



Visitors at the Oregon State Fair sign a petition to recall Gov. Kate Brown.

Claire Withycombe/Oregon Capital Bureau

A populist push to recall Brown

Two petitions in play

By **AUBREY WIEBER**
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SALEM — Santa Claus doesn't care much for the governor.

Dressed in a stocking cap, black boots, red velvet pants and vest, he signed the petition to recall Gov. Kate Brown in between proffering photos from his holiday booth in the stifling August heat at the Oregon State Fair.

"The main thing is being able to have an opinion when you think something's not right," Santa said. He declined to fully identify himself, saying he fears being attacked.

Santa had a very specific grievance: He said the governor's office imposed a \$400 annual fee on him for having a water well at his property east of Salem.

At a time when right-wing populists from United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro to President Donald Trump have accrued mainstream appeal, Brown's opponents are finding an outlet for their dissatisfaction through a recall petition. Two, to be precise.

The Oregon Capital Bureau interviewed about 30 people signing petitions at the fair in Salem over three days. Most were from the Willamette Valley, many from more rural areas such as Molalla or Monmouth.

They carried a variety of grievances to the two booths offering recall petitions. They named business taxes, environmental policies and legislation allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses.

Brown, they say, is responsible for turning Oregon into a tax-happy, gun-hating, business-killing liberal haven.

Disliking politicians is an American tradition, but the recall process is generally reserved as a response

to corruption or scandal, not a rejection of policy. In fact, no recall of a state official has ever made it to the Oregon ballot.

The Oregon Republican Party claims it is on pace to get more than 300,000 signatures by the Oct. 14 deadline.

To many seasoned political observers, the prospect of recalling Brown, who was reelected last November, is as likely as Santa Claus and eight reindeer flying around the world every Christmas Eve.

Thomas Wheatley, Brown's campaign adviser, believes Republicans are juicing the stats. "I'm extraordinarily dubious about this claim, though they do operate in the world of alternative facts," he said.

Gut feeling

The majority of those interviewed at the fair about signing the petitions struggled to specify why they wanted to recall Brown, and seemed to be doing so based on a gut feeling.

Most commonly, people brought up cap and trade — a failed effort by the Legislature that Brown backed to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

"My understanding is that a lot of people just don't think Salem cares about them right now," said Adam Keaton, the Linn County GOP chairman, pointing to that county's agriculture, timber and trucking industries.

While petition signers often said Brown isn't following the will of the voters, she won reelection campaigning heavily for the policies they oppose.

"We are proud of the accomplishments from this year's legislative session," Wheatley said. "Historic investments in our schools, stable health care funding,

bold steps to make housing more affordable, tackling dirty diesel, campaign finance reform and much more."

Though some doubted Brown really did campaign on such policies.

"You know, I don't believe that," said Lincoln City resident Dee Right. "I don't believe it was in full detail. I think she lied."

Right stopped by one of the fair booths, but had already signed the petition.

"She's only benefiting the metropolitan areas and not the rural cities that make up Oregon," Right said.

Right was especially bothered by the cap and trade proposal, which she said would kill the logging and trucking industries.

Right said she's been a registered Democrat her whole life, yet when she saw a recall booth in Lincoln City, she pulled an illegal U-turn to sign it. She's never been political, she said, but spoke with passion when disparaging Brown.

"She's making a mess, and she doesn't listen to the people," Right said.

Two months ago, Right switched her affiliation.

"Sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do," she said, adding she took several sheets to get friends and family to sign as well.

Michael Anna, visiting the fair from Beaverton, said he didn't like Brown's politics and didn't think she was good for the state.

He particularly dislikes cap and trade.

"It's a big scam, and it's not necessary," Anna said. "And I read somewhere the only reason they want to do it is to say, 'We're the first state to do this.' There is no man-made global warming."

In fact, Oregon's cap and trade proposal was modeled after one that passed in California years ago.

Cavalier attitude

Keaton, the Linn County GOP chair, said Brown has a cavalier attitude, but admitted she is not entirely responsible for policies the state's legislators pass.

But, he said, "Brown does get the final say on a lot of this stuff."

"On the whole, I think it's a lot easier to focus on Kate Brown ... making a single focus point of the recall effort is a lot easier than focusing out into 15 different representative, Senate races," Keaton said. "So I think that helps simplify the effort while at the same time focusing on someone who has been rather egregious in the operation."

Tom Wallace, of Molalla, said Brown took away his gun rights, but struggled to explain how.

"She's just taking away our rights without asking," Wallace said.

The 74-year-old was there with his wife, Linda. He had on a custom-made hat that read "old white guy" — a demographic he said is under attack.

"Now the old white guys are sons of bitches, we're all evil," he said.

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.

New plan targets salmon-eating sea lions on river

By **KEITH RIDLER**
Associated Press

BOISE — More than 1,100 sea lions could be killed annually along a stretch of the Columbia River on the Oregon-Washington border to boost faltering populations of salmon and steelhead, federal officials said Friday.

The National Marine Fisheries Service said it's taking public comments through Oct. 29 on the plan requested by Idaho, Oregon, Washington state and Native American tribes.

The agency says billions of dollars on habitat restoration, fish passage at dams and other efforts have been spent in the three states in the last several decades to save 13 species of salmon and steelhead protected under the Endangered Species Act.

But sea lions have learned that fish bunch up at dams and are easy to catch, an opportunity not available when the Columbia was free-flowing.

"The changes in the system have created this sort of pinch-point where sea lions can take advantage of the fish," said Michael Milstein, a spokesman for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

About 900 California sea lions and 250 Steller sea lions could be killed each year, starting about 110 miles from the river's mouth and extending 300 miles upstream. Experts say sea lions in that area are exclusively preying on salmon and steelhead.

The Wild Fish Conservancy, which works to

recover and conserve wild fish, opposes killing sea lions. The group says habitat destruction, dams and overharvest have far greater impacts.

Killing sea lions "is a kind of scapegoating when there are a lot of other actions we are choosing not to do that would have a larger impact," said Emma Helverson, spokeswoman for the group.

The National Marine Fisheries Service already allows up to 92 California sea lions to be killed annually at Bonneville Dam, which is within the stretch of river in the new plan.

The new plan expands the area where sea lions can be killed, allows tribes to take part in removing sea lions, and adds Steller sea lions for removal. Currently, state and federal workers live-capture California sea lions near Bonneville Dam and they are later euthanized.

Last year, Steller sea lions outnumbered California sea lions at Bonneville Dam. Nearly all the sea lions are males bulking up on fish before heading back to the Pacific Ocean and then to breeding grounds.

California sea lions, which can weigh 1,000 pounds, are heading south to the Channel Islands off the California coast. Steller sea lions, which can reach 2,000 pounds, are heading north to breeding areas.

California sea lions number about 300,000, and the eastern population of Steller sea lions about 52,000. Neither population is listed as threatened or endangered.

Port of Astoria holds town hall meetings

The Astorian

The Port of Astoria is hosting three town hall meetings to share its strategic business plan.

Public comment is welcome.

The events are scheduled for the Astoria Library, Flag Room, 450 10th St., at 6 p.m.

on Tuesday; Seaside Library, Community Meeting Room, 1131 Broadway, at 5 p.m. on Wednesday; and Knappa Fire Station, Community Room, 43114 Hillcrest Loop, at 6 p.m. on Thursday.

Additional details and a digital copy of the strategic business plan are available at www.PortofAstoria.com



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Our women's health providers, pictured from left: Jiyeon Jeon, M.D., Family Medicine with Obstetrics; Michael Adler, M.D., Obstetrics and Gynecology; Dominique Greco, M.D., Family Medicine with Obstetrics

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