

# House convenes, disagrees over committee appointments

By Claire Withycombe  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — In the year's first meeting of the Oregon House of Representatives Monday, members of both parties acknowledged the legislative session's imminent hurdles and called for communication across party lines, despite a disagreement over Oregon House rules regarding committee assignments.

The 60 members of the house, including 14 new state representatives, took the oath of office Monday morning. They reconvened in the afternoon to review nearly 800 bills.

Rep. Tina Kotek, D-Portland, voted Speaker of the House for a third time, acknowledged the "enormity" of the Legislature's tasks in the upcoming session, which formally kicks off Feb. 1.

Several high-stakes issues are looming, including a \$1.8 billion budget shortfall, a \$22 billion unfunded liability in the state's public employee retirement system, low gradu-

ation rates and a tough rental housing market.

Kotek encouraged her colleagues to listen to one another and to their constituents, especially to those with perspectives different from their own; and to "engage in robust, constructive debate."

Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, nominated House Minority Leader Mike McLane, R-Powell Butte, for Speaker of the House. McLane lost to Kotek by 10 votes.

Buehler criticized the "tone" of the previous legislative session in his nomination remarks and said the Legislature faced challenges requiring leadership, including the unfunded liability of the state's retirement system for public employees, "a revenue system which is just not getting the job done," and a lack of affordable housing.

He also criticized the continuation of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water, of which McLane was a member. Speaker Pro Tempore Paul

Holvey, D-Eugene, later said the committee was the creation of House Democrats and was not in place when he entered the Legislature in 2004.

Legislators chose Holvey, who replaces now-State Treasurer Tobias Read, over Oregon Rep. Andy Olson, R-Albany, as Speaker Pro Tempore.

Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, also called for bipartisanship in remarks in support of Olson, saying working across party lines was the answer to roadblocks such as the PERS "debacle," affordable housing and environmental issues.

"All these things, the magic that will get us there, is bipartisanship," Bentz said.

Rep. Carl Wilson, R-Grants Pass, objected to the adoption of Oregon House rules, in particular the role of the speaker in making committee assignments.

The speaker appoints both majority and minority party members to committees. The speaker is required to appoint the same proportion of majority to minority members to committees as are in the Ore-

gon House as a whole.

Legislative committees review legislation in specific policy areas. The dispute followed some hubbub in late December over the removal of Buehler from the House Committee on Human Services and Housing.

Republicans contended Buehler was removed due to his skepticism of rent control, while the Speaker's office said at the time that Buehler, an orthopedic surgeon, was removed in order to serve as a member of a Human Services budget subcommittee that meets at the same time.

Holvey said that the new rules include provisions requiring the speaker of the house to consult with party caucus offices about committee choices.

He also said the idea of having caucuses make committee appointments "seemed practically, very, very difficult to accomplish," and that Kotek had made a practice of reaching out to members of the House to learn their committee preferences.

# Farmers look ahead to year of unknowns

By Eric Mortenson  
Capital Press

More water but maybe less regulation. Expanding yields and shrinking labor pools. Big Ag and Big Data taking root amid the blossoming of small farms. A political climate in which some want to drain the swamp while others clamor to conserve the watershed.

Got a crystal ball? Or, more in step with the times, a prognosticating drone? The agricultural outlook for 2017 is cloudy.

"I think we're going into a very uncertain period for producers and the food system, because the new administration coming in will be a little less predictable, perhaps," said Rose Hayden-Smith, a former county extension agent who edits the University of California's "Food Observer" blog.

## Trump and trade

No matter how you voted, the incoming administration poses a conundrum for some producers. Many of them supported him — Trump took up to 80 percent of the vote in many rural counties — but disagree with some of his espoused policies.

For example, producers who ship wheat, blueberries, Christmas trees and other goods to Asia favored the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade agreement Trump vowed to cancel.

And if Trump's campaign bad-mouthing of major trade partner China are an indication of what's ahead, "Holy cow," said Hayden-Smith.

"We are not a food system in isolation," she said. "If we have poor relations with China and the World Trade Organization, it could throw the global food system into crisis."

## Immigration issues

Then there's Trump's "build that wall" rhetoric regarding immigration. It worries producers who rely on manual labor to tend and harvest fruits, nuts, vegetables and berries, because they already have a hard time finding and retaining enough workers.

The second largest Washington apple crop on record this past fall, for example, stretched seasonal workers ever thinner, and employers are still scrambling to find packing shed workers.

Reggie Collins, general manager of Chelan Fruit Cooperative in Chelan, Wash., said a bigger crop means more people are needed for more shifts, and he didn't know of any packer who wasn't in the same fix.

"We're not gaining on it," he said in December. "As many as we hire, we lose about the same number. We're still short 80 to 100. People move or go to California or Mexico. We're trying every method we can to hire people."

The Washington Employment Security Department says there were an average of 54,124 seasonal ag workers per month in the state in 2015 with a low of 28,584 in January and a high of 90,782 in June. It won't have 2016 numbers until next fall.

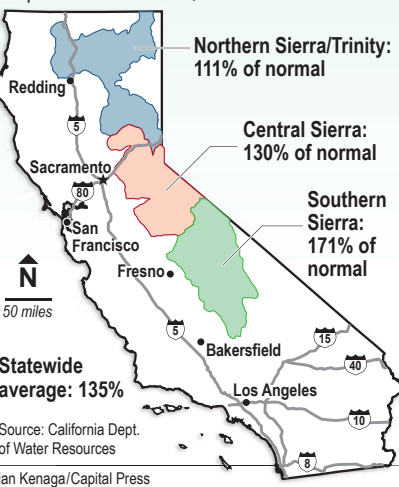
Washington growers have turned increasingly to H-2A visa foreign guestworkers in recent years, hiring 13,641 in 2016. California, Oregon and Idaho use far fewer but are beginning to use more.

"There is an absolute shortage and as the economy picks up it will only get worse," said Kerry Scott, program manager of masLabor in Lovingson, Va., the largest provider of H-2A (agricultural) and H-2B (nonagricultural) workers in the nation.

Answers to the labor shortage include mechanization and immigration reform. With the latter, growers want work authorization for illegal immigrants but the

## California snow water equivalents

Percent of the historic average snow water equivalent for Jan. 10, measured in inches.



greater need, they say, is improvement or replacement of the H-2A program.

## Regulatory relief

Labor shortages and trade disputes may be hurtful — "The TPP is obviously dead" — but some changes accompanying a new administration could have "really big benefits" for producers, said Gail Greenman, national affairs director for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"I expect a lot of change in the regulatory burden imposed on Oregon producers for many, many years," she said. "Regulatory relief is a big one."

Producers could wave goodbye to the EPA's onerous "Waters of the U.S." regulatory gambit, and might see some "honest to goodness" tax reform, including helpful adjustments to the estate tax, she said.

Conventional wisdom holds that a Trump administration will provide "more good opportunities than bad for ag," Greenman said.

Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, was particularly pleased with the selection of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to head the EPA. In a prepared statement, Duvall said it was welcome news to all who are "threatened by EPA's regulatory overreach — and should help provide a new degree of fairness for U.S. agriculture."

Still, it's unclear whether the president-elect is paying attention to agriculture. Into the last week of December he still hadn't nominated an ag secretary to replace Tom Vilsack, who held the post for eight years in the Obama administration.

Then there's the 2018 Farm Bill. Some observers wonder if Trump realizes it's about more than commodities, but includes programs ranging from farmland conservation payments to school lunches and SNAP food stamps.

## Price outlook

The outlook for specific ag sectors is mixed. A November article in CropLife magazine said ag retailers believed 2017 would be "another in the current string of down years, with low commodity prices" depressing grower income. But an updated round of conversations showed some retailers now believe 2016 will prove to be the bottom of the down cycle and the coming year will be flat at worst and maybe up a little.

Analysts at Northwest Farm Credit Services expect headwinds in international markets due to a strong U.S. dollar and uncertainty of how the new administration's scrutiny of trade will affect ag exports.

Michael Stolp, vice president of customer insights at FCS, said things are

looking up for dairy farmers but several commodities are currently selling for less than the cost of production.

Global milk production is down but U.S. production is up 2 percent and prices are strengthening, Stolp said. Class III milk prices are in the high \$16s per hundredweight, with futures prices out to August nearing \$18, he said.

The cattle industry, however, is in about year two of a six-year down cycle, he said, and prices are below the breakeven point for most cow-calf producers.

Hay markets are showing regional differences in supply and prices: Low supplies in the Southwest but ample supplies of low- to mid-quality alfalfa in the Northwest, Stolp said.

Wheat prices also remain depressed, due to strong U.S. and global supplies and a projected record harvest in Australia. Strong production in potatoes and onions across the Northwest depressed prices, but the sugar beet and nursery-greenhouse industries are seeing positive returns.

## Pot-pourri

At least one edgy ag sector — marijuana growers — apparently believes it has little to fear from a Trump administration. Writing at cnbc.com, Grow Solutions Holdings Inc. President Jeff Beverly noted Trump has already endorsed medical cannabis use and said recreational pot use is a matter of state's rights.

In addition, several states that provided him critical electoral votes also passed measures legalizing various forms of cannabis use.

## Water relief

Even political rainmakers like Trump can't make it snow, but his administration is likely to begin with the best water outlook in years for Northwest and some California ag producers.

The water content of snow draping the Cascade range in Washington and Oregon was more than 160 percent of normal in many areas as of Dec. 21, according to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

December snowstorms brought snow accumulation to above-normal levels in many areas in Southern Idaho, and well above normal in the Eastern Snake Plain. The U.S. Drought Monitor shows the Pacific Northwest to be drought-free except in southeastern Oregon, which is still in moderate drought or abnormally dry.

However, most of California is still in a drought, and it's rated as extreme or exceptional throughout the middle of the state and along the Southern California coast.

The good news is that a parade of rain clouds since mid-autumn has put many areas in Northern California above their normal seasonal rainfall totals. Redding, for instance, has sopped up 17.8 inches of rain for the season as of Dec. 21, well above its average of 10.47 inches, according to the weather service.

But California's snow water content was only 64 percent of normal statewide and 66 percent of normal in the northern Sierra, according to the state Department of Water Resources California Data Exchange Center.

Through the remainder of the winter, below-normal rainfall is most likely for Southern California while the remainder of the state faces equal chances of above- and below-normal precipitation, the climate center forecasts.

"If this trend continues, that would be awesome," said Mike Kochasic, a NWS forecaster in Sacramento. "We still have a long way to go, but it's a good start."

## LEGAL NOTICE

### NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

On January 24th, 2016, at the hour of 10:00 a.m. at the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office, 104 W Greenwood Street, Enterprise, OR 97828, the defendant's interest will be sold, subject to redemption, in the real property commonly known as: 207 NW Second Street, Enterprise, OR 97828. The court case number is 16-05-14704, where Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. is the plaintiff, and Kevin E. O'Malley; Priscilla O'Malley; and Persons or Parties Unknown claiming any right, title, lien, or interest in the property described in the Complaint herein are the defendants. The sale is a public auction to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check, in hand, made out to Wallowa County Sheriff's Office. For more information on this sale go to: [www.oregonsheriffssales.org](http://www.oregonsheriffssales.org)

## LEGAL NOTICE

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Board of Directors of the Wallowa Education Service District will hold their regular meeting on Tuesday, January 17, 2017 at 5:30 P.M. in the ESD Board Room. A copy of the agenda may be obtained at the Education Service District office at 107 SW First Street #105 in Enterprise.

## LEGAL NOTICE

### PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

Wallowa County Public Transit Advisory Committee Meeting  
Community Connection Dining Room, Enterprise, OR  
Thursday- January 12, 2017 at 9:30 a.m.

This meeting is to discuss and make applications for an STF Grant Funds, for seniors and people with disabilities, for the Biennium of 2017 – 2019 and is due on February 17, 2017. This meeting is open to the public.

## LEGAL NOTICE

### NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

On 24th day of January, 2017 at the hour of 10:00 a.m. at the Wallowa County Justice Center, 104 W Greenwood Street, in the City of Enterprise, Oregon, the defendant's interest will be sold, subject to redemption, in the real property commonly known as: 59936 River Canyon Road, Imnaha, OR 97842. The Wallowa County Circuit Court case number is 15-04-14548 where JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association is the plaintiff, and Norma J. Hilty, Individually and as Constructive Trustee of the Estate of David E. Hilty; Unknown Heirs of David E. Hilty; and Parties in Possession are the defendants. The sale is a public auction to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check, in hand, made out to Wallowa County Sheriff's Office. For more information on this sale go to: [www.oregonsheriffssales.org](http://www.oregonsheriffssales.org)

## LEGAL NOTICE

### NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

Kerry A. Coleman has been appointed Personal Representative of the Estate of PRISCILLA S. COLEMAN, Deceased, Probate Case No. 16PB08446, Wallowa County Circuit Court, State of Oregon. All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative or the Attorney for the Personal Representative. All persons having claims against the estate must present them to the Personal Representative at:

Alyssa D. Slater, P.C.  
Alyssa D. Slater, Attorney for Personal Representative  
107 Depot Street  
P.O. Box 729  
La Grande, Oregon 97850  
(541) 663-8300  
(541) 663-8298 Fax

within four months after the first publication date of this notice or they may be barred.  
Dated and first published January 4, 2017.

## LEGALS CONTINUED ON 11A



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