



Ag community mourns farmer, firefighter

Austin Smith, 30, died battling barn blaze

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

ST. PAUL, Ore. — To know Austin Smith is to embrace his hometown of St. Paul, Ore., a community of less than 500 people about 30 miles south of Portland. The 30-year-old Smith was a sixth-generation farmer, growing hops at his family's B&D Farms in the lush

Willamette Valley countryside. His spirit of service extended from the local volunteer fire department to the St. Paul Jaycees. He was the president of both organizations.

Later this year, Smith planned to open his own restaurant and taproom on Main Street, which he envisioned becoming a destination for the rural area.

"He was passionate about everything

he was involved in," said Ed Charron, a longtime friend and colleague. "There was a lot. I don't know how he found the time."

Smith died Feb. 3 from injuries suffered in a barn fire and explosion in northern Marion County. He is survived by his wife, Ashley; parents, Dave and Lisa; brother, Zach; nephew, Brayden; niece, Callie; and extended family.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. The barn was at Champoeg Farm, which raises turkeys and

other poultry.

Those who knew and worked with Smith described him as a pillar of the community, an up-and-coming leader in the U.S. hop industry and someone who was always ready to help.

Brenda Frketch, owner of Kirsch Family Farms in St. Paul, knew Smith since he was a kid, when she used to babysit for him. They would later serve together on the St. Paul Rural Fire



Austin Smith

See Fire, Page 12



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and his wife, First Lady Trudi Inslee, at the Pike Place Market July 1, 2021, in Seattle. The visit was part of the Washington Ready tour, re-opening the state after closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

GOV. JAY INSLEE

Occupation: Governor of Washington state

Age: 71

Hometown: Seattle

Education: Degree in economics, University of Washington; law degree, Willamette University

Previous home: Selah, 4 miles north of Yakima, working as an attorney and prosecutor; had a 3-acre field of alfalfa mix horse hay

Family: Wife Trudi, three sons, four grandchildren

Public service: Washington House of Representatives, 1989-1993; U.S. House, 4th Congressional District, 1993-1995; 1st Congressional District, 1999-2012. Elected governor 2012 and is the longest serving current governor in the U.S. Made a brief run for president in 2019

Q&A Washington Gov. Jay Inslee talks about agriculture, dams and COVID

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Since he was first elected in 2012, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has put environmental and climate issues on the front burner.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic came along.

He's prioritized combating climate change and protecting salmon populations in addition to trying to control the spread of COVID.

His approaches have generated criticism from many in agriculture, who say his efforts will have little impact on the environment overall, at the expense of

the state's economy.

The state's rules requiring overtime pay for farmworkers, which he supported, were also controversial.

Inslee spoke with the Capital Press by phone on Jan. 14. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

How would you characterize your relationship with Washington's farmers and ranchers? What's working and what needs to be improved?

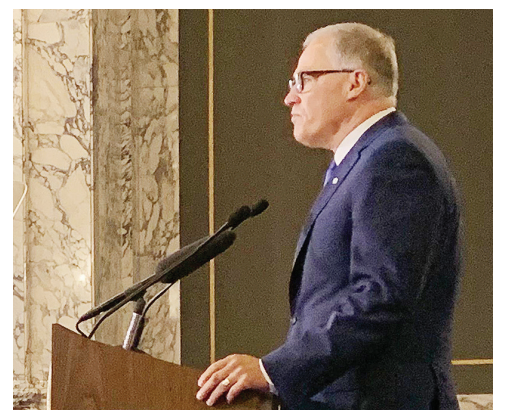
Inslee: Well, I wish that I had a one-on-one relationship with every single farmer and rancher. It would be great. Unfortunately, there's quite a number of folks.

How would I characterize that rela-

tionship? Well, I get up trying to help everybody in Washington state every morning and do the best I can, and that includes for farmers and ranchers.

Maybe it's a little easier for me to do that than others, because I spent two decades in Selah, trying to set my little irrigation box to just the right amount of water to water my hay field, surrounded by orchardists and people in the ag industry.

So I think it's a little easier for me to have that relationship, because of that 20 years in the valley, surrounded (by) people in the industry.



Office of Gov. Jay Inslee
Washington Gov. Jay Inslee delivers the State of the State Address remotely on Jan. 11.

See Q&A, Page 11

'THANK YOU. THANK YOU FOR BEING SO CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE AND DILIGENT AND WE HOPE TO HELP IN THE WAYS THAT WE CAN. WE'VE GOT THE BEST AG INDUSTRY IN THE WORLD BECAUSE WE HAVE THE MOST CREATIVE AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP.'

Wash. Gov. Jay Inslee's message to farmers and ranchers

Oregon ag overtime bill faces opposition

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — The promise of temporary tax credits didn't convince critics to drop their opposition to a bill that would require Oregon farmers to pay higher overtime wages.

House Bill 4002 would phase out the state's agriculture overtime exemption while providing farmers with tax credits to help with added labor expenses for several years.

Opponents said the approach would only forestall the harm to small operators, who'd bear the

brunt of higher costs.

"When you talk about transition, you're talking about the transition from small family farms to large private equity companies," said Larry George, a hazelnut grower and processor who is a former lawmaker.

The gradual implementation of overtime requirements won't ultimately mitigate the burden for Oregon's farm industry, said John Zielinski, who farms near Salem.

"The national and international markets don't care what our crop inputs are," Zielinski told the House Business and Labor Committee.

Farmers overwhelmingly opposed the bill during a Feb. 8 legislative hearing, arguing they'll be forced to limit weekly work hours and effectively deprive workers of income.

"We see it as a false promise to farmworkers," said Kyle Fessler, speaking on behalf of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. "That's a lose-lose for the farmers and the farmworkers."

Prices for crops and livestock are set by global markets that don't recognize higher agricultural labor expenses in Oregon, they said.

See Overtime, Page 12

Founded in 1945 by Farmers and Ranchers.
Who saw a need for Rural Lending.

SHERMAN & MORROW COUNTIES
Shane is Experienced, with a Focus on
AGRICULTURAL and COMMERCIAL LOANS
and **OPERATING LINES OF CREDIT.**



Bank of Eastern Oregon

IONE, OR
Russell Seewald

BOARDMAN / IRRIGON, OR
Shane Lazinka

HEPPNER / CONDON, OR
Amber Schlaich

MORO, OR
Shane Lazinka
541-565-3712

