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Gearing up for the 2021 session

HOW THE 2020 ELECTION IMPACTED THE MAKEUP OF THE 2021 OREGON LEGISLATURE AND WHAT WE EXPECT TO SEE THIS SESSION.

OFB's endorsed candidates largely fared well in the 2020 General Election, with 85% of OFB-endorsed candidates winning their elections. **The 2021 Oregon Legislative Session will also see a record number of Farm Bureau members serving in the Legislature: five members serving in the House and two in the Senate.**

Given that less than 1% of Oregonians are farmers and ranchers, we are proud to have almost 7% of the Legislature composed of farmers and ranchers! We are grateful to have so many Farm Bureau members serving their state and their communities, and we look forward to working with them to provide a strong voice for Oregon agriculture at the Capitol.

In terms of composition, the 2020 General Election brought only slight changes to the Oregon Legislature. The Oregon Senate will remain at 18 Democrats and 12 Republicans. In the Oregon House, Republicans will gain one seat, but Democrats will retain a commanding 37-23 majority.

Notably, in the Oregon House, Republicans captured two coastal districts previously held by Democrats. The success of Boomer Wright (R-Coos Bay) and Suzanne Weber (R-Tillamook) in coastal districts signifies a major cultural shift in the state as reliably Republican suburbs have swung wildly to Democrats, while once reliably Democrat coastal districts have become Republican.

The 2021 Oregon Legislative Session will remain extraordinarily important to agriculture, with significant policy proposals likely to come forward that would have a direct and negative impact on farm and ranch families.

Democrats continue to maintain a super majority in both chambers, meaning they do not need any votes by Republicans to raise taxes, and the 2020 election did not meaningfully



change the politics on issues key to OFB. While not as dramatic as initially feared, budget shortfalls are projected to continue into this year. As a result, we expect to see a number of proposals to make up lost revenue through new taxes and fees. OFB will remain stalwart in opposing any new cost increases on agriculture.

We also expect to see new employment mandates coming out of the COVID-19 crisis and wildfire season, including a number of mandates specifically directed at farm employers; paid COVID-19 leave, paid childcare, harassment/discrimination mandates, Workers' Compensation presumption, and wildfire smoke requirements are all on the table. OFB will continue to oppose new mandates on farm employers.

On the natural resources side, we are anticipating bills to require water measurement and reporting, bans on specific pesticide products, challenges to livestock management, and other bills that will directly impact agriculture. We will continue to fight to protect our members' farms and ranches.

Finally, with the state's increasing focus on racial equity, the Governor's Recommended Budget contained several proposals around the nexus of environmental and racial justice, including a focus on the impacts of agricultural practices, such as pesticide use on farmworkers, indigenous communities, and others. OFB will work to thoughtfully engage on these issues, while ensuring farmers

retain access to the tools they need.

With COVID-19-related restrictions on meetings and gatherings projected to last into the new year, the 2021 Legislative Session will look different than usual. The 2021 Session will begin on Jan. 19, and it is likely that at least part of the session will take place remotely. A remote session will pose a challenge for lobbyists and the public alike, as remote participation poses significant hurdles to legislative access and accountability.

However, a remote session also represents a unique chance for rural Oregon to ensure our voices are heard in Salem. We are hoping that remote testimony will make it easier for Oregon's farmers and ranchers to be able to tend to their operations at home and also testify on proposals that will impact them in Salem!

Please watch your emailed OFB Action Alerts closely for opportunities to engage remotely and help us continue the amazing grassroots engagement we saw successfully defeat major proposals in 2019 and 2020! (Sign up for OFB Action Alerts at OregonFB.org/advocacy.)

OFB Priorities for the 2021 Oregon Legislative Session

Safeguard Water and Land Use — Access to water and land is vital for all farms and ranches. OFB works to protect access to water and farmland for farmers and ranchers across the state.

- Oppose new measurement and reporting mandates.

- Support finding solutions to water shortages around the state that protect senior water right holders, while finding innovative solutions that work for the agricultural community.

- Oppose land use proposals that undermine protection of Oregon's farmland.

- Oppose Oregon Water Resources Dept. (OWRD) reinterpreting existing authority in an overly narrow or prescriptive manner.

Protect Access to Production Tools — All farmers and ranchers should have access to the tools and practices that work best for their operations. OFB works to ensure farmers and ranchers are able to continue to use the tools they need to be successful in their businesses and maintain the viability of their operations.

- Oppose new bans on pesticides and GMOs.
- Oppose changes that significantly limit application practices.

Strengthen Oregon's Economy — Agriculture plays a critical role in the state's economy. Most farmers are price-takers, which means they cannot adjust the price of their product to reflect increases in their cost of doing business. OFB works to protect the viability of Oregon agriculture, help farmers and ranchers stay in business, and ensure that Oregon farmers and ranchers are competitive in regional, national, and international markets.

- Oppose costly new employment mandates.
- Oppose new tax increases on Oregon's farms and ranches and the businesses they rely on.
- Oppose new fees on natural resources services.
- Reduce regulatory red tape for activities needed to support farms and ranches.
- Oppose acquisitions of private land for public purposes.

Environmental Stewardship — Farmers and ranchers work to reduce their environmental impact and care for our natural resources for future generations. OFB works to ensure that ag producers are recognized for their environmental stewardship and that Oregon's natural resources are actively managed.

- Oppose carbon policies that would increase costs on farmers and ranchers while not resulting in meaningful changes to climate.
- Support carbon policies that recognize and promote the sequestration role played by Oregon's working lands.
- Support forestry and wildfire prevention policies that place natural resource management at the forefront and rely on local expertise.
- Support active management of our state's wildlife.
- Support continued and increased funding for invasive species control.
- Support measures to ensure wildfire prevention and protection of forestland and farmland from the effects of wildfire.

Promote Oregon Agriculture — Promote coexistence, collaboration, and communication for the benefit of Oregon's farms and ranches. OFB works to promote coexistence and ensure that all crops are supported in our state.

- Support legislative changes needed to allow Oregon to develop a state hemp plan that meets USDA's requirements.

Enhance Rural Communities — Agriculture is the economic driver in many rural areas. OFB supports policies that will create new opportunities for rural Oregonians and address the challenges of living and working in remote areas.

- Support broadband access.
- Support access to vital community services.

Join Farm Bureau today

HELP US KEEP AG STRONG AND VIABLE!

At the county level since 1919 and the state level since 1932, Farm Bureau has represented and fought for the interests of Oregon's farm and ranch families for generations.

With the 2021 Oregon Legislative Session about to start on Jan. 19, Farm Bureau needs your support more than ever.

Between proposals around COVID-19 relief, wildfire mitigation, and redistricting — along with myriad bills involving water, labor, taxes, and pesticide use, among other important issue areas — this will be yet another critical session with significant impacts on

Oregon's ag community.

As a grassroots organization, we are only as strong as our membership. Voting members are professionally engaged in agriculture, while supporting members value a strong agricultural sector. If you're reading this, we hope you join us if you haven't already. We need your support. **Visit OregonFB.org/join today.**

And if you are a Farm Bureau member, please make sure you're signed up for emailed OFB Action Alerts at OregonFB.org/advocacy, and take the time to respond to them. With at least part of the session going virtual, there

will be unprecedented opportunity for farmers and ranchers to communicate with lawmakers and legislative committees without making a trip to Salem.

Along with your engagement at the Capitol, sharing your story with lawmakers, please know that OFB staff are working extremely hard to stop legislation that makes it more costly, complicated, and/or burdensome to grow crops and raise animals in this state — and are also striving to pass bills that benefit hard-working farm and ranch families and Oregon's rural communities. We thank you and appreciate your support!

OFB 1st VP Bailey, 3rd VP Otley reelected

On Dec. 10, 2020, at the 88th Oregon Farm Bureau Convention, which was all virtual, the House of Delegates unanimously reelected **Angi Bailey**, owner of a nursery specializing in Japanese maples and member of Multnomah County Farm Bureau, as OFB's 1st Vice President — and **Shane Otley**, a cattle rancher, hay farmer, and member of Harney County Farm Bureau, as OFB's 3rd Vice President.

"We are honored to have Angi and Shane continue to serve as officers on the OFB Board of Directors and help guide our grassroots organization into the new year and beyond,"



said OFB President Barb Iverson.

Congratulations to Angi and Shane!