



Could a Community Bill Of Rights keep out a gas pipeline?

Southern Oregon communities along a proposed natural gas pipeline route are looking for creative ways to stop the project. Douglas and Coos County residents hope a Community Bill of Rights will give them a legal avenue to assert local control.

The pipeline for the proposed Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas export terminal in Coos Bay would run through the property of Stacey McLaughlin. She doesn't want it there. And speaking out before government officials has been less than satisfying.

"It feels like a waste of my time," she said. So McLaughlin is organizing her Douglas County neighbors to enact a community bill of rights. It would give cities and counties the legal grounds to say no to projects that violate local values.

The group met last week with Kai Hushcke of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund to discuss their options going forward. Hushcke said many communities have little to no recourse against state and federally approved projects.

"So folks are actually moving law to assert that right," Hushcke said. "That right of government to say no to things like pipelines, and yes to sustainable energy futures."

McLaughlin said the Douglas County group is early in the process. Community members are working on language for their community bill of rights, which may eventually include fossil fuel and community health provisions.

"I think it will create an opportunity for reason and rational thinking to start being the approach we take as citizens in this community," McLaughlin said, "instead of just settling for somebody (who) just walks in the door and says, 'Hey, here's what you have to do.'"

Feds not convinced by tribal claim that would halt coal project

A federal agency says a Puget Sound tribe has not made a convincing enough case to halt the permitting process for a coal-shipping project.

The Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing the review of plans for the train-to-ship coal facility proposed for construction near Bellingham. It said in a letter to the Lummi Nation that it would not halt the permitting process. Instead, it asked for more detailed information about tribal fishing practices.

The Lummi Nation's tribal lands about the site of the largest proposed coal export terminal in North America — one of three coal export facilities proposed in the Northwest to move Montana and Wyoming coal to Asian markets. In a letter the tribe argued the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal and the hundreds of large coal ships it would draw each year would violate the fishing rights it secured in a treaty with the federal government.

The letter from the Corps' District Engineer Colonel John G. Buck was made public Wednesday. In it, Buck said the tribe needs to provide more information:

"While the information you provided supports historic and current fishing practices in the subject waters, we need detailed information for our administrative record on the Nation's specific use of project waters and how the facility's construction and operation would affect access to, and use of, these waters."

Washington legislation would mandate bigger crews on oil trains

A growing number of oil trains rolling through Washington has emergency responders and rail workers calling for bigger crews on board to better protect human health and the environment.

A set of bills, one introduced in the House and one in the Senate, would require all freight trains coming through Washington to have a minimum of two crew members. Trains carrying hazardous materials would be required to have a third crew member at the rear of the train. Oil trains more than 50 cars long would be required to have two crew members at the rear of the train.

'In God We Trust' leads to county debate

By SAMANTHA TIPLER
Klamath Falls
Herald and News

KLAMATH FALLS — Not everyone agrees with the motto "In God We Trust." And a contingent of Klamath County residents doesn't want to see it on the commissioners' hearing room wall.

"If 'In God We Trust' is going to be placed on that wall, shall we then place 'Allahu Akbar' on this wall for our Muslim citizens? Or 'Yahweh is God, you shall have no other god before him' on that wall for our Jewish citizens? Or 'We bow down to our Mother Earth at this time of solstice' on the back wall for our Wiccan citizens? Then we have the Buddhists, the Baha'i, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Orthodox Catholics and so on.

"God knows what we'll do with the atheists," said Trish Seiler, Klamath Falls City Councilwoman. "Choosing one faith over another by placing the proposed plaque in this room is not only unconstitutional, it is morally wrong. It is not the American way."

Seiler joined about 40 other citizens who attended a town hall Tuesday evening hosted by the county commissioners. The commissioners didn't set



Klamath Falls Herald and News photo by Samantha Tipler
More than 40 people came to the Klamath County Commissioner town hall meeting Tuesday evening. Most citizens wanted to talk about the issue of putting "In God We Trust" on the wall of the hearing room.

an agenda or topics for the meeting, but the majority of people spoke about the "In God We Trust" issue.

At the end of December, commission chairman Tom Mallams suggested putting the words "In God We Trust" on the wall of the public hearing room. It has come up several times in meetings since, mostly with citizens speaking in favor of the motto. At Tuesday's meeting, the tune changed, and more spoke against it.

"I am a Christian. I love my God and I love my government for giving me the

constitutional right that it gives me. I don't want my government — federal, state or county — to tell me how to love my God, or tell others to do so or not," said Austin Polnag, a homeowner in Klamath County and member of the Klamath Community College board.

He said he wanted to attract more homeowners to the area, and he thought the "In God We Trust" sign would hinder that.

"I want young families and young people to come and fall in love with this county," he said. "I want that regardless

of their race, their religion or creed."

Seiler also urged the commissioners to focus on economic development, job creation, efficient government and other issues that would help unite the community, not divide it.

"This issue is dividing our community," she said. "We need to work on issues that bring us together."

Commissioners said they were surprised the "In God We Trust" issue became the dominant topic Tuesday evening. They had anticipated talking about the county budget, or public safety. But "In God We Trust" came up again and again.

The issue brought forth arguments about the First Amendment and the separation of church and state.

"The Founding Fathers felt very strongly we need to have a moral compass of some sort. They didn't say 'In God We Trust' the God of the Bible or the God of the Muslim faith," Mallams said, adding he believed the motto didn't violate church and state division. "Even atheism is considered a religion by many now."

Bellet said he didn't see a problem with putting the words on the wall.

West Coast port employers to cut shifts amid labor dispute

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Companies that handle billions of dollars of cargo at West Coast seaports said Friday they will hire far fewer workers this weekend, the latest escalation in a contract dispute with dockworkers that threatens to shut down a vital link in U.S.-Asia trade.

The association representing port terminal operators announced its members would not hire crane drivers to move containers on and off massive ocean-going ships. Instead, employers

could order smaller crews to clear already-unloaded containers from congested dockside yards.

The announcement could foreshadow a full port shutdown as soon as Monday, or it could be a hardball bargaining tactic designed to force a contract after nine months of talks.

Congestion has been a huge issue at the West Coast's 29 ports, where containers are taking two to three times longer than usual to clear dockside yards on their way

to distribution warehouses.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union has blamed employers, saying they failed to manage the supply chain efficiently. The Pacific Maritime Association, which represents shipping companies as well as port terminal operators, has said for months that workers have slowed their work by about 50 percent to gain bargaining leverage.

Last month, employers cut crane crews at night, saying the focus needed to be

on decongesting dockside yards.

Earlier this week, the maritime association said that as early as Monday, ports could become so gridlocked with containers there's no place to put cargo unloaded from incoming ships. The association's CEO said that "meltdown" point would result in a worker lockout that would shutter ports that handle about one-quarter of the nation's international trade — about \$1 trillion in commerce annually.

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