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OUR VIEW



Aliya Hall/Capitol Press

Signs like this one help bridge the urban-rural divide by letting drivers know which crops are grown on farms.

Crop signs help bridge urban-rural divide

The farm community talks a lot about the urban-rural divide, that sense that people in the cities don't understand, and perhaps don't care, about what's happening in small towns and farm country.

It's particularly true about most issues concerning agriculture. Part of the problem is that most Americans, even those living outside of big cities, are three or more generations removed from the farm.

So, as people drive down the highway past the region's most productive farmland — as close as many get to a farm — they are often unsure that they're looking at.

For 30 years there has been a program in Oregon to put up crop and breed identification signs along the highway to help educate passing motorists about what's growing in the fields. The Oregon Women for Agriculture and Oregon Aglink have partnered to raise more than 200 crop identification signs across the state.

It's a great tool to quickly educate the public about the diversity of Oregon agriculture.

"We're about education, and people didn't really understand what they were driving past, and

it's important to us for them to know what it was," said Dona Coon, former OWA president and daughter-in-law of Pat Roberts, who initially created the concept of the signs.

It has been a great statewide effort. There have been similar efforts in Washington and Idaho. The Nampa-Caldwell Agribusiness Committee of the chamber of commerce, for example, places about 150 signs identifying 30 different crops around Canyon County, Idaho.

We encourage farmers to participate in the program where available, and agribusinesses to support them financially.

The signs are a great way to create a connection between consumers and the food grown in the Pacific Northwest.

Americans are generations removed from the farm.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Know the rules before flying a drone

Petoskey (Mich.) News-Review

They are becoming a common sight, much like seagulls and other birds in the air.

However, instead of the pleasant sounds of chirping, whistles and caws, this small flying object makes a buzzing sound as it watches and records everything around it.

This sight is not a feather friend. THE skies are starting to see more drones or unmanned aerial systems (UAS).

We anticipate seeing more of these machines in the skies well into the future too, as prices for them come down to sometimes under \$100. These machines are fun and do allow users to capture some stunning aerial images, either photographs or video. But, far too often we notice that those flying the drones don't seem to understand there are rules that must be followed.

First of all, the operator of the drone must understand they could be required to have a license to fly it in some cases. A person using a drone for recreational or other amateur purposes is not required to have any sort of licensing to fly it. But, a person who is using the drone for any sort of commercial purpose — real estate, journalism or professional imaging services, for example — is required to obtain a license from the agency.

To obtain a license through the FAA, person must be at least 16 years old, "be in physical and mental condition to safely operate a small UAS" and pass a written knowledge test.

The process also include a security background check by the Transportation Security Administration.

Secondly, there are flight rules that pilots must follow:

— Drones must give way (stay out of

the way) of manned aircraft.

— Operators must keep the aircraft in sight (visual line-of-sight)

— Drones must be under 55 pounds

— Operators must follow community-based safety guidelines

— Operators need to notify airport and air traffic control tower before flying within five miles of an airport

On its website, the FAA offers these "safety guidelines" for hobby or recreational (non-licensed) drone operators:

— Fly at or below 400 feet and stay away from surrounding obstacles

— Keep your UAS within sight

— Never fly near other aircraft, especially near airports

— Never fly over groups of people (we've noticed pilots violating this one at almost every festival this summer)

— Never fly over stadiums or sports events

— Never fly near emergency response efforts such as fires

— Never fly under the influence of drugs or alcohol

— Understand airspace restrictions and requirements

The FAA lists the following as "must" rules for licensed drone operation:

— Must keep the aircraft in sight

— Must fly at altitudes under 400 feet

— Must fly during the day

— Must fly at or below 100 mph

— Must yield right of way to manned aircraft

— Must NOT fly over people

— Must NOT fly from a moving vehicle

Following these rules is not only a safety issue for the public, but helps spread good attitudes about drones and drone pilots. We encourage all drone pilots to follow these rules and help grow this activity in a positive way.



OTHER VIEWS

Grandfather and the bounty hunters

One of my fond childhood memories is going to the amusement park in Cincinnati on Republican Day. My grandfather, who was a bail bondsman, organized the outings so I could ride on the rides and he could play cards in a tent with the judges. To whom he would systematically lose.

It was cleaner than outright bribery. Plus, you know, the Ferris wheel.

All that was a long time ago. I'm sure the current Cincinnati bondsmen, now known as bail agents, are lovely people. I'm just telling you this story as a colorful entry into the discussion of bail system reform.

The current model varies from state to state, but here's how it basically works: If you get arrested for, say, shoplifting an expensive piece of jewelry, the judge will probably allow you to go free if you put up a certain amount of money as a guarantee that you'll show up for trial. Maybe the judge will say \$5,000. If you have \$5,000, you are back home for dinner.

If you don't have \$5,000, you can dispatch a relative across the street from the courthouse, where there are undoubtedly bail agents who will charge around \$500 to guarantee the money on your behalf. If you don't have \$500, you may be sitting in jail until your trial. You won't show up for work, and your boss will probably fire you.

"It's simply not fair," said Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif. She's co-sponsoring a bail reform bill with Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky.

"This is something people could feel good about getting done," she added.

That's pretty hard to resist — when was the last feel-good moment to come out of Washington? I'm thinking maybe the turkey pardoning last Thanksgiving.

The Harris-Paul bill is a pretty modest proposal — the idea is just to make \$10 million available to encourage states to work on reform. But at least it would put things on the right track.

The current system is generally terrible. It's unfair, and it doesn't even do a good job of separating harmless arrestees from the ones you definitely want to keep behind bars. ("Are the right people in and the right people out? Most prosecutors would say no," said Dave LaBahn, president of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.)

Also, it costs a fortune — "\$38 million a day to hold people in jail awaiting trial — \$14 billion a year," Harris said.

A few states have passed major reforms that take ability to pay a bail agent out of the equation as much as possible. Courts are also beginning to act — a federal judge in Houston ordered the county jails to stop



GAIL COLLINS
Comment

holding prisoners awaiting trial for a misdemeanor. That was based in part on the famous case of a woman who was kept behind bars for driving without a license after she was unable to post \$2,500 bail.

The bill is in the Judiciary Committee, so feel free to let the members know your opinion. The current attorney general, Jeff Sessions, doesn't seem to have taken a public position on it. But given his overall attitude toward criminal justice, I think we can work under the assumption Sessions is not in love with any plan that would reduce the number of people in jails, whether they've been tried or not.

It is also facing fierce, fierce opposition from the Professional Bail Agents of the United States. Their president is Beth Chapman, who happens to be the wife of the world's most famous bail agent, Dog the Bounty Hunter.

"I like Rand Paul, but I'm shocked at the people he's working with," Chapman said in a phone interview.

"They're sort of anti-American."

The bail agents argue that people who have been freed under New Jersey's reform system have been arrested for other crimes while awaiting trial, in one case murder. This is true, just as it's true that some people commit crimes while they're out on bail.

It's also possible that all bail agents are not always as energetic as members of the Chapman family when it comes to keeping track of their charges.

My grandfather's system of dealing with a "skip" was to write largely fictional letters to the judge explaining that he went to great efforts to retrieve the still-missing bailee and therefore did not deserve to be held accountable. Actually, he sometimes dictated them to me. This was back when I was in grade school, so clearly the judges did not have high spelling standards.

But again, that was a long time ago. Harris warned that it was important not to be cynical about modern-day bail agents. "A lot of them are running family businesses. They're decent people trying to earn a living," she said when I tried to entertain her with the sagas of my grandfather.

This is almost exactly what Beth Chapman said, right after she told me the senator was sort of anti-American and one of the "people whose agenda is to abolish prisons." Maybe we need to get the two of them together for a friendly drink.

Gail Collins joined *The New York Times* in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an *Op-Ed* columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the *Times*'s editorial page.

YOUR VIEWS

All Oregonians should have access to fully-trained dentist

When legislators wrapped up their 2017 session in July, they touted big wins for Oregonians, including passing a balanced budget of \$21 billion, addressing transportation and housing issues and ensuring access to critical services for many communities across the state.

The Legislature accomplished a lot in 2017, but one job that never ends is ensuring all Oregonians have equitable access to oral health care.

One significant health care win for rural communities here in Eastern Oregon was the renewal of the Medicaid primary care loan repayment program and of the state's rural medical practitioners tax credits. These programs are vital to ensuring health care providers can locate their practices in the rural areas that need them most while providing affordable care to all Oregonians.

The Legislature also took on tobacco during the 2017 session and passed the Tobacco 21 Bill, raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products and e-cigarettes from 18 to 21. Given the well-documented oral health concerns associated with tobacco use, including periodontal disease and oral cancer, this was a significant step toward improving the oral health of younger, more

vulnerable Oregonians.

Unfortunately, an oral health school screenings law, which would have ensured the reporting of certain oral health data to the state and more importantly to parents, stalled in the Legislature. As a longtime dentist myself, I have seen firsthand the need for this type of early reporting, leading to earlier intervention, in making future program and funding decisions for the health of Oregon's children.

Ensuring all Oregonians have access to a fully-trained dentist does not stop with these legislative solutions. I look forward to a potential partnership between OHSU's School of Dentistry and our tribal communities through a new Native American health scholarship program. This program would provide free tuition and fees to eligible members of tribes who committed to working at a tribal service site for a period of time, providing more equitable dental care throughout Oregon's Indian Country.

This year's Legislative successes proved that dental health is nonpartisan. Progress was made toward ensuring that every Oregonian has access to high-quality, professional dental care, but there is still more that needs to be done. Our work does not end with the 2017 Legislative session. It is only just now beginning.

James McMahan, DMD
La Grande

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.