

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Editor/Senior Reporter

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OUR VIEW

Oregon Trail is a two-way street

The political leadership in the West needs to take note of the growing number of farm families that are picking up stakes and moving east.

In the 1840s, white settlers from east of the Mississippi River started making the arduous journey west, pushing up the Oregon Trail to the Pacific Northwest.

Others followed the trail to Fort Hall in present-day Idaho, then turned southwest on the California Trail to reach the gold fields of the Sierra Nevada and the farmland of the Central Valley.

Land was cheap and opportunity was within relatively easy grasp. The West offered fewer restrictions than were in place in the established eastern communities.

Many longtime farm and ranch families proudly point to their pioneer heritage.

But over the last decade or so, there's been a small but growing number of farm families picking up stakes and moving east of the coastal states to escape tough business climates.

It's a reverse Oregon Trail of sorts, with modern day emigrants moving to Idaho, Montana, the Plains and the Midwest.

While it hardly can be described as a mass exodus, people are noticing an uptick in the number of farm operations moving east.

"People have talked about moving for years and years, but now people are actually doing it," said Ryan Jacobsen, manager of the Fresno County Farm Bureau in California. "Statistically, it's still probably a blip on the radar. But it's crazy that it's actually happening."

Farmers cite several reasons for moving: seeking less crowded places; political concerns; COVID-19 protocols; estate taxes, regulations and associated costs; opportunities for expansion; "climate migrants" fleeing drought; and farmers seeking more secure water supplies.

The common thread is that farmers and ranchers are moving to places where they believe their businesses, and families, can better thrive.

The tax and regulatory climate on the West Coast has made it increasingly difficult for family farming operations.

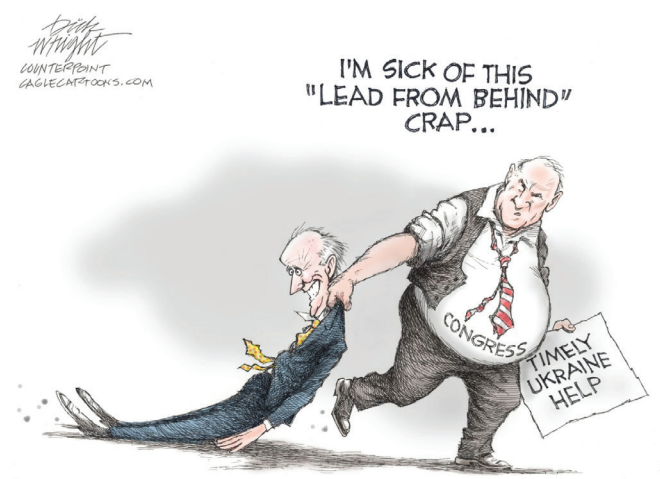
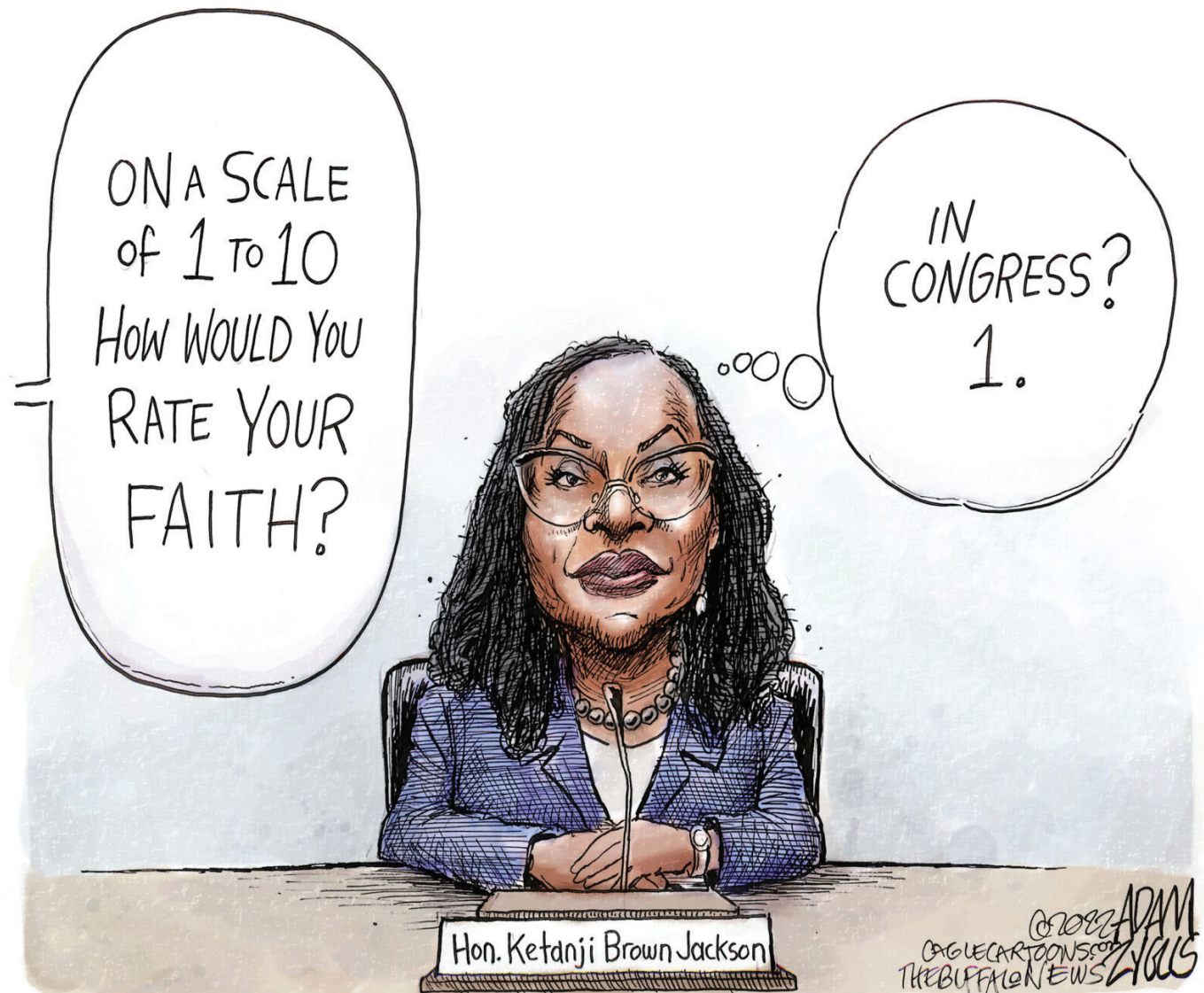
Carbon policies have made fuel more expensive. COVID-19 regulations have reduced the availability of labor, and thus have reduced yield while increasing costs.

State legislatures have grown openly hostile to agriculture, proposing gross receipt tax schemes that would turn the already precarious economics of farming on its head.

They have adopted alternative energy policies that encourage converting farmland into wind and solar energy facilities. They've proposed increasing riparian buffers. They have restricted common pesticides, herbicides and fumigants.

Most farmers can't pick up and leave. But, they can sell out to bigger operations.

Through increased regulation and legislation, state governments will hasten the consolidation of the industry, and the ruin of the rural communities that depend on a viable population to thrive.



YOUR VIEWS

Greater Idaho is a shoot-first, think-later idea

Much is being said in Eastern Oregon about the east-west political schism in our state. However, most of the opinions and comments are being made by those who believe the more populated western side of Oregon basically dominates statewide decision making. As a life-long liberal Democrat who has lived most of my life in Eastern Oregon, I do not believe this is such a bad thing.

Now there is discussion of creating a Greater Idaho by moving the Idaho-Oregon border further westward, even to the Pacific Ocean. I would never support such a radical, shoot-first, think-later idea. If Eastern Oregonians are frustrated with the current situation, then they need to better organize at the grass-roots level so they can counter ideas from Western Oregon.

I cannot help but think that if there was a Greater Idaho, that it would attract and bring more of the self-appointed vigilantes and militias, such as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers and Three-Percenter, most of whom are loyal disciples of our one-hit president,

Donald J. Trump.

These Second Amendment all-stars have already made a home in much of the Idaho panhandle. The world has already seen how they react when things, like a fair election, do not go their way — the attack on our democracy and national Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Grant Darrow, the Cove resident who is a leader of the Greater Idaho movement, was asked if he dislikes the Oregon political situation so much, then why not just move to Idaho? He replied: "That is what I am trying to do."

This is an updated version on if you cannot bring Mohammed (Darrow) to the mountain (Idaho), then you bring the mountain to Mohammed.

**Bob Shippentower
Pendleton**

Not all rural Oregonians want to be Idahoans

I'd like to tell everyone to go outside and sing a song. I recommend "What a Wonderful World." Oregon has a thriving economy. The only ones who experience real hardship here are the poorest. Some have been victims of

neglect all their lives. Polluted water, air and soil are harmful to development. Financial struggles are accompanied by lower school attendance. Behavior problems often become aggravated and cumulative.

Investing in healthy families isn't just a softhearted liberal policy. Even the most conservative capitalists must be waking up and saying to themselves: Oh my, I guess we should have put money into a clean environment, good schools and economic support for struggling parents. Then their kids could have grown up to be smart, trustworthy workers capable of learning new technologies. (And getting along well with others.)

Oregon is not perfect but is certainly capable of turning these concepts into reality.

Those who are unhappy with our state should go live in Idaho for a few months. Just try it out before you push your separatist ideology. The media is in grave danger of presenting a distorted picture of rural Oregonians. They are failing to cover anyone here who believes in keeping Oregon whole.

**Mary Cooke
Cove**

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. PRESIDENT

Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111

U.S. SENATORS

Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
La Grande office: 541-962-7691

Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Cliff Bentz
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
Medford office: 541-776-4646

GOVERNOR

Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court St.
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582

REPRESENTATIVES

Bobby Levy, District 58
900 Court St. NE, H-376
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1458
Rep.BobbyLevy@state.or.us

Greg Smith, District 57
900 Court St. NE, H-482
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1457
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

SENATOR

Bill Hansell, District 29
900 Court St. NE, S-415
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1729
Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us