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Today's high-tech world is a long way from what Jefferson had in mind, but there seems to be a growing appreciation among the non-farm public for agriculture and a desire to get back to our agrarian roots.

One of the hottest real estate trends is developing homes around a working farm instead of a golf course or a man-made lake. According to an article in Smithsonian magazine there are dozens of so-called agri-topian developments that are offshoots of the local-food movement.

The foodie culture and farm-minded chefs are bringing more attention to the source of our food — the nation's farms and ranch-

es, and give credit to the agricultural community for reaching out to consumers like never before through social media and television. Farmers have always had a good story to tell, but now they have an audience more willing to listen. Yes, some non-farmers may follow a romanticized version of what farming ought to be, and that's why a dialogue becomes important.

Jefferson's dream of having a large part of the population living on farms is no longer possible, but his premise for the agrarian creed is still valid. As a nation, we should continue to place a high value on agricultural pursuits and recognize the work ethic and good citizenship of those who farm and ranch.

*Stewart Truelsen, a food and agriculture freelance writer, is a regular contributor to the American Farm Bureau's Focus on Agriculture series.*

## Editorial Board

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# N. California spring water sources key to weathering drought

By ANDREW BRAUGH  
For the Capital Press

**Guest comment**

Andrew Braugh



The winter of 2015 was the driest winter in California's recorded history. But despite the great drought — and perhaps the worst arid spell for California in 1,200 years — spring-fed water flows steadily in Northern California.

You read that correctly. Even with a fourth consecutive summer of record-setting drought, water from the depths of Mount Shasta, Mount Lassen and the Medicine Lake Volcano rises insistently to the surface providing life for people, fish and wildlife, agriculture and hydropower.

As the drought reduces rain water and snow melt, spring water acts as an emergency reserve, currently pumping 1.7 billion gallons a day into Shasta Reservoir. In total, over 2 million acre-feet per year of spring-sourced water flows from our region's aquifers into Shasta Reservoir — California's largest — accounting for about one-half of total storage capacity. Thanks to this water source, Shasta Reservoir is currently maintaining 61 percent of its historic average:

more surface storage than any reservoir in the state (California Department of Water Resources, 2015).

Despite the undeniable importance of this water source, we know surprisingly little about the complex geochemical processes that fuel our major regional spring systems.

It wasn't until 2014 that researchers verified that the source of Fall River water — one of the largest spring-fed rivers in the entire western United States — originates from the Medicine Lake Volcano aquifer located just 30 miles east of Mount Shasta.

In response to our poor scientific understanding of source water, California Trout is launching a new assessment of California's most valuable spring systems throughout the Klamath-Cascade region.

The purpose of the study is three-fold:

First, establish a scientific baseline for all large-volume spring systems throughout the region. Second, identify important recharge areas and potential stressors.

Last, inform decision-makers tasked with making tough

decisions about critical issues to California's water and energy future, including geothermal development, groundwater pumping, additional surface storage and water for agriculture and the environment.

The study will include, among others, Fall River, Hat Creek, the Shasta River, and the famous McCloud River. Our Fall River work is especially important, as Calpine Energy proposes geothermal development in the Medicine Lake Highlands.

Not coincidentally, the assessment will also include Big Springs, an important cold-water spring source to the Upper Sacramento River and lightning rod of controversy surrounding Crystal Geyser Water Co. in Mount Shasta.

Crystal Geyser plans to invest \$50 million to upgrade an existing bottling facility that draws water from the same aquifer that fuels Big Springs. Although Crystal Geyser is confident their operations won't affect the springs or groundwater levels, their plans naturally raise questions about the vulnerability of the aquifer.

To begin addressing these questions CalTrout has developed a detailed study plan for Big Springs, which includes four new gaging stations and a real-time monitoring system that will measure possible changes in flow or water quality. Crystal Geyser fully supports this effort.

As with all our restoration efforts throughout the state, CalTrout is committed to pursuing scientifically based solutions to complex natural resource issues. With the right approach, we can elevate public policy that balances the needs of fish, water and people. But in the context of extreme drought, a changing climate and increasing water demand, we need to improve our scientific understanding of these systems because spring-sourced water is more important than ever.

Andrew "Drew" Braugh is Mount Shasta/Klamath director for the nonprofit fish and watershed advocacy organization California Trout.

## Letters policy

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