

Big changes coming to Oregon State Capitol

OTHER VIEWS

Dick Hughes



If you were building a state capitol, would you construct it on stilts? Probably not. But such an idea would borrow from the mind of Salem native A.C. Gilbert, who invented the Erector Set in the early 20th century.

More than a century later, the Oregon State Capitol is not actually being erected on stilts. Still, that is a handy image for visualizing the steel shoring that will hold up the massive 1938 portion of the building while base isolators and new columns are installed underneath.

A base isolator is key to reducing damage in an earthquake.

“Think of it as the building sort of sitting on a springy cushion. What it allows it to do is the building stays put while the ground moves under it,” said Jodie Jones, the Capitol Accessibility, Maintenance and Safety project director.

Major seismic upgrades are part of phase 3, now underway. Phase 2 has included seismic work in the legislative office wings, hearing rooms and underground parking garage.

Compared with what I’ve heard from politicians, Jones offered a realistic answer when I asked how a seismically reinforced Capitol might fare in a 9.0 Cascadia quake.

“You can’t really just pick a number and say this is seismically safe up to such-and-such a level. The reason for that is, it all depends on where the original earthquake happens. What the epicenter of it is and how close it is to where you are. How many aftershocks,” she said.

“People always want to say, ‘Are you safe to a Level 9?’ Well, I can’t say that because a Level 9 under the building is different than a Level 9 that’s 50, 100, 300 miles away.”

When a quake happens, the seismic upgrades have two aims: 1) Enable the occupants to safely exit the building, and 2) Get the Capitol back up and running as quickly as possible so the work of government can continue, which is doubly important during a disaster.

All this is part of making the “People’s House” safe for the people.

How to get in: The Capitol’s main entrances are closed due to the construction, but signs direct people to one door each on the east and west sides.

Parking around the Capitol is problematic due to the construction and other reserved spaces. Meanwhile, construction continues across the street at the Justice and Supreme Court buildings, although that work should wrap up this year.

Jones said she appreciates the patience shown by the public, legislators and employees in dealing with the noise, dust and inconvenience. Phase 3 requires the 1938 portion of the Capitol — including the rotunda and governor, secretary of state and treasurer offices — to be vacated for two and a half years.

Still, she said, “We’re trying to get this done as quickly as possible.”

And within budget and on time.

Other improvements: The half-billion-dollar project includes:

- Bringing the electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems up to code, including improved air circulation that meets the latest standards.
- Improved lighting. LED is being installed wherever possible, including the Senate and House chambers.
- Two new staircases to the lower level, which will be called the concourse instead of the basement, and additional staircases on the north side.
- Four additional hearing rooms, which will be on the concourse level.
- A new, larger cafe for the public.
- A new private lounge for all legislators, replacing separate eating areas for the Senate and House.
- Accessibility improvements throughout, including building entrances and ramps on the dais area of the Senate and House chambers.
- Two new courtyards on the first floor,

replacing ones in the basement. The basement is being gutted, so everything there is being redone or moving, including the press room.

- Fire-suppression systems and improved fire-detection throughout the Capitol.
- Resealing and repairs throughout, including exterior cleaning.
- Installation of an emergency generator with expanded capacity.

Legislative schedule: Committees will meet virtually for Legislative Days, Sept. 21-23. The Senate will have an in-person floor session Sept. 23.

The Senate and House wings are open to the public, including all member offices. (Being a legislator theoretically is a part-time job, so don’t count on finding your lawmaker in the office during the interim.)

The format for the December Legislative Days has not been announced.

Although virtual testimony options will remain available, in-person committee meetings are planned for the 2023 Legislature. Hearing Rooms A-F, 170 and 174 will be available for committees, but not rooms in the old part of the Capitol until construction finishes in late 2025.

The House and Senate chambers will be open during legislative sessions. Jones said public access will be limited for fire safety due to construction.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

OTHER VIEWS

John Nalivka



Federal lands grazing challenge

Grazing is the foundation of the U.S. beef industry. And, regardless of the source, whether private or federal lands, the total forage base of this country is the single factor making the greatest contribution to the success of the industry.

There are 770 million acres of rangeland in the U.S. One half of those acres are privately owned while 43% are managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. Grazing is permitted on about 50% those federal lands.

Given that all grazing acres are critical to the U.S. beef industry, I have always firmly believed it is important to pay close attention to any appeal by the various environmental groups to limit grazing on any of these acres, regardless whether federal or private.

While climate change may be the lead headline to “justify” the elimination of cattle grazing in the U.S., I recently read an article that brought into focus another hot-topic discussion — wolves — and tied it to grazing. The article presented management changes proposed by Oregon State University to increase the number of wolves and beavers — I repeat, beavers. They have added a new dimension to the discussion!

Remember gray wolves were put back on the endangered species list in January 2021 after being delisted in October 2020. OSU’s research paper was titled “Rewilding the American West.”

Without going into the weeds of this article concerning “rewilding” the habitat, there were a couple of statements that I thought truly stood out.

First, “the authors determined the most common threat was livestock grazing, which they say can cause stream and wetland degradation.”

A second statement was “we suggest the removal of grazing on federal allotments from approximately 285,000 square kilometers within the ‘rewilding’ (my quotes) network, representing 29% of total 985,000 square kilometers of federal lands in the 11 western states that are annually grazed.”

I would submit that whether it be wolves, riparian areas, wild horses, climate change or beavers, just to name a few, this is a serious continuation of the challenges faced by cattlemen in the race to eliminate cattle grazing.

The challenge to federal lands grazing has been in the courts for decades and it is far from ending. Cattlemen, whether grazing federal or private land, must remain vigilant to the challenge if the beef industry is to remain a solid contributor to U.S. agriculture, the food industry and the U.S. economy.

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Take care of yourself and each other

IT'S ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Ann Bloom



There’s a song with a line that goes, “they say all good things must end someday.”

And so, it is with me.

This is my last column for the Chieftain as a nutrition educator for the Oregon State University Extension Service. I will officially retire the end of this month after almost 18 years with OSU. To say it’s been the experience of a lifetime would be an understatement.

I’ve met some amazing people over the years; some I am now happy to call friends. I’ve learned a great deal, too. When I started with Extension, I didn’t know what the word “riparian” meant. Now, I do. When I started, I didn’t know the finer points of delivering a calf — now I do, the basics anyway. I’d still call the vet. But now, I have a starter for dinner parties when there is a lull in the conversation. Thank you, Jill.

Did I get it all right, all the time? Hardly. I made plenty of mistakes along the way; we all do. It’s part of learning. A teacher I greatly admire, who is now retired, had a sign in her classroom that read: F.A.I.L. It means First Attempt In Learning.

I have had the honor and privilege of having worked with some remarkable people. It would be hard to thank, impossible really, each person without running the risk of leaving someone out (plus there is a limit to these columns).

So, one “thank you” will have to suffice, and I’m sure those people know

who they are anyway. I’m grateful for the support and love of my family, for the faith the OSU Extension Service showed by hiring me (and keeping me) and for all the encouragement and help I received along the way from all the teachers and staff with whom I worked. You are a wonderful and amazing group.

In reflecting on my time as a nutrition educator for OSU Extension, I have been asked some interesting questions

“OF ALL THE THINGS I WILL MISS, I WILL MISS YOU, THE STUDENTS, MOST OF ALL. YOU ARE THE REASON I WANTED TO GET UP EVERY MORNING TO GO TO WORK FOR THE LAST 17 PLUS YEARS.”

over the years. A few come to mind. One student wanted to know if illegal substances had calories. I had to throw the teacher under the bus on that one.

Someone else wanted to know what food group you put a coconut in. It’s not a nut, so it doesn’t go in the protein group where other nuts go. The “milk” inside isn’t really milk, so it doesn’t go in the dairy group where other milk

products go. So, what is it? It turns out that a coconut is categorized as a fruit, because it has more of the vitamins and other characteristics of the fruit food group. It’s also botanically considered a seed and a nut. It gets a little confusing to explain all that to a third grader, so we just say it’s a fruit and let it go at that.

To my students, I hope you have learned a thing or two over the years about nutrition. If anything, I hope you have learned that there are no good or bad foods, it’s all food. It’s about making healthy choices (as in it’s OK to have one or two cookies, just don’t eat the whole bag at once). That it’s important, in addition to eating a healthy diet, to get enough physical activity. And, to enjoy your food. Eating good food is one of life’s greatest pleasures.

Of all the things I will miss, I will miss you, the students, most of all. You are the reason I wanted to get up every morning to go to work for the last 17 plus years. You made it fun, interesting, challenging, funny and, at times, even heartbreaking. Working with you was never dull. I’ll miss the “I love yous,” the hugs and the sound of your voices and laughter. I’ll miss the sound of your feet running down the hall. I’ll miss seeing your artwork along the walls. I’ll miss your funny stories and jokes.

I’ll still be around, though. As we all know, once Wallowa County gets into your soul, it never leaves. I’ll be writing and I’ll be doing some traveling. So, in closing, as my favorite news anchor, Lester Holt would say — “please take care of yourself and each other.”

Ann Bloom lives in Enterprise and has worked for the OSU Extension Service for 18 years as a nutrition educator. She studied journalism and education at Washington State University.