

Opinion / Politics

— EDITORIAL —

That holiday merch

We walked into some local stores this week only to see the Christmas displays out, with decorations and gifts already for sale. Friends around town said these things have been out for weeks and we're just slow in noticing it.

This means Americans are now devoting about one-third of our calendar year to either thinking about or planning for Christmas shopping.

We've skipped right past celebrating the beautiful beginning of fall, right past Halloween, right over the top of Thanksgiving, and all the way to Christmas in one giant materialistic leap. We aren't living

in the moment anymore, but rather, always chasing what's ahead.

Why are we working so hard to tie our children's happiest, most joy-filled memories to receiving the hot new toy or glitziest electronic?

What happened to the spiritual side of Christmas? The part of the holiday where we simply enjoy family time together?

We suppose gifts have always been somewhat at the center of the holiday, going back for decades, but it seems as if the scale has tipped to where getting outweighs giving, and the stress of budgeting and spending is consuming what peace was once there in between preparing for holiday activities.

We think it's time to take Santa Claus, his elves, and that Elf on a Shelf down a peg and get a grip on Christmas before its meaning is further lost beneath mounds of wrapping paper and ribbons.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Support amazing for recent petition drive

To the Editor:

This past September the Baker County Republican Party began a petition drive to get several measures on the ballot so the people can make the decision on important issues rather than Salem.

We had over 25 people circulating petitions in the county. We had all the petitions at our booth at the Halfway fair over Labor Day weekend.

We did two petition drives in Baker City at the park. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Almost 100% of the people who came to the tables thanked us profusely for doing this. We had people from all political parties and walks of life come to sign. People are visibly mad at what is going on with the State Legislature and the Governor's office. We had hundreds of people create a steady backed up line each day we set up the table at the park.

All total Baker County submitted almost 1,000 signatures for all five measures. These were Initiative Petition #1 to Stop tax dollars for abortions. #5 Proof of citizenship for voter registration. #22 Stop sanctuary state status. #301 Stop tax on health care insurance premiums, and #302 Repeal gun confiscation law.

Here are the results: #302, to repeal the gun confiscation bill did not get enough signatures. Please remember Governor Brown delayed signing this bill and cost us 39 days of petition gathering time. Another thirty days and we would have qualified. This being a referendum we cannot get an extension. But rest assured we are not done with this issue.

#301 will be on the ballot. Signatures collected were certified and this petition had the full legal time to collect signatures.

Initiative petition #1 has an extension to the end of the year. #5 and #22, both can be collected through July 2018.

If anyone wants to help collect signatures, please let me know and we will get you the petition forms and instructions. Call me at: 541-519-5035.

It was heartwarming to have the good citizens of Baker County, from all parties participate in the petition drive. All is not lost here in Oregon and meeting and talking with each one of you who signed, who circulated petitions proved that.

Suzan Ellis Jones

Bridgeport

Baker County Republican Chair

Congressional District 2 Alternate Chair

ORP Natural Resource Committee Chair

Rep. Walden applauds reopening of sage-grouse public comment period

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River) this week released the following statement applauding the reopening of the comment period for sage grouse plans in Oregon:

"I am pleased that Secretary Zinke has reopened the comment period for sage grouse plans in Oregon and across the West. Oregon's ranchers and landowners have done

great cooperative work to improve sage grouse habitat, and this is a chance for their firsthand knowledge to be incorporated into the planning process. Lifting the overreaching sage grouse mineral withdrawal is also welcome news in Lake County, where I've heard strong concerns about how the withdrawal would impact sunstone tourism in the area.

"The BLM's decision is a step in the right direction towards working with our rural communities in these planning processes, rather than just burdening them with rules from Washington, D.C.

"I am confident Secretary Zinke will use their input as he develops a better path forward for Oregon and the West."

Oregon wants to tax roads modeled after California

The U.S. Department of Transportation last week awarded Oregon a grant of \$2,315,000 to enhance Oregon's existing road usage charge program (OReGO), as well as a \$2,590,000 grant to implement a joint project with California that will integrate the states' road charging programs. Both grants will help expand the state's understanding of the technology used in the OReGO program and its ability to support local, state, regional and even national transportation funding needs.

"The principal method of funding the road system—the fuels tax—is not sustainable in the long-term because of the much-improved efficiency of vehicles," explained Maureen Bock, OReGO Program Manager. "Economists expect this trend to continue and for the gap in road funding to get much worse over the next several decades. An alternative to the gas tax is needed to ensure all drivers pay their fair share of road costs."

"We know we need reforms to transportation funding to create a system that benefits everyone," said Elissa Gertler, Planning Director for Oregon Metro. "Exploring the innovative tools that could be at our disposal is a critical part of making sure our transportation system is equitable, efficient, and affordable for everyone in our region. It's great to see that ODOT's innovative efforts to reform our transportation funding system are being recognized and supported."

ODOT successfully launched OReGO July 1, 2015. The fully operational system is functioning effectively with 1,404 vehicles enrolled to date. In creating the program, Senate Bill 810 (2013) authorized ODOT to assess and collect a charge of 1.5 cents per mile for up to 5,000 vehicles. OReGO volunteer drivers receive a fuels tax credit while enrolled.

Adapting road charging for local transportation funding

The first OReGO grant will support testing of three options for adapting road charging to local jurisdictions. In most states, counties and cities levy a local-option fuels tax. These taxes are then remitted back to the local government for their use. More than ever, local jurisdictions need different revenue sources to maintain their roadways as roads age and the population of Oregon grows, increasing congestion and wear and tear.

While OReGO demonstrates that road charging works for the state, it remains unproven at the local level. Better understanding of OReGO's technological capabilities may provide local jurisdictions with alternative funding options.

How local area road charging technology will be tested

ODOT will examine three local road usage charge options with up to 500 volunteer participants each. Each option will explore technical feasibility of various local per-mile

scenarios such as: geofencing a city or county for additional per-mile rates during specific travel times; and, incentivizing freeway corridors during certain times of day for longer through trips.

The test scenarios will launch in 2019 in the Portland metropolitan area and run concurrently for one year. The tests will illuminate whether the OReGO system can handle local option road usage charges, and provide some insight as to whether different pricing scenarios inspire drivers to plan their trips differently.

The RUC West regional California-Oregon interoperability project

With the second grant, RUC West—a consortium of 14 western states—will demonstrate a regional system between member states Oregon and California, creating a platform that other states may join as they become ready. The demonstration will provide a starting point for potential future nationwide adoption and implementation. The pilot is expected to go live with volunteer drivers in 2019.

California's road charge program launched July 1, 2016 and concluded March 31, 2017. Oregon's program (OReGO) launched July 1, 2015 and continues to operate. Testing interoperability of these two inaugural systems is the next step in developing road usage charging as a viable transportation funding alternative across the country.

For more information visit RUCwest.org.

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- ↓ Breakfast Certificates
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- ↓ Free ¼ lb of fudge ea. month for 1 year

TOTAL VALUE OVER \$1000.00

Drawing to be held November 1, 2017

TICKETS \$5 EACH OR 5 FOR \$20

Call 541 519 9312 or 541 519 1987 or
541 519 8254

For tickets or info

All proceeds go to fund Baker High School Student,

Taya Riley, to attend the Baker High School

Spring Break trip to CHINA!!

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