

Put rural lessons on the slate for Gov. Brown

Gov. Kate Brown, installed last week, is taking the helm of a state embroiled in a scandal – a governor under investigation for influence peddling and ethical transgressions – unlike anything seen here before.

She takes charge of a state government that is controlled by the Democratic Party, her party, which gives her plenty of opportunity to be effective in the short time before the next statewide election in November 2016.

While the Kitzhaber mess is likely to grab headlines for months to come, the Democrats nonetheless will continue to maintain strong majorities in both the state House and the Senate. That's not seen as welcome news in Republican-dominated Eastern Oregon, where we need a lot of friends in the Valley in order to get anything accomplished. Despite his foibles in Salem, Kitzhaber could claim to be one such friend.

A case in point was Kitzhaber's support for increasing water from the Columbia River to expand irrigation and agriculture production in the Umatilla Basin. That goal seemed near reality just a few weeks ago, but has been thrown back into limbo by the recent political upheaval.

Kitzhaber's proposed budget featured money for such water development, as well as other projects to help the still struggling rural areas. One of the early tests for Brown will be what she does with the

governor's budget and with the staff that coordinated policy with rural Oregon communities.

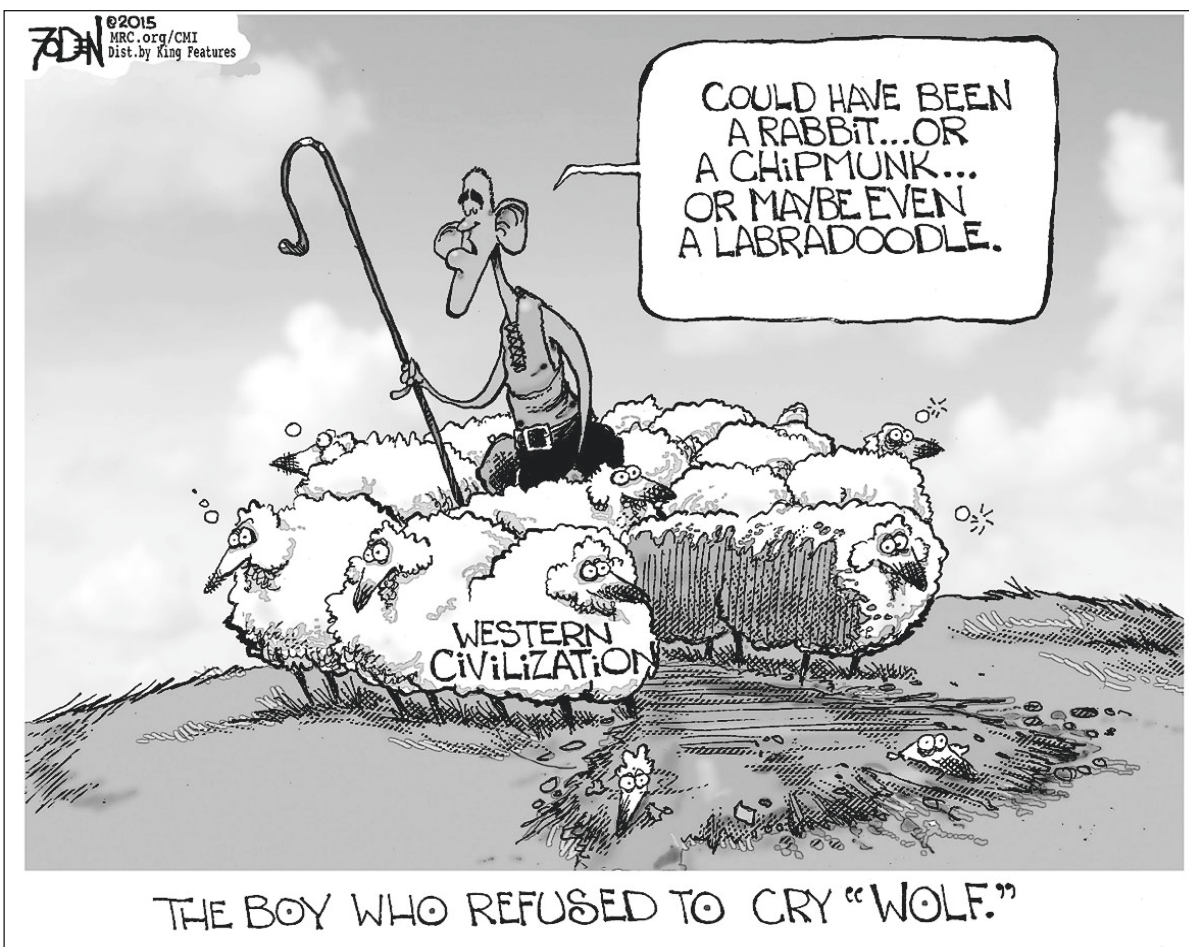
Obviously, water is just one of many issues important to our communities. The change in command has left county and city officials across this region wondering about the ramifications for their specific needs, whether that comes down to water, forest health, sage grouse habitat, or road maintenance, to name just a few items on the rural list.

In her early statements, Brown weighed in for ethics reforms – no surprise, given the circumstances of her ascent to power. But more important for this region, she also said she wouldn't forget the needs of areas of Oregon that have been left behind by the economic recovery. In other words, places like Grant and Harney counties.

Political analyst Jim Moore told the Capital Bureau he thinks she'll follow through on the pledge to rural areas.

"The reason she will is because that is where the economic problems of the state are right now," he told reporter Peter Wong. "The Legislature has said we are going to focus on the rural Oregon economy. She has to be in on that conversation."

As do we. With some key players changing, Eastern Oregon leaders must be prepared to adjust their strategies and build new relationships to keep rural recovery from slipping down the priority list. Let the rural education of Gov. Brown begin now – and with a chorus, not a whisper.



THE FARMER'S FATE

Speeding combines fail the small-town test

By Brianna Walker
For the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

I recently picked up an article titled "You know you're from the farm when ..." I settled down in my chair and prepared for a few minutes of amusing light reading.

It started out with "...you have only two McDonald's in town." Only two?

I read on: "You casually state to out-of-towners that your house is protected by the Good Lord and a gun, and you'll meet 'em both if you show up without an invite." Okay, I'll give them that one.

But when I came to the third I had to wonder if the writer had ever even been in a small town: "You know you're from a small town when your school tardiness is excused because your combine only goes 35 mph."

Huh? 35 mph? In a combine? And a tiny town with two McDonald's? The article should have been titled "you know you're not from a small town when you think ..."

The rest of the statements were equally ridiculous. "Yeh frequentleh tahlk with that old suthern drawl lai-lke this, an' nobody gits tired of it. And them city gals just melt when yeh use it."

After shaking my head, I decided to just write my own, hopefully with a bit more accuracy.

You know you're from a small farming community when:

10. Your short cut across town is avoiding the stop light.
9. When you look up at the sky, see your familiar constellations, and aren't surprised that it's dark enough to see them.
8. On a grocery trip, you buy all your frozen foods last ... to ensure they won't melt on the way home.
7. You're in the city and you can see or smell livestock without walking too far in any direction ...

and you think nothing of it.

6. You have (or know someone who has) put a lamb or calf in the bathtub ... and it doesn't seem unusual.

5. It's time for roof repairs and you get the front-end loader to do the job.

4. Your early morning prayers always mention rain.

3. Your chainsaw gets used for everything from house remodels to cutting down your Christmas tree.

2. You wear specific hats for farm auctions, cattle sales, and holidays (and they probably all advertise a local business).

And the No. 1 way you'd know you were from a small farming community: If you saw a combine coming down the road at 35 mph, you'd get out of their way in a hurry – because you'd know they must have lost their brakes coming down the hill.

Brianna Walker writes about the Farmer's Fate, published occasionally in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

COMMENTARY

Solve the costly port crisis

By Rep. Greg Walden
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Rep. Greg Walden

For the past nine months, operators and workers at the Port of Portland and 28 other West Coast ports have been locked in bitter negotiations over a collective bargaining agreement.

Like pebbles thrown into a pond, the slowdowns and delays caused by the dispute have had a ripple effect throughout Oregon's economy. Crops are sitting, rotting on the docks. Trucks sit idle at the ports. Prices of commodities are plummeting. Farmers are losing their customers and communities are losing their livelihoods.

And negotiations are still at an impasse after nine months, despite the involvement of a federal mediator. The situation will only get worse. Since growers cannot reliably export their products, foreign customers have been forced to go elsewhere and may never come back.

Onion growers in Malheur County, with whom I met last week, are shipping at less than their production costs, if they are able to ship at all due to a backup on the railways. Pear growers in the Columbia Gorge

are seeing shipments of perishable fruit delayed by over a month, degrading the value of the product. Cherry growers have lost thousands of dollars due to the disruption, and Oregon's potato farmers have seen their sales decline 15 percent. Manufacturers and transportation companies are also reporting a heavy reduction in sales, reverberating throughout Oregon's economy.

Nationally, agriculture exports have been reduced by \$1.75 billion every month because of the labor slowdown. At the Port of Portland, Oregon's largest port, 95 percent of shipments are being delayed, with delays averaging four to six weeks. On top of that, the Port's largest carrier, Hanjin, announced recently they are canceling service to Portland, a double whammy for Oregon agriculture and other industries.

Enough is enough. It's time to end this crisis. I've teamed up with members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to introduce a resolution calling on both sides to swiftly reach an agreement. It's time they

get their work done before more people suffer.

And we're calling on the president to get involved too. A similar situation in 2002 was only ended when the president got involved to end a lock out. While it is encouraging that President Obama has sent a member of the cabinet to help mediate the dispute, he must do more to publicly urge both sides to end this conflict as soon as possible. And if the situation should move into a strike or lockout, he should immediately use the legal authority Congress has granted him to settle the dispute and end this crisis.

More than one in five Oregon jobs depend on trade. And 40 percent of our agriculture products are shipped internationally, according to the Oregon Farm Bureau. The labor dispute at West Coast ports has already harmed our fragile economy, and it will only get worse if not resolved. It's time to end this crisis and get Oregon products – and our economy – moving again.

Greg Walden (R-Hood River) represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties including Grant.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Focus on logging?

To the Editor:

Christy Cheyne, the District Ranger of the Emigrant Creek Ranger District, Malheur National Forest proposes to amend

the Forest Plan twice to allow her to implement the Wolf Timber Sale in the Wolf Creek Watershed 17 miles southeast of Seneca. The proposed timber sale will log 43.2 square miles. She claims the logging is needed to save the aspen growing in the area.


Cheyne proposes to amend the plan to allow logging trees greater than 21 inches DBH in aspen stands and to log big-game winter range to an extent the big game cover will be below Forest Plan standards.

If you plan to hunt in this area and/or enjoy hik-

ing and camping among the old-growth trees that will be liquidated, please call Cheyne at 541-573-4398 and comment in writing on the draft Environmental Assessment before March 6.

Dick Artley
Grangeville, Idaho





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