

Editorials are written by or approved by members of the Capital Press Editorial Board.

All other commentary pieces are the opinions of the authors but not necessarily this newspaper.

Opinion

Editorial Board

Publisher
Mike O'Brien
opinions@capitalpress.com

Editor
Joe Beach
Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

Managing Editor
Carl Sampson

OUR VIEW

ODA's loss is the state's gain

Katy Coba, longtime director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, on Oct. 1 will become director of the Department of Administrative Services and Oregon's chief operating officer.

That's a good thing for Oregon, but it will be a sad day for Oregon farmers and ranchers when she gives up the reins at ODA.

Coba, a Pendleton native who grew up on the family wheat ranch, has been director at ODA for 13 years, having served four governors. Her tenure has been longer than any other director.

We live in an age when the



Katy Coba

term "bureaucrat" has come to be used as a pejorative, and those with long tenure at the head of a regulatory agency are viewed with apprehension by the regulated. But Coba is no imperial Mandarin or party apparatchik.

Farm Bureau gives Coba credit for keeping ODA from being politicized.

Too often government uses a hammer to enforce its regulations. Coba has overseen a department that has collaborated with producers to achieve desired

outcomes, leaving stronger measures as a last resort. It's a concept other agencies would do well to emulate.

"The Department of Agriculture is really a great role model," Coba said. "We focus on education and outreach and providing technical expertise to the people we interact with, and that is our first goal in the work that we do."

That's not to say that everyone has been happy with every decision. They have not. Like many things in Oregon, agriculture sparks passionate debate. Producers of all stripes can adopt strident positions regarding cropping practices.

But ODA and Coba practice a big tent policy. Big ag is good, small ag is good, organic ag is good, and conventional ag is good. Coba has promoted it all.

"Oregon agriculture is very diverse, which is a strength we have, but it also brings a lot of challenges," Coba told our colleagues at the East Oregonian.

In making the appointment, Gov. Kate Brown praised Coba's "proven record of effective and innovative leadership and extensive knowledge of state government. She is committed to making government work better for all Oregonians."

Her professional resume made

her a natural choice.

Kristin Grainger, a spokeswoman for the governor, said there was one other thing.

"Her roots in rural Oregon and Eastern Oregon were influential as well," Grainger said.

So Coba will bring a fresh point of view to the upper echelon of a state government that has been Portland centric for many years.

"I still feel very much connected to our natural resources-based industries," Coba said. "I will be shameless in my advocacy for those things, even in my new job."

That can only be good for agriculture and rural Oregon.

OUR VIEW



Capital Press

A sign posted in Jordan Valley opposes the Owyhee Caanyonlands National Monument in Malheur County, Ore. Jordan Valley is nearly surrounded by the proposed monument.

Blumenauer widens urban-rural divide

You have to hand it to U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer. He's not afraid to take a stand, especially when the issue will have zero impact on his district and when the victims will be hundreds of miles away.

The Portland Democrat sent a letter to President Barack Obama recently urging him to use the Antiquities Act to establish the 2.5 million-acre Owyhee National Monument.

The law allows a president to unilaterally designate a national monument, which forbids multiple use of the land. The act is often used by lame ducks to shove such designations down the throats of local residents and curry favor with environmental groups.

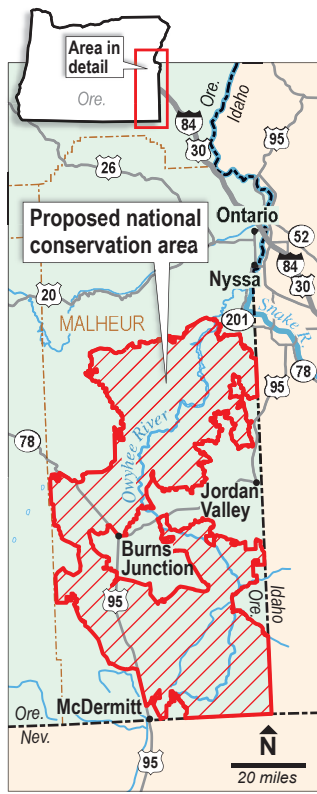
The distance from Portland to the proposed monument: 368 miles.

"A growing statewide coalition of local citizens, businesses, conservation organizations, recreational interests, sportsmen, and other diverse partners support permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands," Blumenauer wrote to Obama.

But, he wrote, "there are some local interests who are opposed to such a designation."

The "local interests" are Malheur County residents, including ranchers and others who for generations have depended on the canyonlands area to graze cattle. They fear grazing and other economic activities would ultimately be banned if the monument were designated. That would most likely put them out of business.

Last spring, 90 percent of Malheur County voters



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

opposed the monument proposal in a county-wide advisory vote.

In essence, Blumenauer is telling rural Oregonians that their opinion doesn't matter, and neither do their businesses, many of which have been in Malheur County long before he and his Portland friends ever heard of it.

There is a lot of talk these days about the urban-rural divide, about how urban folks lack an understanding of rural areas. These same people say rural residents need to understand the needs of urban folks.

But when it comes right down to it, urban residents say they have the votes, and whether rural residents agree or not, that's tough. That's Blumenauer's stand, and the stand of others who want the canyonlands "protected" from the generations of Oregonians who have ranched there.

Blumenauer, in his support for the Owyhee National Monument, just made the urban-rural divide wider. He demonstrated — again — that the wants of Portland's elites outweigh the needs of rural Oregonians.

The next time you hear folks talk about the need for urban and rural Oregonians to listen to one another, remember that, on issues such as this, urbanites only seem to hear what they want.

Blumenauer mentions the possibility of a "win-win" solution for all communities in Malheur County should the area be set aside as a playland for hikers and campers.

What he really means is "We win, you lose."

Readers' views

U.S. needs to regain its sovereignty

The U.N. TPP and TTIP treaties are being touted as beneficial to our farms, trade and economy. Have we benefited from any of the other treaties — WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA, etc.?

Our economy has slumped

to the point of homeless citizens with their families living in cars, vans or wherever. Their children have maybe a meal a day. Just think what the approximately \$8 billion of your tax money going to the U.N. could do for our citizens and economy.

Yet, we are increasingly being saddled with Agenda 21, Small Arms Treaty, climate control and various other rules and regulations. Our

nation and its citizens were ruled against with COOL, the Country of Origin Labeling law for some foods.

Isn't it time to stand up for our sovereignty and Amexit, as did the Brits?

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., has introduced HR 1205, the American Sovereignty Restoration Act (previously submitted by Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, in 1997) that if passed would stop and

correct these attacks on our sovereignty.

We need to stand together and keep calling to accountability our legislators. Their phone numbers are readily available.

Freedom isn't free. You have to fight for it.

Ho 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Mrs. M.A. Novak
Yamhill, Ore.

Ag must stand united this November

By BARRY BUSHUE
For the Capital Press

Guest
comment
Barry Bushue



The November 2016 election is close upon us, and it has never been more vital for the Oregon agriculture community to come together as a strong, united front.

All farming and ranching families — no matter the operation size, commodity raised, or farming method used — are impacted by the public policy decisions made at the state capitol. Ever-increasing rules and regulations involving labor, water, land use, transportation, taxes, wildlife, to name only a few, directly affect our ability to do our jobs and stay in business.

We must stand together in support of candidates who understand and value agriculture — and stand up against activists and out-of-state groups that threaten our family businesses, rural communities, and way of life.

Just look at what happened in the last two Oregon legislative sessions. Lawmakers passed bills that create an uncertain regulatory landscape and unfairly burden food, foliage and fiber producers.

- The minimum wage hike hurts "price-taking" industries like agriculture that have little ability to raise prices to offset increased operations costs.

- Paid sick time does not account for the unique needs of agriculture, like short harvest windows.

- The Low Carbon Fuel Standard will increase the cost of transporting goods through a hidden gas tax, hitting producers and working families at the pump.

And we face new challenges in 2017, including requiring employers to set worker schedules weeks in advance, costly retrofit and replacement of diesel engines, and prohibitions on important production tools that are used responsibly and sparingly on the farm.

In Oregon, we face constant pressure to reject scientific advancements in agriculture, threatening not only the affordability and accessibility of food, but also the family farms and ranches that raise it. We must continuously fight proposed bans on animal health tools, biotechnology, and crop protection products.

It's especially frustrating because farmers and ranchers truly are the original environmentalists, our livelihoods directly dependent upon the health of the land. All farmers, whether organic, conventional, or both, care about sustainability. Who is

more sustainable than a farmer working to pass down an operation to the third, fourth or fifth generation?

And certainly the size of an operation does not dictate its level of commitment to the environment, its employees, its animals, or the quality and safety of its product. Larger farms care just as much as smaller farms.

Less than 1 percent of Oregonians make their living in agriculture. We cannot let others divide us into battling factions of small vs. large, organic vs. conventional vs. biotech, one commodity vs. another.

That's why we need you to vote in November. Farmers and ranchers are stronger as a community, as a constituency, when we stand together against fear-mongering and misinformation.

To get the word out, Farm Bureau and other Oregon ag organizations have launched an "I Farm, I Vote" campaign, similar to those in other states. To participate, print out an "I Farm, I Vote" sign from oregonfb.org/iffarmivote. Take a picture of yourself holding the sign on your farm or ranch, and post it on social media with the hashtag #IFarmIVoteOR. Help us show that Oregon's rural communities are united, engaged and will come out in force on Election Day.

Throughout the year, it's important for farmers to get in front of legislators and local decision-makers to explain how public policy and legislative proposals threaten agriculture's ability to survive. That's what Oregon Farm Bureau does for our 7,000 farm and ranch family members.

We represent their interests at the capitol, share information, and empower our members to advocate for themselves.

From now through Nov. 8, take to social media and proclaim #IFarmIVoteOR. Pay attention to local races and support candidates who understand the challenges farmers and ranchers face every day. Learn about the ballot measures. And most importantly, cast your vote this November.

Oregon Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue is a third-generation farmer raising a variety of vegetables and berries at a nearly century-old farm near Boring, Ore. He is OFB's 15th president.

Letters policy

Write to us: Capital Press welcomes letters to the editor on issues of interest to farmers, ranchers and the agribusiness community.

Letters policy: Please limit letters to 300 words and include your home address and a daytime telephone number with your submission. Longer pieces, 500-750 words, may be considered as guest commentary pieces for use on the opinion pages. Guest commentary submissions should also include a photograph of the author.

Send letters via email to opinions@capitalpress.com. Emailed letters are preferred and require less time to process, which could result in quicker publication. Letters also may be sent to P.O. Box 2048, Salem, OR 97308; or by fax to 503-370-4383.