

Trucker: Shortage puts drivers in high demand



Staff photo by Kathy Aney/
Michael Kennedy, a long-haul trucker who works for Medelez Trucking in Hermiston, drives his rig Wednesday in Hermiston. Later, he headed to San Diego with a load of frozen french fries.

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\$10, the driving test is \$70, the certificate of test completion is \$40, the license is \$75 if you already have an Oregon driver's license and \$135 if you don't.

Medelez said he sees truckers aging out of the workforce with no one to replace them as another major factor. According to the transportation institute's report, 28 percent of truck drivers are 55 and older, a situation putting "significant pressure on the industry to increase the available pool of qualified truck drivers."

One way to do that is provide better pay and benefits.

Medelez said his family's business offers a health insurance package, a 401K for retirement and an annual savings program in which the company matches 50 percent of an employee's contributions. He said that's a popular item for some extra Christmas cash.

And rookie drivers can make \$60,000 a year, Medelez said, while Walmart pays its drivers more than \$80,000. Drivers at Medelez and BJK can earn that, too, he said, "But you've got to hustle. It doesn't come easy."

Stephens said the competition is giving drivers freedom to pick where they want to work. Drivers are

willing to jump from one company to the next if they see a better deal, he said, and companies need drivers so badly they overlook someone who may have left their last employer in the lurch.

Medelez said all the competition compounds the shortage. Large companies, small companies with just a handful of semis, even bus companies are looking for folks with the golden combination of a CDL and clean driving record. That's why Medelez and BJK keep on top of who they have available to handle big rigs.

"I think we manage it well," Medelez said. "We're here all the time."

Texas landowners dig in to fight Trump's border wall

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT**
Associated Press

HIDALGO, Texas — As President Donald Trump travels to the border in Texas to make the case for his \$5.7 billion wall, landowner Eloisa Cavazos says she knows firsthand how the project will play out if the White House gets its way.

The federal government has started surveying land along the border in Texas and announced plans to start construction next month. Rather than surrender their land, some property owners are digging in, vowing to reject buyout offers and preparing to fight the administration in court.

"You could give me a trillion dollars and I wouldn't take it," said Cavazos, whose land sits along the Rio Grande, the river separating the U.S. and Mexico in Texas. "It's not about money."

Trump is scheduled to visit the border Thursday in McAllen, a city of 143,000 on the river.

Congress in March funded 33 miles of walls and fencing in Texas. The government has laid out plans that would cut across private land in the Rio Grande Valley. Those in the way include landowners who have lived in the valley for generations, environmental groups and a 19th century chapel.

Many have hired lawyers who are preparing to fight the government if, as expected, it moves to seize their land through eminent domain.

The opposition will intensify if Democrats accede to the Trump administration's demand to build more than 215 new miles of wall, including 104 miles in



AP Photo/John L. Mone
Father Roy Snipes, pastor of the La Lomita Chapel, shows Associated Press journalists the land on either side of the Rio Grande at the US-Mexico border on Tuesday in Mission, Texas.

the Rio Grande Valley and 55 miles near Laredo. Even a compromise solution to build "steel slats," as Trump has suggested, or more fencing of the kind that Democrats have previously supported would likely trigger more court cases and push-back in Texas.

Legal experts say Trump likely cannot waive eminent domain — which requires the government to demonstrate a public use for the land and provide landowners with compensation — by declaring a national emergency.

While this is Trump's first visit to the border in Texas as president, his administration's immigration crackdown has been felt here for months.

Hundreds of the more than 2,400 children separated from their parents last summer were detained in cages at a Border Patrol facility in McAllen. Three "tender-age" facilities for the youngest children were opened in this region.

The president also ordered soldiers to the border in response to a wave of migrant caravans before the November election. Those

troops had a heavy presence in the Rio Grande Valley, though they have since quietly left. A spokeswoman for the border security mission said they closed their base camp along the border on Dec. 22.

But Trump's border wall will last beyond his administration. Building in the region is a top priority for the Department of Homeland Security because it's the busiest area for illegal border crossings. More than 23,000 parents and children were caught illegally crossing the border in the Rio Grande Valley in November — more than triple the number from a year earlier.

Homeland Security officials argue that a wall would stop many crossings and deter Central American families from trying to migrate north. Many of those families are seeking asylum because of violence in their home countries and often turn themselves in to border agents when they arrive here.

The number of families has surged. DHS said Wednesday that it detained 27,518 adults and children traveling together on the

southern border in December, a new monthly high.

With part of the \$1.6 billion Congress approved in March, U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced it would build 25 miles of wall along the flood-control levee in Hidalgo County, which runs well north of the Rio Grande.

Congress did not allow construction of any of Trump's wall prototypes. But the administration's plans call for a concrete wall to the height of the existing levee, with 18-foot steel posts on top. CBP wants to clear 150 feet in front of any new construction for an "enforcement zone" of access roads, cameras, and lighting.

The government sued the local Roman Catholic diocese late last year to gain access for its surveyors at the site of La Lomita chapel, which opened in 1865 and was an important site for missionaries who traveled the Rio Grande Valley by horseback.

It remains an epicenter of the Rio Grande Valley's Catholic community, hosting weddings and funerals, as well as an annual Palm Sunday procession that draws 2,000 people.

The chapel is a short distance from the Rio Grande. It falls directly into the area where CBP wants to build its "enforcement zone."

The diocese said it opposes a border wall because the barrier violates Catholic teachings and the church's responsibility to protect migrants, as well as the church's First Amendment right of religious freedom. A legal group from Georgetown University has joined the diocese in its lawsuit.



EO file photo
A VFW color guard marches underneath a large United States flag at the start of the Fourth of July Parade on July 4, 2018, in Pendleton.

Parade: Council considering \$1,500 fee, with four exceptions

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In an interview Wednesday, Fairley elaborated on his comments, saying he wants to have a discussion with the council on how to recover public safety costs. Since the police department relies on the general fund for most of its budget, Fairley said a cost recovery mechanism for public safety could allow the city to use its only discretionary fund for other budget priorities.

Although the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 922-organized Fourth of July Parade is currently exempted under the amendment proposal, a \$1,500 fee would have an effect on parade organizers.

A former Pendleton police chief, VFW Commander Gary Ward said he

understands the costs that go into covering parades.

But requiring a \$1,500 fee means the VFW would have to consider how to spread their additional costs amongst their members and sponsors.

Roberts said he doesn't have an opinion on who should or shouldn't be exempted from the fee, but he said a lot goes into organizing public safety for a parade, which can sometimes include coordinating with the Oregon Department of Transportation.

While the council usually votes on an ordinance at the meeting following a first reading, Mayor John Turner told City Manager Robb Corbett that the council needed more time "to talk about it some more" and suggested a final vote be postponed further.



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky
Oregon Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle shows her oath of office after she signed it after her inauguration at the state Capitol in Salem on Monday.

Hoyle: Newly-elected Oregon labor commissioner delegates duties to deputy

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workplace free of harassment. They said they expect recommendations by the Oregon Law Commission aimed at achieving that will be swiftly implemented.

Among the commission's recent numerous recommendations:

— The Legislature should establish and fund an Equity Office with at least two staffers, one of whom would conduct investigations, write investigative reports and recommend

interim safety measures. The other staffer would conduct outreach and training, receive confidential disclosures and provide advice.

— Make at least two hours of training available on multiple occasions throughout the year.

— Make respectful workplace training mandatory for legislative staff, including interns, and lobbyists.

— More clearly describe conduct that constitutes workplace harassment.

— Use cell phone apps

that allow members of the Capitol community to submit questions anonymously or interact with the Equity Office or trainer; and use software for interactive training when in-person training is impractical.

Deputy Labor Commissioner Duke Shepard will make the final decision on the case, Hoyle said.

There had been worry that Hoyle, a former House majority leader, would give the investigation short shrift because she knows the leaders in the Legislature.

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Craig Reeder - Growing up around his family's wheat ranch in Eastern Oregon, Craig has a life-long association with production agriculture. After graduating from OSU with degrees in Agriculture Business Management and Finance, Craig spent 5 years in the Midwest working for the R.D. Offutt Company. Wanting to return to Northeastern Oregon, he began working for the Hale Family in 2000, where he served as CFO & COO, until the operations were sold. Currently Craig is the CFO of Madison Ranches and Chairman of NOWA (Northeast Oregon Water Association). Craig and his wife Tina also own and operate the Reeder Family Farm in Helix where they live with their three children.

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