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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to our wildland firefighters, who responded quickly to the Weigh Station Fire near Meacham and are currently fighting big blazes across the West.

The Weigh Station Fire's location had both pros and cons. Alongside a major interstate, it allowed for easy access. But that also meant that possibilities of disruption and destruction were high. Crews wrangled the fire for much of Saturday and started to wrest control earlier this week. It was no easy job and we appreciate the work to keep the most-traveled section of the Blue Mountains as safe and as healthy as can be.

Although this fire season has thus far much more subdued than last, wildland crews have plenty of headaches on their hands right now. The fire burning near Unity continues to grow, spurred by high winds, and the 176,000 fire near Yakima is the largest in the Northwest. That fire, called Range 12, is the culprit for much of the smoke in the Hermiston area.

And in addition to all the big fires, there have been plenty of little flare-ups that have tested both wildland and local municipal crews. Echo firefighters returning to their station, exhausted from fighting another fire all night, saw flames near Sno-Road Winery and the Umatilla River. Their sharp eyes and quick response likely saved acres of cropland, and similar stories have taken place from Boardman to Pendleton and places in between.

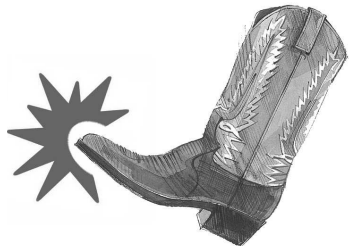
A kick in the pants to SeaPort Airlines for more public relations problems that threaten the long-term health of the company.

The airline has been honest about their past problems, which ran them into bankruptcy, and has said that it is now improved and back on solid ground. But revelations from the past (see the most recent on page 1A today), continue to hamper the company and its public image.

Although each flight was completed safely, the FAA alleges the company skipped or did not document required inspections. A bad look indeed that will surely cost them customers and confidence.

Pendleton needs its airport and Eastern Oregon needs it too, but it is not tied to SeaPort longterm. The contract between the airline and the airport expires December 31.

Until then, SeaPort can't afford any more mistakes.



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OTHER VIEWS

A big Western power grid

Los Angeles Times

Gov. Jerry Brown doesn't shy away from big solutions to the problems that ail California. A multibillion-dollar bullet train to transport Californians from north to south. Two giant tunnels beneath the Sacramento-San-Joaquin Delta to help move precious water around the state. The most aggressive climate change laws in the nation.

His latest ambitious undertaking is to build a regional electricity market linking utilities in 11 Western states into a massive electrical grid that could make power more reliable, less expensive and greener. This giant grid would allow California to sell the excess solar power it expects to generate in coming years to states such as Utah to help them kick their coal-burning habits. The big skies over the American West would be clearer and cleaner. Everyone wins, at least that's the pitch.

It's a promising idea that energy experts say is the best-option future for the currently power-balkanized West. But this grand plan is still so new that it's not yet fully thought out — which is a problem because it has been moving forward at breakneck speed despite warnings to slow down.

It's been barely a year since the regional power market idea surfaced in Senate Bill 350, the landmark climate change law mandating that 50 percent of California's power come from renewable sources by 2030. Among other things, the bill directed the quasi-governmental agency that manages the flow of electricity through most of the state to study the feasibility of developing a regional market for electricity. The study was released this month, showing modest benefits in the form of slightly lower electricity rates and cleaner air. But even before the study was released, pressure was building to get approval for the next step before the Legislature adjourns the session next month.

Whoa. Compared with the glacial movement of most massive government projects, this one is moving at the speed of light. So fast that many people, including some lawmakers, some consumer groups that focus on utilities, and the Sierra Club feel that their

questions have been brushed aside.

For instance, what does it mean for California to disband Cal-ISO and replace it with a regional commission that would include representatives from states that don't share California's strict carbon-reducing goals? Would partnering with the coal-heavy utility PacifiCorp, which serves Utah, Wyoming and other Western states, truly result in that utility reducing its coal portfolio — or would it provide markets and incentives for PacifiCorp to continue producing dirty power, as some fear? Are the other states in the region on board with California's grand plan?

Answers must be forthcoming before the Legislature approves dissolving Cal-ISO and replacing it with a regional board to oversee the new grid.

PacifiCorp, which serves much of Utah, and parts of Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and California, and which derives about 60 percent of its power from coal, would be added to the grid under the proposal. But PacifiCorp executives say they will not be able to partner with the California utilities without approval from regulators in the states they serve. And those states have indicated they won't participate if California runs the operation on its own. Reasonable, but what's the guarantee that if California gives up some control of its transmission grid it might not end up undermining its own climate change policy? As of yet, there isn't one.

The big grid idea might ultimately be one of the great legacies of Brown's fourth and final term. It could be great for air quality and for ratepayers — if it's done right. But there's no reason to rush into it. California is still on track to reach the required 50 percent of renewable power by 2030, though a regional market might make it a cheaper to get there. Other states have already shown interest in joining the regional market once California gets it going.

But there's every reason to move deliberately, starting with fact that Californians are still skeptical of state lawmakers' ability to make wise power policy after the electricity crisis of 2000. Slamming through a proposal that many informed people feel has not been properly vetted won't improve the public's trust.

OTHER VIEWS



Khan, Trump and the debate over Muslim immigration

There's a sensation building over the Democratic convention speech of Khizr Khan, a Pakistani-born Virginia lawyer whose son Humayun was killed in action while serving as a captain in the U.S. Army in Iraq in 2004.

In seven minutes on the national stage, Khan, a naturalized U.S. citizen who came to this country in 1980, excoriated Trump for proposals to build a wall along the Mexican border and to temporarily ban the entry of foreign Muslims into the U.S.

"Let me ask you: Have you even read the United States Constitution?" Khan said to Trump. "I will gladly lend you my copy. In this document, look for the words 'liberty' and 'equal protection of law.'"

Even before Khan's speech ended, Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans began to issue rhapsodic praise on social media and elsewhere. Video of the speech went viral, along with commentary that it was the best of the convention, the most moving, the most powerful, the most devastating to Trump, and so on. Khan, who ended with an exhortation to vote for Hillary Clinton, became an instant star of the campaign.

At the same time, some Trump supporters stirred outrage with foolish attacks on Khan. Ann Coulter tweeted, "You know what this convention really needed? An angry Muslim with a thick accent like Faraed Zakaria." The American Family Association's Sandy Rios said Khan's loyalty to the U.S. is in question. Then Trump himself downplayed the Khans' sacrifice in an interview with ABC News.

With a few obvious differences, the uproar bears some resemblance to a white-hot controversy more than a decade ago involving Cindy Sheehan, a California woman whose son Casey was killed in 2004 while serving in the U.S. Army in Iraq.

Sheehan became a media sensation when she attacked President George W. Bush over the war. Opponents of the war immediately took up her cause in their protests, and Sheehan became, for a while, ubiquitous in media reports of opposition to Bush and the war.

Some Republican Bush supporters (including Coulter) stirred outrage with foolish attacks on Sheehan, although in those pre-Twitter days there were fewer opportunities for a single comment to go viral.

Now, with Khan, the parents of another son killed in Iraq are in the middle of a national storm. But this one is over immigration. Like Cindy Sheehan, as the father of an American soldier killed in action, Khizr Khan has standing to do what he is doing. Those who disagree with him should never belittle his sacrifice or impugn his motives. But they can challenge his argument.

Khan's brief speech wasn't a finely detailed case. But he suggested that Trump's Muslim ban and Mexican border wall proposals are unconstitutional. Specifically, Khan cited the words "liberty" and "equal protection of the law" in suggesting that Trump's policies violate the Constitution.

It's hard to know what Khan meant by suggesting a wall on the Mexican border would be unconstitutional. Perhaps it would be a bad idea, or it wouldn't work as Trump claims it would, but there's simply no sense



BYRON YORK
Comment

in which a border wall violates the Constitution.

Khan did not mention deportations, but regardless of exactly where Trump's illegal immigrant proposal stands at the moment, there is nothing unconstitutional about deporting people who are in the United States illegally.

As far as a Muslim ban is concerned, Trump has recently amended his proposal to focus on immigration from countries

"compromised by terrorism." But assume that Khan was addressing Trump's original, more extensive, proposal: a temporary ban on foreign Muslims from entering the United States. By telling Trump to "look for the words 'liberty' and 'equal protection of law'" in the Constitution, Khan was suggesting that the ban would violate the 14th Amendment. This is the relevant portion of that amendment:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The text makes clear that its protections apply to "all persons born or naturalized" in the U.S.; persons "subject to the jurisdiction thereof"; and persons "within its jurisdiction." None refers to foreign persons in foreign countries. Pakistanis in Pakistan, to take one example, regardless of religion, do not have U.S. constitutional rights. As far as "liberty," the other word mentioned by Khan, is concerned, the Constitution says the government may not deprive someone of liberty without due process of law, which of course means the government may deprive someone of liberty with due process of law.

It may be that building a wall, deporting illegal immigrants, and temporarily banning the entry of foreign Muslims are all terrible policies. But among the Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans touting Khan's performance there appears to be a belief that something is a terrible policy, it must also be unconstitutional. That's not necessarily so.

It should be noted, though, that Trump's proposals are not unconstitutional according to the way the Supreme Court has interpreted the law for the last 225 years. If a President Trump acted on his proposals and was challenged in court — as he certainly would be — there would always be the possibility that the justices might make up some new reading of the Constitutional to invalidate the president's actions.

The Khans represent a small group. Humayun Khan was one of just 14 Muslim-Americans (the number was compiled by the House Homeland Security Committee) among the 6,885 U.S. troops who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. But his parents' anguish is very real and their story very powerful. And it will undoubtedly be used against Trump many times between now and November.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

