

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Trade tariffs costly for U.S. farmers

This week reporters from *Capital Press*, a fellow EO Media Group paper that focuses on agriculture, tried to put a dollar figure to the impact of retaliatory tariffs placed on U.S. agriculture products to farmers and rancher in the West.

It’s an elusive number, but it appears to be in the neighborhood of \$4.1 billion over the next year. That’s a significant number in a region where exports account for a large portion of farm income.

One of the central themes of Donald Trump’s campaign for the presidency was that the United States was not well served by its many trade agreements.

So, the U.S. left the Trans-Pacific Partnership and is working on bilateral deals with key partners. The North American Free Trade Agreement has been reopened for negotiation. Mexico and the U.S. have reached tentative agreement and the administration is still talking with Canada.

All of this has caused concerns with farmers and ranchers who depend on trade.

But it’s the tariffs the administration slapped on steel and aluminum imports from some of our biggest export customers that are at the root of the most damaging trade problems.

China, India and Mexico responded with retaliatory tariffs on a host of U.S. products.

President Trump has long alleged that China manipulates its currency to advance its sales abroad. There are also questions surrounding China’s handling of intellectual property.



Don Wilson/Port of Seattle

The Port of Seattle. President Trump promised better trade deals to U.S. farmers but has yet to deliver.

So, the administration placed additional tariffs on Chinese goods to address those issues, fueling several rounds of tit-for-tat retaliatory tariffs. U.S. farmers and ranchers have taken a big hit.

Last month Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue released details of the administration’s aid package for farmers across the country impacted by the tariffs. The plan includes nearly \$4.7 billion in direct payments to producers harmed,

more than \$1.2 billion in government food purchases and \$200 million to develop foreign markets.

While producers will welcome the assistance, it’s clear that the \$6 billion and change provided over the next year won’t cover the losses of every farmer in the country.

The obvious solution for producers, and their trading partners, is for the tariffs to go away. That’s unlikely to occur without the administration being able to claim progress on the

legitimate underlying disputes.

The president is asking for the benefit of the doubt that he is working, though so far unsuccessfully, in the interest of American farmers and ranchers. But having quickly put producers in jeopardy, he needs to move with haste to make the better deals he promised.

Producers rightfully worry that the trade relationships they have worked so hard to develop will be lost if tensions are not soon eased.

Time for a change in Gilliam County leadership

Despite overwhelming opposition from area residents and landowners, Gilliam County Judge Steve Shaffer, Commissioner Mike Weimer and Commissioner Leslie Wetherell made a unanimous decision allowing the Oregon Department of Transportation to develop and operate the Phillippi Canyon Quarry.

This decision allows ODOT to blast and destroy nearly 33 acres of basalt outcroppings and other evidence of the historic Missoula Floods that overlook Interstate 84 at approximate mile marker 123. The site lies amid the I-84 big horn sheep habitat and will block them from utilizing approximately eight miles of their accustomed range.

This project is completely unnecessary! The construction and maintenance of I-84 has thus far utilized aggregate from existing privately owned quarries in close proximity to the interstate. These currently permitted quarries have enough source to supply arrogate for any future projects (acknowledged too in the 2017 Gilliam County Comprehensive Plan); however, now a state agency has been given the upper hand in competing with private enterprise. ODOT has also moved to condemn private property that adjoins this site. In this, the current Gilliam County Court, sworn to represent and protect the interests of Gilliam County residents, are complicit.

By approving the zoning change, Judge Shaffer and Commissioners Weimar and Wetherell have failed us in epic fashion. Their decision flies in the face of the 2017 Gilliam County Comprehensive Plan Goal 5 findings and policies as well as other areas of the plan and has kicked all of the affected landowners squarely in the gut.

Fortunately, this is an election year. Judge Shaffer’s seat is being challenged by Elizabeth Farrar and Commissioner Mike Weimar is not running for re-election.



While Commissioner Leslie Wetherell is on the ballot unopposed, I strongly encourage a coordinated write-in campaign. We need a county court that will actually represent and protect their constituents and the lands of Gilliam County.

Connie Anderson
Arlington

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid at risk

Regardless of whether you are a Republican, Democrat or independent, this midterm election will have a lasting effect on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and health insurance. Since the GOP Congress has passed huge tax breaks, mainly for the wealthy, they have lost huge amounts of tax income. To cover these losses, they are very busy looking for pools of money to skim, and have targeted Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

About two months ago, the House Republicans began drafting a bill that make significant “adjustments” (AKA cuts), to

present and future Social Security and Medicare benefits. They must have gotten worried about exposing their handiwork just before the midterm elections. Instead of forwarding the bill to the Senate, they decided to postpone it until after the elections.

If you think for one minute that our current Republican representative, Greg Walden, is going to protect your Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from these cuts, think again. Two years ago, he helped draft a healthcare bill that was so bad that even Trump called it cruel. It contained language that cut staggering amounts from Medicaid, which would result in millions losing healthcare coverage. It would have been catastrophic to rural Oregon, where one in five would lose these benefits. Then Mr. Walden voted three more times on a modified healthcare bill that was much worse. He will lead the charge to “adjust” Social Security and Medicare.

At one time I think Mr. Walden represented his constituents; now he pretty

much answers to big business and special interests. He is said to have three million dollars in his campaign fund. Very little of this comes from small donors; the majority comes from big pharmaceuticals and other large corporations. In my opinion, it’s time for a change.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner promises to protect your Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and access to affordable healthcare. She is hardworking and honest, and will truly represent you and me if elected. Please do your homework on evaluating these two candidates, and consider voting for Jamie.

David and Viki Lange
Pendleton

Why so many holes in school calendar?

A recent look at the Hermiston School District’s calendar for the year is a little troubling. August 20-24, 2018, teacher in-service week; September 21, 2018, “Non-student day”; October 26, 2018, “Transition Day” (non-student); November 8, 2018, K-5 Conferences (no school for K-5); November 9, 2018 Non-student/Non-staff day; November 21, 2018 (Wednesday), Non-student/Non-staff day; January 18, 2019, “Transition Day” (Non-student day); February 15, 2019, Snow make-up day (no students); March 22, 2019, Non-student day; March 28, 2019, No school for K-5; March 29, 2019, Non-student/Non-staff day.

Recently a ballot measure was put before the voters to fund approximately \$104 million for new schools and was turned down. The new schools already built all have variable message signs (probably costing \$100,000 or more) that are all proud of the fact there is “no school today!”

No wonder that the parents who actually care about their kids’ education are home schooling more and more.

Gary Roberts
Hermiston

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