

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

Editor & Publisher
Joe Beach

Managing Editor
Carl Sampson

opinions@capitalpress.com Online: www.capitalpress.com/opinion

OUR VIEW

USDA plan a move toward better government

Plans at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to move two of its agencies out of the District of Columbia and into the countryside has the mandarins predicting dire consequences, but we think the Republic might actually be better served with its government spread out among the governed.

USDA proposes moving the Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture out of Washington, D.C., by the end of next year. It has not settled on an alternative location for the agencies.

According to USDA, the moves are intended to help recruit

qualified staff, locate the agencies closer to stakeholders and save money.

That makes sense. Washington is an expensive city, but we would be happily surprised if any money were saved. We think moving agencies out of the capital will help make government more responsive to the needs of the people.

Bureaucrats, former and present, think this is a terrible idea.

Earlier this month, 56 former USDA and federal statistical agency officials and 45 organizations sent letters warning of the damage the move would cause, including loss of staff

expertise by employees not willing to move and loss of visibility with policy makers.

There was a similar outcry when a bipartisan group of senators last year suggested that the Bureau of Land Management be moved from the capital to somewhere in the West where BLM manages large swaths of the real estate. Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke, who manages BLM, agreed. So did we.

First, it seems unrealistic that these agencies will be left without any physical presence at headquarters.

Even if they were, to suggest that an agency that is out of sight would be equally out of the mind

of department leadership at budget time seems a bit far fetched. It has been our experience that even the most fiscally conservative cabinet members are oath to cut off viable parts of their empires.

It's true the agency mid-level managers will have less opportunity to bump into Secretary Perdue in the cafeteria or to participate in the impromptu bull sessions around the watercooler with other apparatchiks. But with the plethora of electronic communications options available today — even in such dusty outposts as Des Moines and Kansas City — we don't think anyone should be left out of substantive

discussions on policy.

We understand the appeal of being close to the heart of power. Even a casual visitor to Washington, D.C., can easily be caught up in the pomp and ceremony. For those who work there, it is woven into the fabric of their being.

The problem with centralized government is that it loses touch with those being governed. For whom are the statistics being collected? For whom is the research being conducted?

We think that a move outside of Washington, while disruptive in the short run, would be good in the long run.



Readers' views

Name game leads to support for Walden

What's in a name? We are all given a name at birth and that name stays with us for the rest of our lives. Though some choose to change their names, particularly if you are an artist like Madonna, Prince or John Wayne. Our names define who we are. They represent our heritage, our lineage, our history. Some names are so famous, all you need to hear is the last name and you immediately know who they are, like Jordan, Gates, Reagan or Kennedy.

In the ranching community, there are several old-time names that you know just by mentioning their last name. One such name is the Skinner Ranch. The Skinners have been in Jordan Valley Oregon since 1863. It is a seventh-generation ranch headed up by Bob Skinner. Bob is a past president of the Oregon Cattleman's Association and the current president of the Public Lands Council. Bob and his family have spent countless hours and much of their own money defending and promoting their livelihood and communities that they and many other ranching family's support. The Skinner name is known from the State House to the White House.

I have known Bob and his family for years, they have an impeccable reputation known for their honesty, integrity and work ethic. That is why it is so troubling that in the political race for Oregon's second congressional district Greg Walden's opponent who happens to have a hyphenated last name with Skinner in it is falsely implying that she is a local girl. You see, last fall in her travels she took a selfie in front of Bob's family ranch sign then posted, "As she prepares for

Thanksgiving that she is very grateful for her family." Then she ended the post #jordanvalleyoregon.

OK, I get it, if I ever see a road sign or a pub in my travels that says McElligott I am going to stop and take a picture. Heck in my library I even have a copy of Dr. Seuss' "McElligott's Pool." Even though he left a "t" off the end of the name. But I am not going to post it for the world to see and imply that I am somebody that I am not. Bob Skinner recently wrote Ms. McLeod-Skinner a nice letter requesting that she remove the picture of his ranch sign from her website. As of last night, it was still there. Her website boasts of ethics and integrity, but I find the act of posting a selfie of someone's personal property without their permission and implying that they are close family very unethical and lacking integrity. Not removing the picture when asked just solidifies that opinion.

Congressman Greg Walden, on the other hand, doesn't have to pretend to be someone he is not. He lets his record speak for itself. Walden, as he is known in Oregon's second congressional district and in Washington, D.C., has worked hard for Oregon. He and his staff have spent countless hours on the Blue Mountain Forest Plan trying to get it right for all of Oregon.

He has championed forest fire funding, transportation and health care issues. I have had the opportunity to see him work in Washington, D.C., and the respect he has garnered from both sides of the aisle.

Don't be fooled by what you see on a website. Remember not everything on the internet is true. When you fill out your ballots this November vote for the candidate that has integrity and ethics. Vote Walden.

Matt McElligott
North Powder, Ore.

OUR VIEW

Budd-Falen top choice for Interior job

Judging by the knee-jerk reaction of some environmentalists, the Trump administration has chosen well in Karen Budd-Falen, its new deputy solicitor for fish, wildlife and parks within the Department of the Interior.

"Her appointment to this position is abysmal for the protection of wildlife, respect for sacred tribal lands and conservation of wild places that Interior is supposed to safeguard," the Wilderness Society's lawyer, Nada Culver, said in a press release.

Culver tries to paint Budd-Falen with a broad brush that includes the Bundy family, whom she represented along with other ranchers in 1989 in a case involving the Mojave desert tortoise, an endangered species. The fact that 27 years later the Bundys participated in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge debacle is laid at Budd-Falen's feet. It "calls into serious question whether she can be trusted to apply the law on behalf of the Department of the Interior," Culver said.

Let's clarify what Budd-Falen has done for a living for the past three decades. She is a lawyer. It is her job to represent her clients to the best of her ability, no matter what side of an issue they are on. The fact that the Wilderness Society doesn't like that she has represented ranchers in disputes with environmental groups and the federal government apparently is enough to give them

a massive case of heartburn. We infer from the Wilderness Society's statements that if Budd-Falen had represented environmental groups instead of ranchers she would get both a medal and a ringing

operates or shares responsibility for the water works of the West, including rivers and reservoirs. Think the Klamath Basin, the Columbia River, the Colorado River, the Snake River and scores of reservoirs that supply water for irrigation and other uses. The importance of water in the West cannot be overstated. Having a person who understands that, and how water laws work, will benefit all westerners, even environmentalists.

Then there's the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Among its responsibilities is the Endangered Species Act, a law that promotes the shuffling of paper and the filing of lawsuits by environmental groups as much as protecting endangered and threatened species. Budd-Falen has tracked the ESA, its uses and abuses, and has a thorough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve it.

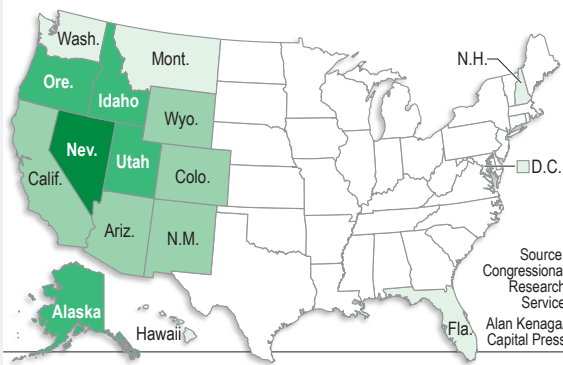
As a private attorney, an attorney with the Mountain States Legal Foundation and as a special assistant within the Interior Department during the Reagan administration, Budd-Falen has developed an encyclopedic knowledge of land and water management issues in the West. As deputy solicitor for fish, wildlife and parks within the Department of the Interior, she will be uniquely able to apply that knowledge to high-level decisions that will impact nearly every farmer and rancher in the West.

We can think of no one better for the job.

Federal land by state

Land area by percent of state

0-10% 11-30% 31-50% 51-80% > 80%



endorsement.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's look at the Department of the Interior. Among the nine bureaus within the department are the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The BLM is the landlord for 247.3 million federally owned acres, most of it in the West. That means anyone living in the rural West — ranchers, for example — will have to meet the demands of the BLM. Budd-Falen will know the issues backward and forward and be able to weigh all sides and make a fair-minded assessment that follows the law. No one could ask any more, or less, of a person in that position.

The Bureau of Reclamation

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.