

Size really shouldn't matter

Some members of the Oregon Legislature and a coalition of environmental groups and small-farm advocates want the state to ban large dairy farms.

Their argument: large dairy farms are bad.

They also want tighter regulations governing dairy farms. The argument is the legislature and the state government know the best size for a dairy farm.

Pardon our skepticism.

This is the same state government that can't build a much-needed Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River, that can't produce a website for its Obamacare program, that can't figure out how to plow snow in Portland, that can't operate its foster care program, that can't fix its out-of-control retirement plan. ...

Yet this coalition wants that same state government to tell farmers how to farm by dictating how big a dairy should be.

The Oregon Senate Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources last week decided to introduce two bills during next year's session targeting dair-

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Editorial opinion

ies larger than 2,500 cows, or 700 cows if access to pasture isn't available.

One concept would classify a large dairy as an industrial facility and strip it of protections under the state "right to farm" law. That law allows Oregon farmers to use normal farm practices, provided they follow the many rules and regulations already placed on them by the state and federal governments.

Another legislative concept would ban more large dairies at least until the state comes up with a new permitting system.

Neither proposal makes any sense.

The fact of the matter is that all sizes of dairy farms in Oregon are already robustly regulated. Any farmers who don't follow the rules will find themselves in deep you-know-what, both literally and figuratively. Whether a dairy has 20, or 200 or 20,000 cows matters not one bit. What matters is the quality of man-



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The size of a dairy farm doesn't matter; the management does.

agement. Large or small, a farm with good management will meet the many regulatory requirements placed on it.

This coalition points to the Lost Valley Farm, a bankrupt dairy in Eastern Oregon that was poorly managed, implying that all large farms are equally bad. State regulators saw the problems when they occurred and took the owner to court, forcing him into bankruptcy and putting him out of business.

That is exactly what regulators do. If someone screws up, tell him or her to fix the problems. If the problems persist, take the owner to court.

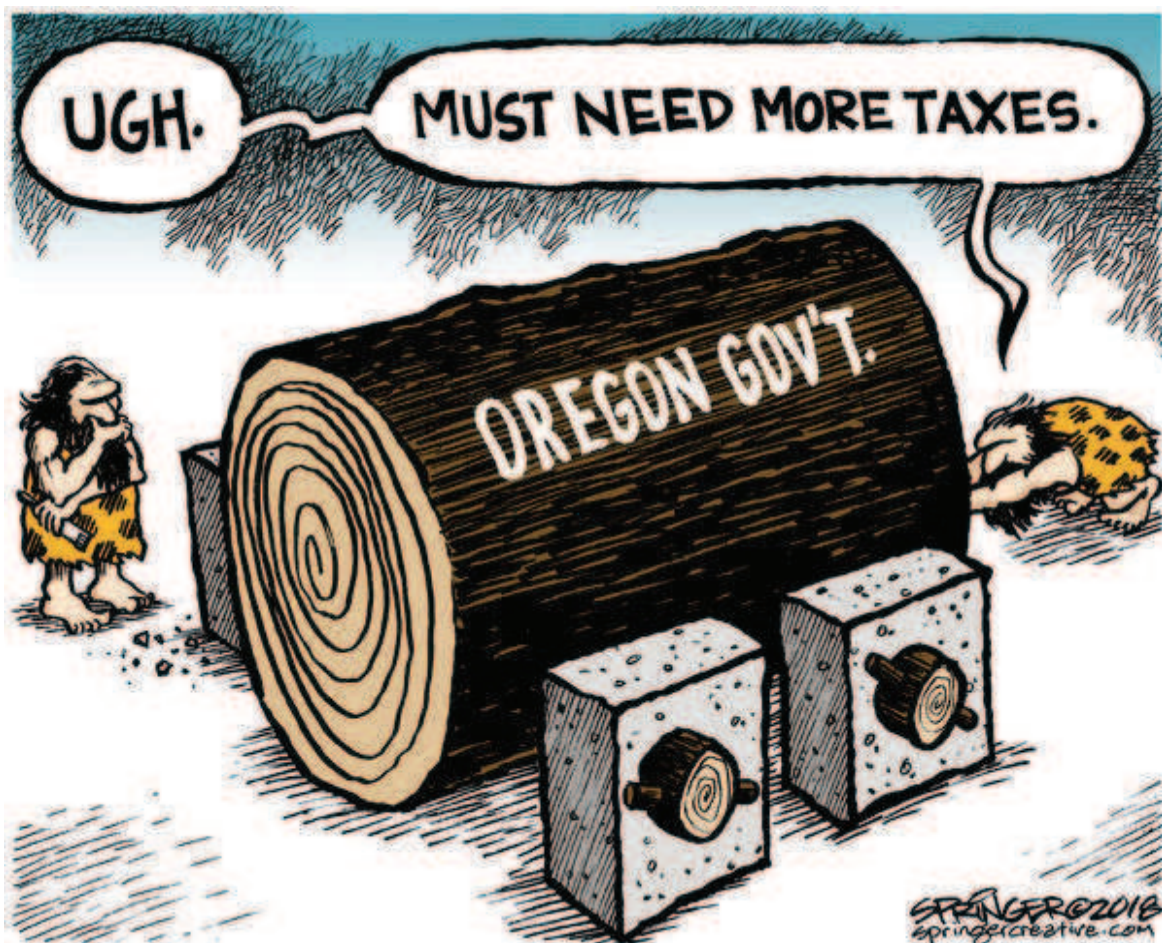
to handle the waste and grow a variety of crops; they treat their 300 year-round employees well; and they are constantly innovating to do things better. They are good neighbors in every sense of the word and are a point of pride in the community.

Those who are hung up on size ignore the realities of 21st century agriculture. A farm needs to be the right size for its market and to find economies of scale.

To say a farmer is doing something wrong because he, or she, has been successful and sustainable and built a small family farm into a large family farm is illogical.

The state of Oregon should not pick winners and losers in agriculture. It should see that all sizes of farms are well-regulated to protect the environment and produce safe food. If a farmer messes up, he or she should correct the problem, whether the operation is 5 acres or 50,000 acres.

When it comes to regulating farms, size really shouldn't matter.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

VanGrunsven column inflammatory, inaccurate

After reading Karla Holmes' letter to the editor (Oct. 31), followed by Andi Mitchell (Nov. 14) and Catherine Matthias (Dec. 5), this letter may seem redundant and unnecessary.

We believe, however, the sentiments written by those three cannot be expressed too frequently or too

strongly. All three chastise the level of discourse in Ms. VanGrunsven's column and letters to the editor.

There is a difference between free speech and hate speech, and the two must not be conflated.

"Let's Roll" may give voice to views that many conservatives feel are under-expressed, but it does them no favors. Since its inception, "Let's Roll" has been inflammatory, inaccurate, illogical and insulting. Most importantly, it does nothing to inform the reader of important issues, rather it only deepens the divide between different views at a time when what is badly needed is thoughtful conversation that is

respectful of different opinions.

Before the sentiments in "Let's Roll" do real harm to the fabric of our community, a community in which individuals with widely differing opinions and beliefs manage to care for and about one another, we ask that the editor reflect on these issues.

Surely there are potential authors of a conservative column that reach across the divide rather than making it wider and deeper.

Signed (alphabetical):
Miles McFall, George Oja, Cheryl Oja, Terry Polk, Ron Polk, Janet Pulsifer, Don Swart, Ralph Swinehart

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Pending Bills — For information on bills in Congress, Phone 202-225-1772.

SALEM

Oregon Legislature — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Web site: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

Updating golf's written rules

Whether they know it yet or not, golfers have some little presents waiting for them under their Christmas trees, courtesy of the United States Golf Association, the organization that governs the rules of the sport. A few changes have been made beginning in 2019 that should help make the game more fun, fair and "user-friendly."

I won't try to cover all the rule changes in this column or to cite them chapter and verse, but I will mention some that made me smile when I read about them.

Golfers can now repair a spike mark on a green before putting, just as they could always repair a ball mark. That former restriction never made much sense anyway.

Another nice modification is that if a player's ball moves a bit after the marker has been picked up or just as the player is about to putt, the ball can simply be put back where it was without any penalty stroke. (But most casual golfers probably just did that anyway.)

Players can now choose to leave the pin in on the green when they putt, although I get the impression that if the putt hits the pin without falling in the hole, the putt will not count as good. So most players will probably still choose to remove the pin, unless they play alone and would rather save a little time.

One of my personal favorites is that a double strike will now count only as a single stroke instead of as two strokes. This usually happens on a short putt or a chip where a nervous golfer has decelerated and then picked up speed just as the ball is struck, causing the club head to hit the ball twice in a millisecond. Golfers who have ever struggled with "the yips" might have experienced this mishap a few times. Now we won't have to bear the extra embarrassment of adding another stroke if this happens.

Another win for common sense relates to shots that may or may not be out-of-bounds or in hazards. Often golfers are not sure after a poor shot whether the ball stayed in play or not, and the recommendation was that they should play a "provisional shot" — usually from the tee — in case their first shot did end up out-of-bounds or in a hazard. If a player neglected



POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

John McColgan

to do that and then could not find their ball, he or she was supposed to go all the way back to the tee to hit their third shot. Now another option is that the player can simply drop a ball in play near where the original shot went out, and from that point the hole would proceed with their fourth shot. As with some of the other rule changes, this one probably permits something that a lot of golfers already did anyway. And the change should improve the speed of play while easing a few consciences, too.

Like most golfers here in Wallowa County, I play mostly at Alpine Meadows, our beautiful nine-hole course in Enterprise. As others will attest, it is well-maintained, economical, scenic and subtly challenging because of the convex contours of most of the greens. In the same spirit as the USGA has made improvements in the rules, I will offer several friendly suggestions for the folks who run our local course.

I would love it if the greens were a little slower. This would be possible as a mowing and maintenance policy, and would probably lead to fewer three putts and happier summer golfers.

And I will renew the recommendations that I offered in a *Chieftain* column in 2017 regarding the seventh green, which is challenging enough all by itself because of its humps and ridges without adding some of the unnecessary woes that surround it. I would like to see the fringe area behind and to the right of the green widened and the grass there left longer so that good shots that land on the green do not stray too far into the hazard or out-of-bounds area. And I would welcome a solid fence beside the green on the boundary side, so that shots that land to the left of the fence remain in bounds.

Just as golfers nationwide should celebrate the changes in the USGA rules, I think our local golfers would enjoy a few user-friendly improvements too.

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