

We must fight high fire threat

by Governor Kate Brown

As we near the end of a third consecutive costly fire season, the aftermath is staggering. Some 2,218 wildfires burned more than 600,000 acres across the state and threatened more than 1,400 homes and structures. More than 10,000 firefighters across the Pacific Northwest risked their lives fighting these fires, and ensuring that they could respond swiftly, with all available resources, I invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act five times. Because of the great work of many, we were prepared to minimize loss during these challenging months.

On behalf of all Oregonians, I thank the thousands of firefighters and support crews from local, state and federal agencies, tribal governments, the contract community, local first responders, landowners, forestry professionals and others who ensured that not one life was lost in Oregon. Other states were not so fortunate. Your dedicated service to our state is never taken for granted, and is greatly appreciated.

Even though wildfire season is winding down, now is the time for Oregonians to begin thinking about next summer's fire season and prepare for the rains of winter. This is the best way to express our appreciation for the risks that Oregon's firefighters experience every year.

For those who lost homes and property, state and local officials are working hard to help you put the pieces back together. There are several resources, ranging from streamlined permitting processes to financial assistance programs, available to victims of the fires. Many have already attended the informational meetings held by state and federal officials. But the tools to get help are always available at wildfire.oregon.gov.

With the onset of winter and an El Niño pattern likely, persistent rains could wreak havoc on areas stripped of vegetation by wildfire. Oregonians in these areas are already taking preventative steps such as seeding or mulching bare ground, keeping culverts unplugged of debris, and installing sediment traps above culverts.

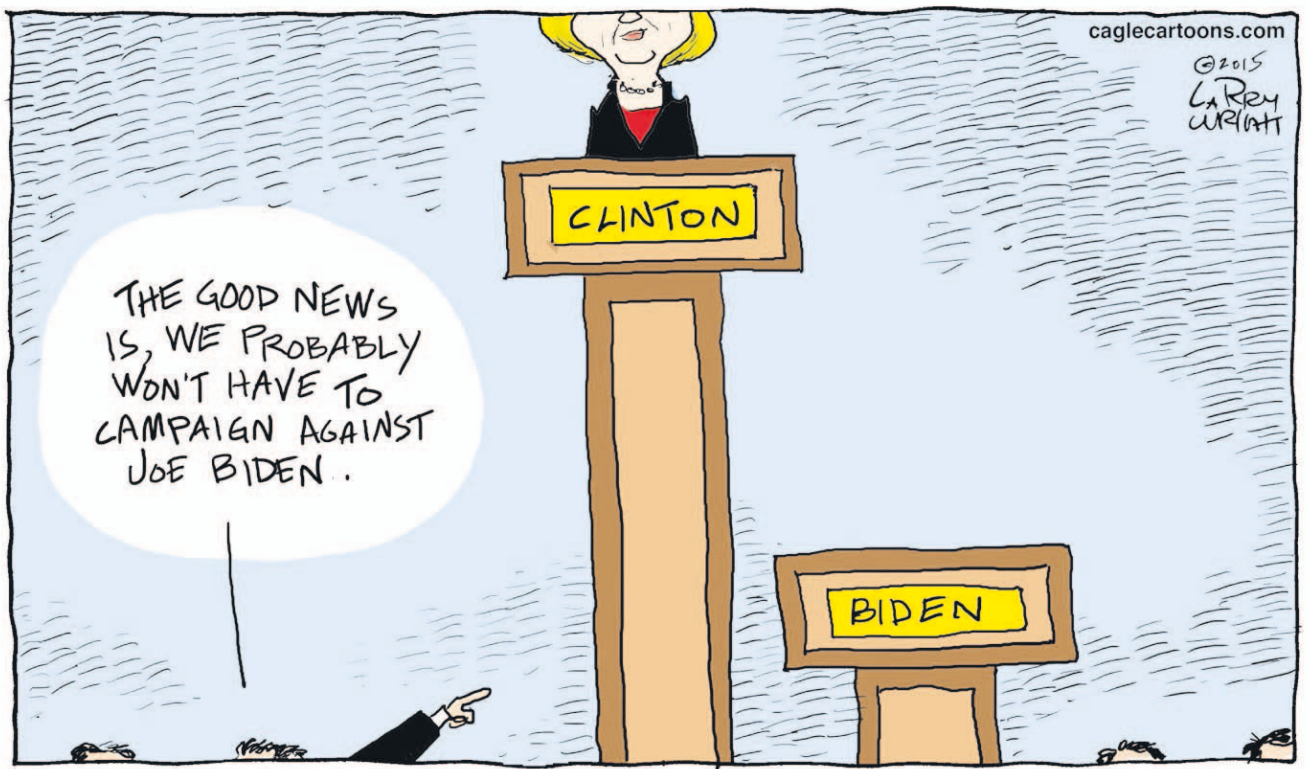
Looking ahead to next summer, homeowners can work with community organizations such as Oregon Firewise, www.firewise.org, to manage the landscapes around their homes. Homeowners should consider establishing what's called "defensible space," so if wildfire threatens a home and there is little to burn near its walls, firefighters will have a better chance of saving it.

Wildfire, drought, and the myriad of challenges resulting from climate change have likely introduced our state to a new normal. As preventing and fighting fire becomes more complex, we must rethink our approach, adopting strategies for both wet and dry seasons. Addressing and preventing fire damage is a year-round effort, and it is more important than ever to work together to adapt to climate change and protect our way of life now and for tomorrow.

Kate Brown is the governor of Oregon.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain



Lessons at Big Brown Church

I've been brooding about growing individualism, isolation, and feelings of entitlement for years. Phones disconnect us from fellow-humans as they connect us with terse text messages; "liberated" co-eds need escorts to cross campus at night; athletes and CEOs forget teams and chase individual wealth and fame; and solitary misfits collect arsenals and go on shooting rampages.

Maybe I'm just getting old and crotchety—every age bemoans the fact that the world we grew up in passes, and new ideas, technologies, and concerns take its place.

But I am clearheaded now about the problems of my forties and fifties in middle America: women chased back from good war-time jobs to make 3.2 children and have drinks ready for hubby coming home; African American veterans of WW 2 getting the same and worse treatment as they did pre-war; Indian tribes and treaties being "terminated" to make way for American business.

But I also believe that those of us who grew up in good places in those times experienced a different kind of camaraderie and community than do young people today.

I thought about this as I sat in on the 75th anniversary of the Big Brown Church—Congregational—in Enterprise last Sunday. I'm nominally a member, but for one reason and another have not been active the last few years, but congregation leader Stacy Green gave me a nudge, and I showed up to hear Mary Louise Nelson and Addie Marks talk about church history and long-time pastor Jerry Raedeke talk about church philosophy. And to see old friends.

It actually took me a long time in the



MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

community to find the church—I followed one of my sons there about 20 years ago. An early recollection is of an older woman tapping me on the arm and whispering that she was glad I was there, and that I didn't have to believe everything in the UCC Creed to be part of their congregation. Jerry Raedeke echoed that sentiment when he reminded people that this church had grown from a coming together of two separate—Methodist and Presbyterian—congregations. Putting aside differences, the two groups negotiated a "community" church. Jerry lamented current divisions in churches as offshoots of congregations find one theological or ideological thing or another to disagree and disengage over. Like fireflies, despite all their earnestness, these upstarts come and go.

But this merging group in 1940 did build a community church! Addie and Mary Louise recounted past ministers and church growth—there were almost 300 members at one time, a choir of 30 and a Sunday School with 80 youngsters.

Thinking about Mary Louise reminds me of a general church meeting with regional officials about a decade ago, when we were searching for a new minister. The Portland pastor said that the word was out, and he was sure that we would find someone who liked the outdoors, hunting, fishing, etc. Mary Louise told him to forget stereotypes, that

people in our congregation also read, wrote, and liked music and song.

Sue (Morgan) Wagner, brother Sam, and Nancy Rudger told Sunday School stories, and one of a regional youth conference that brought in others from this community and scores from around Oregon and Washington. And of a group called "M 3." Did Sam remember what that meant? Sue asked. The oldsters in unison said that it meant that "God is first, others second, and 'me' third." How quaint that seems now. It reminds me of old coaches screaming "team" at would be superstars, and of the verses to "We Shall Overcome" that I once sang arm in arm with blacks and whites in Washington D.C., with Coretta Scott King leading the singing.

Sam was a pew behind me, and I had to ask him about a story that I had heard years ago—maybe from his Mother Betty, or from one of his eight or nine siblings. The story was that there was a box of shoes in the hallway, and you picked out your shoes—and returned them—as you grew. Sam confirmed the shoe box, and remembered that one time his dad had done some work for the Crows in Lostine, and been paid with a box of awful, new but dusty, yellow tennis shoes. I guess the Morgan kids wore those shoes to school for quite a stretch.

That too is hard to imagine today, when every kid has the right shoes, clothes, and I-phone, and helicopter parents hover over the single child. With all its warts and sores, there was something grand about big families, close communities, and a time when teams trumped stars and yellow shoes got you by.

Columnist Rich Wandschneider writes from his home in Joseph.

TPP positive for ag; questions remain

GUEST EDITORIAL

From the Capital Press

The Trans-Pacific Partnership, a big multi-nation trade pact, has been negotiated and within the month will begin a long process of ratification by member countries.

The agreement — known by its initials TPP — is designed to improve trade relations between the 12 participating countries, including the United States, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Vietnam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam.

We are for trade. It's the lifeblood of American farmers and ranchers, particularly those in the Northwest. Anything that facilitates the opening of markets abroad is probably good.

In a teleconference with reporters, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack touted these among the benefits of the pact:

- TPP eliminates or reduces tariffs or taxes assessed by other countries on U.S. agricultural products, including beef, pork, poultry, dairy, horticulture, rice, grains, soybeans, wheat, cotton and processed products.

- The agreement includes safeguards to protect U.S. markets from other countries essentially dumping product into the country.

- TPP gives the United States an additional opportunity to contest sanitary and phytosanitary standards that are not based on risk or science.

- Beef and pork producers will see reductions in taxes levied by Japan on their products. The deal expands the market for dairy products such as cheese and yogurt in Japan and Canada.

So, painted with a broad brush the deal sounds good for American agriculture. That said, this is a complex treaty with a lot of moving parts. The devil may well be hiding in the details that have yet to be made public.

Critics are concerned with portions of the pact that deal with intellectual property, the Internet and dispute resolution.

Opponents worry that one common component of recent trade agreements, known as "investor-state dispute settlement," will allow big, multi-national corporations at odds with American laws to bypass U.S. courts in favor of an expert panel of arbitrators.

Where once such a provision made sense when companies didn't want to risk the third-world judicial system, opponents point out that most if not all participants of the TPP have stable, established legal systems.

Critics say the deal includes provisions that could severely restrict the Internet and remove "fair use" protections for use of copyrighted material. Labor unions oppose the deal because they say it will move more American jobs overseas.

Although alleged drafts of the deal have been posted to Wikileaks, we probably won't get official copies for another 30 days, after Congress has reviewed the pact. The public will then get 60 days to pore over the terms.

Congress gave President Obama "fast track" authority in negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. As such, it can only give the deal an up or down vote, and it can't amend it. So, weighing the relative benefits and potential harms of those details is all the more important.

Without benefit of a complete text, the deal appears to us to be positive for U.S. farmers and ranchers. We are for trade, but not for a deal for a deal's sake. We await a vigorous debate.

Where to write

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