

# Platforms offer insight into key ag concerns

The two major political parties have approved their 2016 platforms.

**EDITORIAL**

*Voice of the Chieftain*

While presidential candidates of both stripes have in the past freely diverged from specific points in their party's platform — and we would expect the same of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump — the documents provide a point for comparison of the policy priorities of each party.

Have a look. Each party promises to protect and advance the interests of farmers.

The GOP says it will change capital gains and estate tax laws to ensure farms can stay in the family. Republicans favor ending direct payment programs in favor of risk-management programs, such as crop insurance.

Democrats promise unspecified programs to “protect and enhance family farms, a cherished way of life. ...” Democrats say they’ll do more to support young farmers and ranchers, and will promote “environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.” It favors a “focused” safety net for farmers.

Republicans say they want to rein in the Environmental Protection Agency. The platform demands “an end to the EPA’s participation in ‘sue and settle’ lawsuits, sweetheart litigation brought by environmental groups to expand the Agency’s regulatory activities against the wishes of Congress and the public.” It supports legislation giving the states a larger role in protecting the environment.

Democrats take note of EPA programs, particularly the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard, but say more needs to be done. The Democrats want to enlist farmers as “partners in promoting conservation and stewardship.” Republicans want regulators to shift from punitive enforcement to “a spirit of cooperation” with producers, processors and the public.

The Democrats promise more and stronger regulation on just about every front. The GOP says it will reduce government regulation, and wants Congress to approve any regulation that will cost consumers more than \$100 million.

The Democrats oppose any attempt to “weaken” the Endangered Species Act. Republicans want to block attempts by the EPA and the Corps of Engineers to “expand jurisdiction over water, including water that is clearly not navigable.”

The Democrats’ platform wants to expand access to public lands, and at the same time “strengthen protections for natural and cultural resources.” It supports the creation of a trust fund to expand outdoor recreational opportunities. The Democrats want to create more jobs and billions of dollars in activity by doubling the size of the “outdoor economy.”

Republicans want Congress to explore transferring to ranchers, timbermen and miners some public land, arguing that private owners are the best stewards of the land because conservation serves their economic interests. It favors maximizing timber harvest on public land.

We think the GOP platform is better for farmers and ranchers. But we urge caution.

Platforms are gauzy documents long on ideology and short on specifics. They are points of departure for candidates up and down the ticket who are free to put their spin on policy.

By what mechanics will either party deliver its vision? Details are important. Even ideas we agree with can turn sour if they are realized through objectionable means.



# The price we pay for tasty ice cream

Economic indicators are signaling a drastic shift in the price index of essential commodities here in Wallowa County. The purchase price of an R&R Drive-In “baby cone” has recently skyrocketed from 25 cents to — you might want to sit down — 50. Fifty whole cents. To put this in perspective, that would be like the price of a fully grown ice cream cone going from one price to an entirely different price that was more. And that’s how inflation works, kids.

Quick story. My first summer here I worked as a counselor for a kids program at Joseph City Park. We did arts and crafts, nature stuff, played lots of freeze tag. Once in a while at the end of the week I’d take the kids on a walk. We’d bring along some garbage bags and clean up litter between the park and the other end of town. Usually we’d find enough cans and bottles along the way for each youngster to cash in the deposit and buy their own ice cream at R&R for a quarter. The first time we came up short on deposits I was going to pay the pocket change difference, but the kids had come to regard this as a quest and insisted we keep looking until we found enough nickel deposits for ice cream all around. I loved this activity. Figured we were cleaning things up, recycling, getting exercise, learning the value of paying our way and also getting ice cream. I did wonder what parents must think when they heard Jon took their kids scrounging for cans to buy food.

So, you see, I’ve got history with 25-cent baby cones. Most of us probably do.



**AND FURTHERMORE**  
Jon Rombach

Family friends who are longtime Wallowa County visitors and R&R devotees recently came for a visit and brought the baby cone price hike to my attention. There was a stunned silence in the room as they let me process the news. The only sound was the ticking from an old clock I’d bought at the Soroptimist Thrift Store. Paid 25 cents, matter of fact.

Well, at least Soroptimists ... Oh, for crying out loud. Sit back down. Or you may want to recline on the floor for this next bombshell. Reliable sources tell me the Soroptimists have raised their prices from a quarter to — take a guess — yeah, two whole quarters. Do these people think we’re made of quarters?

This Soroptimist price increase to 50 cents hasn’t been in place long enough for reliable figures on how this will alter our economy. But it appears to be a case of going from paying next to nothing for cool stuff to still almost next to nothing. People talk about how far your dollar will go in certain places and I always thought: huh, a quarter gets you awfully far in the county. Especially when you consider how that army of volunteer angels at Soroptimist plows our quarters right back into local good deeds, scholarships, fighting crime as masked

crusaders and whatever else it is they do.

Back to the ice cream. I went to the R&R to see for myself about this baby cone deal. My plan was to order a baby cone and make a show of struggling to hand over TWO whole quarters to pay for it, then ask the staff what the blow-back has been, how many protesters had been picketing the price hike, real Woodward-and-Bernstein-type reporting. But I got to R&R around 5 o’clock during Chief Joseph Days week, so they were plenty busy and probably didn’t have time for my hardcore investigative journalism. Instead I just ordered a burger, fries and a baby cone that I ate before my food came out. You heard right. Ice cream before dinner. I was shocked myself at such daring.

I talked with a friend in New York City while I was conducting this exhaustive research on the price of baby cones. I asked how much an ice cream cone costs in New York and she said usually five bucks. I almost spit out the bite of baby cone ice cream I’d just taken, but remembered how much it costs now and managed to hold it in. Ever experience an ice cream nose ache? Not recommended. At any price.

Bottom line: paying 50 cents is still almost like getting paid to eat ice cream or take something home from the Soroptimists. It may not be the screaming deal we’re used to, but it’s still raising its voice quite a bit.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist and consumer advocate for *The Chieftain*.

# County needs housing solutions

Silence is golden, but I never was one for gold.

I have read and heard multiple takes on whether Joseph should allow vacation homes within city limits. Am I the only one perplexed by our concerns? It seems we are putting our proverbial cart not only in front of the horse, but choosing to power said cart with turn-down service.

I will grant you, in 2015 Wallowa County brought in \$27.6 million in tourism. That’s not surprising — it is the area’s top industry, followed at a distance by the arts and entertainment.

To keep a small town flowing functionally with out-of-town visitors, a workforce must be maintained. Workers require stable housing. Satisfied customers are served by happy workers who feel secure in their basic needs (food, shelter and water). So, when concern is voiced over people’s use of their extra or secondary home, I can’t help but shake my head, being fully aware of the shortage for affordable primary homes in town.

This problem doesn’t belong solely to dishwashers, housekeepers and cooks,

but to business owners and professional men and women, who have uprooted their lives elsewhere to serve our community in one degree or another. So rather than address a secondary concern, why not first secure a solid community foundation? One that can house the people employed to make tourism continue to be our number one industry. I say, open up the home rental market and stop driving up home and land prices to unreachable heights. We have the ability to clear the path for hard-working individuals to be able to live independently in the area they work. Retain the charm and warm, friendly service people expect here by offering hope to those who keep it going.

Katie Jo Morgan  
*Joseph, Or*

## When talk will end

Over the last decade some people now only communicate through texting. Because humans have always adapted to their environment over millions of years of life on Earth, some of our abil-

## LETTERS to the EDITOR

ities have been lost because of progress. We no longer have the ability to run fast because humans have found other ways of escaping attack from wild animals. We have cars that take us places instead of walking or running physically from place to place.

We will lose our ability to verbally talk to one another face to face because of the internet. We communicate digitally now. It’s cheaper, less stressful and just plain old — no one talks anymore, only through modern technology do we communicate.

Our children are far different now and their art of communicating is through texting. I suggest we take a hard look at how the world has changed in the last few years or we may end up losing our physical voices forever because it will no longer be necessary.

Mike Brink  
*Gresham, Ore.*

## Correction

Rachel Gibbs’ name was misspelled in an article about the Chief Joseph Days Court’s special projects in our July 27 Chief Joseph Days Guide.

Also, Jaycee Campbell’s name was misspelled in our July 27 front-page article about CJD Parade Grand Marshal Char Williams.

## Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It’s acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party’s ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we’ll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper’s website, located at wallowa.com.

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