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Opinion

Editorial Board

Publisher
John Perry

Editor
Joe Beach

Managing Editor
Carl Sampson

opinions@capitalpress.com

Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

OUR VIEW

Pesticide notification bill unneeded

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation, 2,401 people were killed or seriously injured last year in traffic accidents. Driving cars is a real and tangible threat to the public safety. Not only are people who drive and ride in cars and trucks at risk, so are those who walk, ride bicycles and live near roads and highways.

Yet we don't foresee the Washington Legislature requiring anyone planning to drive a car to notify their neighbors of their intentions, just in case an accident takes place that might involve them.

That's similar to what House Bill 1564 would have done to farmers, ranchers and orchardists. It would have required them to notify their neighbors when they



Associated Press File

Pesticide use is already tightly regulated by the federal government.

planned to apply a pesticide. This requirement would have been a massive inconvenience to people who work in agriculture — and a massive annoyance to people who live near farms, ranches and orchards. Our guess is they would prefer to stay in bed if a farmer knocks on their door at 5

in the morning to warn them of something he's done for years without any threat to public health.

The bill, which would have also required farmers to file monthly reports on pesticide applications, died in the Legislature this session, but

its supporters, including union activists and nonprofit legal services lawyers, vow to bring it back next year. Similar bills have been floated in other state legislatures.

At the heart of HB 1564 was the notion that anyone near a farm is at risk when a farmer uses a pesticide. The main implication is that farmworkers and others who will apply the pesticides are incompetent or in some way a general threat to the public safety.

That's not true.

Those who apply pesticides have to be trained, to protect themselves and others. Just this year a new federal regulation went into effect requiring even more training.

On top of all that, the labels on all pesticides carry specific

instructions on how to use them and have the force of federal law behind them.

Even considering all that, accidents involving pesticide applications do happen. In 2015, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 24 accidents were reported. That's out of an estimated 500,000 pesticide applications each year in Washington state. That's about 0.0048 percent of the time.

Our suspicion is the federal laws and regulations already in place will reduce the number of such incidents even further.

For activists to push a complicated, expensive, annoying, ineffective and unneeded solution in search of a problem seems to any reasonable person to be a case of massive overreach.

OUR VIEW



The Boise River flows through Boise, Idaho, last June. President Donald Trump has ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency to undertake a much-needed review of the new Waters of the United States regulation.

Sean Ellis/Capital Press File

Trump sends WOTUS back for review

President Donald Trump is working to make good on a campaign promise to dump the "waters of the United States rule."

Last week Trump signed an executive order calling for the Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps of Engineers to review the final rule, and to revise and rescind the rule as necessary.

Good. The rule was overly broad, and expanded the already considerable reach of those agencies.

EPA and the Corps worked on the rule for a couple of years in the hopes of reconciling two separate Supreme Court decisions in cases involving the Clean Water Act. The object was to better define what constitutes "waters of the United States," which the act gives the federal government authority to regulate.

The language of the rule would extend regulation to isolated bodies of water that have a "significant nexus" with navigable waters of the United States.

While the rule makes clear reference to exempted established

farming practices, the bureaucracy has flouted these exemptions in the past by imposing narrow and unconventional interpretations of what is allowed.

Despite the government's protest to the contrary, farm and ranch groups worried the feds would use the opportunity to expand their authority over "waters," and therefore adjacent lands, not previously subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act. Such a designation could have profound and expensive consequences for landowners.

Twenty-eight states asked the Obama administration to delay implementing the rule when it came out in 2015, arguing the agencies had failed to follow proper procedure in formulating the rule. Thirteen states promptly sued in 2015 when the final order was released.

Even the Corps had its doubts, writing a scathing email to EPA officials prior to the release of the final draft. Unhappy with the way EPA wrote the document, the Corps determined the rule would not

withstand a court challenge.

And it was right.

North Dakota U.S. District Judge Ralph Erickson granted a preliminary injunction delaying the rule's implementation.

Erickson said the states were likely to succeed on the merits because the agencies had adopted an "exceptionally expansive" regulatory scheme, allowing the EPA to regulate "waters that do not bear any effect on the 'chemical, physical and biological integrity' of any navigable-in-fact water."

The litigation is ongoing, and the rule remains under nationwide stay.

Getting rid of the rule as written is a good first step in reducing the reach of the administrative state. But that's not enough, because it will leave unresolved the ambiguity created by the disparate Supreme Court rulings. Farmers, ranchers and regulators need clear, unambiguous guidance on the true extent and limit of the government's authority.

On that point the next rule must be quite clear.

Rural-urban divide has been around a long time

By STEWART TRUELSEN
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Stewart Truelsen



The election of Donald Trump as the nation's 45th president drew attention to the rural-urban divide. It wasn't the only dividing line in the election, but it is credited with helping Trump win.

Rural voters tended to vote Republican and urban voters Democratic in this election. The divide may have less to do with party labels and more to do with political philosophy. Rural Americans are more conservative than urban dwellers, and their priorities often differ.

A presidential election with similarities to this one occurred in 1948 when Harry Truman defeated Thomas Dewey. Only then the party labels were reversed. Truman was the Democrat running for election after serving out President Roosevelt's last term, and Dewey was the Republican.

Both men traveled the country by train to campaign, but Dewey did so at a more leisurely pace and made far fewer speeches than Truman. By all accounts, he was a shoo-in and had nothing to worry about, although Truman was drawing large crowds wherever he went.

On a hot, sunny day in September Truman drew 90,000 for a speech at the National Plowing Contest in Dexter, Iowa. Introduced by legendary farm broadcaster Herb Plambeck, Truman unloaded on special interests and the eastern establishment. "The Wall Street reactionaries are not satisfied with being rich," he said, "They want to increase their power and their privileges regardless of what happens to the other fellow. They are gluttons of privilege."

The Des Moines Register said his speech was "harsh and demagogic." A writer for the New Yorker thought the speech was "deplorable." But Truman struck a chord with rural audiences. He had, after all, been a farmer early in his career, and had populist appeal.

Of course, there was no Twitter back then, nothing even close to it. Truman's campaign distributed a sixteen-page, four-color comic book about his life, and that was considered innovative. In contrast to today's politics, neither candidate engaged in name-calling.

When Truman won in a huge upset, Dewey reflected that it was due to the farm vote, which he said switched sides in the last days of the campaign.

The farm vote was a larger share of the electorate

then, but it is still important today because farmers and ranchers get out and vote.

In an analysis after the recent election, National Public Radio said the rural-urban divide grew in 2016 from where it was in 2012 and 2008, and it was because rural counties became progressively more Republican. The NPR analysis said it was impossible to tell what is causing the widening rural-urban gap because of the number of factors related to voting patterns.

One striking similarity between the election of Truman in 1948 and Trump in 2016 is that a segment of the population felt left out or passed over by the losing party.

Dewey was criticized for speaking over the heads of voters. Truman, on the other hand, played upon farmers' fears that a Republican administration would lead to another depression, especially in farm prices.

The farm economy is always on farmers' minds, but in the 2016 election they had other serious concerns. A major example was the regulatory overreach by the Environmental Protection Agency.

It isn't just that farmers abhorred the fines, paperwork and legal fees. They viewed EPA as a threat to private property rights. This issue was not a high priority with urban dwellers, who seldom face a loss of property rights or EPA intrusion in their affairs.

The rural-urban gap is more than just politics, of course, and attempts to bridge it go way back. Beginning in 1955, the National Farm City Council began promoting better understanding between rural and urban citizens, which included National Farm-City Week, the week leading up to Thanksgiving.

The idea was to recognize the interdependence of rural and urban communities. This is a good thing for politicians to keep in mind when running for state or national office.

Cities never get overlooked in a political campaign, but rural America does. Politicians do that at their own peril.

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

Readers' views

Trump right to withdraw from TPP

The letter in the Feb. 17 Capital Press is rebuking President Trump for inciting the agricultural workforce and withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty. Shouldn't we look into reasons for these decisions?

The ag workers came to America to work and had green cards giving them admittance to work through the harvesting of crops. After their work season they returned home. They weren't looked down upon. It's the ones who break the law.

If they intend to become citizens there are steps required by law and if they conform to our rules, laws and language, then there is no complaint.

Our nation is a republic ruled by law and we must comply or our identity and sovereignty will be lost.

The withdrawal from the TPP and other treaties and negotiating NAFTA are in our best and economic interest. It's not all about the money gained for farmers, ranchers, etc., with more trade. It's

about politics and greed by treaty promoters.

Our trade deficit increased dangerously high, affecting our economics since we entered NAFTA, CAFTA, etc. If we agreed to TPP, the trade deficit wouldn't be the only concern. If we would have researched this secret deal we would find the treaty's rules and regulations would be the downfall of our freedoms and sovereignty and were touted as free trade. This tactic was used on Europe to be considered for the European Union, which many nations now want to exit.

So as the president of our nation why shouldn't he think of our nation first? We should thank him for regarding us and our nation.

We all need to research and uphold our nation. Our freedoms, constitution and sovereignty depend on it.

My latest issue of the New American magazine, Feb. 17, sheds light on the TPP, TIPP, and their effects on our nation and us. A fitting verse from the Bible, Hosea 4:6: My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Mrs. M.A. Novak
Yamhill, Ore.