

# Capital Press

## The West's Ag Weekly

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URBAN VS. RURAL

# GREAT GUN DIVIDE



E.J. Harris/EO Media Group  
Nick Goit, owner of Eastern Oregon Tactical, places a Panther Arms DPMS LR-308 out for display at his shop Tuesday in Hermiston.

## In West, heritage and landscape shape rural, urban views on guns

By ERIC MORTENSON | Capital Press

In Hermiston, Ore., 184 miles east of Portland and 180 degrees politically turned, gun shop owner Nick Goit engages almost daily in “open carry,” meaning he wears a holstered pistol on his hip as he walks about town. He said it doesn’t raise eyebrows, although it helps to carry yourself in a professional manner.

“Over here, if you see someone coming down the street with a gun, you don’t automatically assume they’re going to shoot things up,” Goit said. Do that in Portland, however, or Seattle, Eugene or other urban areas, and people would most likely be alarmed. There is an urban-rural divide over firearms that seems every bit as stark as the divisions over farming practices, wildlife, land and water use and natural resources.

With guns, however, the disagreement sharpens in the wake of yet another mass murder, this time the Oct. 1 shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore. Nine people dead, plus the gunman. Nine wounded.

### One issue, two sides

From urban areas, primarily, come the demands for greater gun control. From rural areas, primarily, comes the answer: Leave us alone.

How to cross that divide?

“There’s such a culture clash, I don’t think it can be explained,” said Goit, who opened Eastern Oregon Tactical in Hermiston four years ago. “The opposite culture baffles me.”

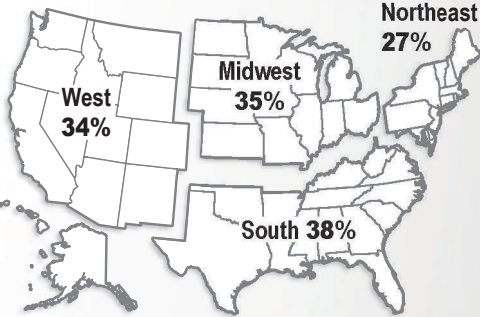
Wes Hare says it’s a really tough question.

Hare is city manager of Albany, in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. He started in Ashland, went to high school in Bend, and lived in Eugene, Oakridge

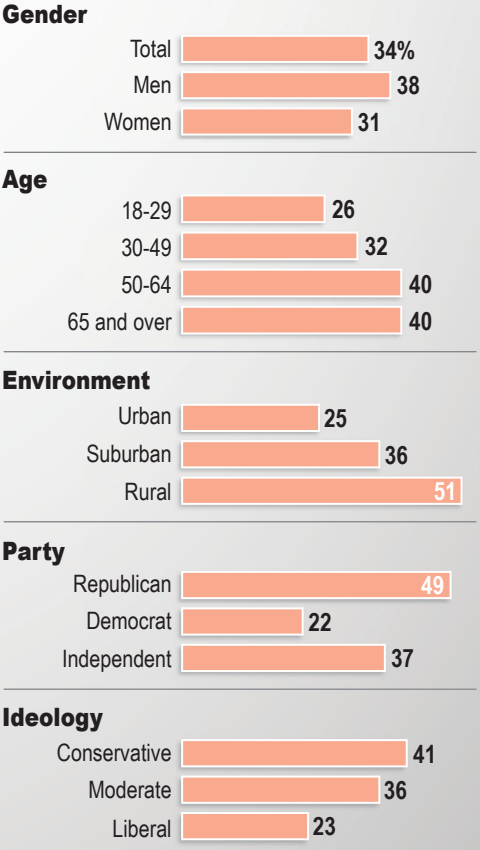
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## Gun ownership by region\*

Percent of all households with a gun in the home.



Percent in each group who say they have a gun, pistol or rifle in their home:



\*Based on a national survey of 3,243 adults with an overall sampling margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.  
Source: Pew Research Center, American Trends Panel, April 29-May 27, 2014  
Capital Press graphic

# National organic boss faces backlash

Groups criticize policies of Miles McEvoy, head of USDA’s organic program, in federal court

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

When Miles McEvoy was put in charge of the USDA’s National Organic Program in 2009, the appointment was strongly applauded by organic and environmental groups.

Six years later, some of those same organizations are facing off against McEvoy in federal court over his administration of the program.

While the criticisms of his policies are numerous, most boil down to the allegation that McEvoy has weakened independent oversight of the program to make life easier for large agribusiness firms.

“There is a decisive split in the organic community and McEvoy is right in the middle of it,” said Mark Kastel, co-founder of the Cornucopia Institute, an organic watchdog group, who once praised the deputy administrator as “a true believer, not a PR figurehead.”



Miles McEvoy

Prior to joining USDA, McEvoy was instrumental in shaping the organic inspection program at the Washington State Department of Agriculture and was involved in launching other organic programs and organizations.

“I don’t know if we had higher expectations than McEvoy deserved or if he changed,” Kastel says now.

A spokesperson for USDA said the agency “values and has faith in Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy’s leadership of the National Organic Program.”

The program thoroughly investigates any complaints about non-compliance with organic protocols and it’s inaccurate that USDA’s internal auditors are investigating McEvoy or his department, as claimed by the Cornucopia Institute, the spokesperson said.

A major point of contention is McEvoy’s decision to change the decision-making process for which synthetic substances are allowed to remain in organic production.

Traditionally, synthetic substances were removed from the list of approved organic materials unless two-thirds of the members of the National Organic Standards Board voted to retain them.

In 2013, the USDA changed the procedure so that two-thirds of the board must vote to remove a substance. In effect, a nine-person majority of the 15-member board can vote to remove a substance and its use would still be allowed.

Earlier this year, a lawsuit was filed against McEvoy and his superiors at USDA for allegedly violating administrative law by implementing the new rule without public comment.

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# Ranchers oppose Malheur County monument designation

Conservation proposal would encompass 40 percent of the Eastern Oregon county

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

ONTARIO, Ore. — An effort by conservation groups to have a large chunk of Malheur County set aside as a national monument or wilderness area has riled up ranchers and farmers in the area.

They have joined forces with a group of concerned citizens and elected officials who are fighting the Owyhee Canyonlands Conservation Proposal, which would encompass 2.5 million acres.

Malheur County Cattlemen’s Association President Chris Christensen said locking up that much area would eliminate a large amount of grazing land and devastate Or-

egon’s No. 1 cattle producing county.

“If this thing comes to pass, it would have a devastating effect on the ranching community and agriculture in Malheur County,” he said. “Anybody involved in agriculture in Malheur County isn’t going to be in favor of this thing.”

Christensen said a large chunk of that 2.5 million acres is grazed.

According to Sergio Arispe, a livestock range-land agent at Oregon State University’s Malheur County Extension office, locking up that much land would eliminate about 33 percent of the county’s total grazing land.

A monument designation

“would destroy the community and the business of agriculture as it’s being done in this area right now,” Christensen said.

Oregon Natural Desert Association, which is leading the monument effort, says it would protect 2.5 million

acres of wild lands and hundreds of miles of wild and scenic rivers. According to the group’s web site, the proposal would “allow working farms and ranches to continue to operate.”

But Jordan Valley rancher Bob Skinner, former president

of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, said area residents believe the opposite would happen.

The majority of that 2.5 million acres is grazed, he said.

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