

# A good year for the Oregon Legislature

It is common to find farmers and ranchers holding their breath and crossing all of their fingers and toes whenever the Oregon Legislature is in session.

That's because the state's best and brightest have, on occasion, fallen short of those qualities when it comes to agriculture. It seems some elected officials profess to know everything there is to know about farming, once they take the oath of office.

That's why this year's legislative session is remarkable. While not perfect, the work product the legislature generated is worthy of praise.

Of particular note is the fact that compromise appears to have come back into vogue in the state Capitol. Not long ago, the "us vs. them" mindset appeared to dominate the political landscape, leaving innocent bystanders scratching their heads. Issues such as field burning were decided based as much on emotion as on science.

This year, the legislature ultimately rejected radical proposals that would have banned aerial applicators, restricted antibiotic use in livestock (the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is working on that issue), and regulated genetically modified crops.

At the same time, legislators made good progress on difficult issues ranging from funding for much-needed water projects to helping neighboring farmers mediate disagreements that arise over genetically modified crops.

One example of this was the Legislature's approval of \$50 million for water development projects. That includes about \$11 million for the pumps and equipment to provide water from the Columbia River to Umatilla Basin farms in Eastern Oregon. Though it's not full funding for the projects, it's certainly a good start.

The GMO mediation bill originally required farmers

who refused mediation and then filed suit against their neighbors to pay court costs if they lost. When anti-GMO activists objected to that language, a compromise was reached in which judges will consider the refusal when deciding on sanctions.

Both bills that were ultimately produced represent compromise — there's that word again.

Among the other agriculture-related issues, the Legislature:

- Added \$14 million to Oregon State University's budget for agricultural extension and research. This allows administrators to significantly increase those efforts after nearly a decade of reductions.

- Tightened the regulation of aerial applicators, especially while spraying forestland, and set up a hotline for complaints.

- Protected farmers who offer agritourism activities such as hay rides from liability provided they post signs and are not found to be negligent.

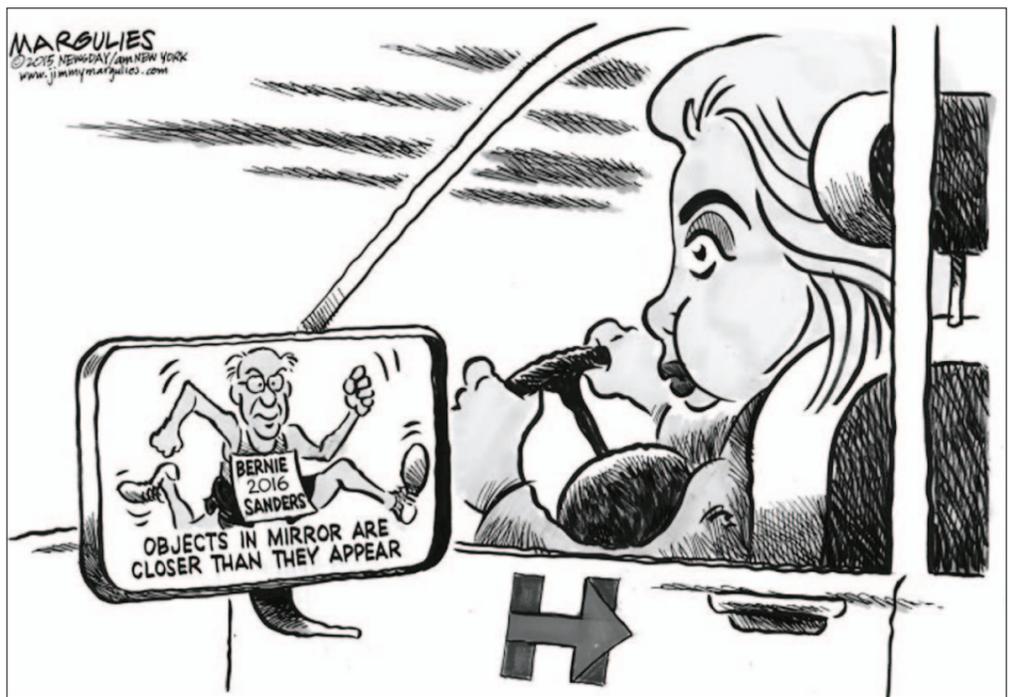
- Passed a bill that allows landowners to set up special assessment districts to fund USDA Wildlife Services, which offers predator control.

- Extended research on canola in the Willamette Valley. This had been a highly contentious issue among brassica seed growers, who argued canola could introduce new weeds and diseases into the area.

- Resolved a legal quandary in which state law forbid farmers selling raw milk from advertising. Legislators lifted the ban, which was unconstitutional, but left in place other restrictions on raw milk.

These bills allow Oregon's farmers to head back to their fields with the knowledge that the legislature did its best to find workable compromises on issues that are important to them.

The result is that farmers, and Oregonians, will come out ahead.



## COMMUNITY VOICES

# Welcome to a smoke-free fair

By Sheila Comer  
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

This year the Grant County Fair, which opens August 5, joins the growing list of Oregon fairs that have adopted tobacco- or smoke-free policies.

Smoking will be prohibited during the entire event on all event grounds. This policy includes both burning tobacco as well as electronic devices. Smoke-free fairs help to reduce secondhand smoke exposure, demonstrate to our children that smoking is not the norm, and provide an environment that is supportive for those who have successfully quit smoking or are trying to quit. As an added benefit, this policy will help preserve the investment made on many facility improvements by reducing

the amount of cigarette litter and eliminating the potential fire hazard.

"A smoke-free fair is a positive step toward achieving a healthier community and providing a safer and cleaner atmosphere for our children," said fair board member Heather Rookstool.

Fair Manager Mary Weaver agreed that tobacco use is one of the most significant health risks.

"Most people prefer smoke-free spaces, and this creates a more welcoming and accessible event—especially for young people or people with health conditions that are impacted by secondhand smoke," said Weaver.

In addition to the obvious health benefits, smoke-free events help break the cycle of addiction and substance abuse by demon-

strating to youth that smoking is not the norm. Nearly 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 18. Research shows youth who witness smoking in public are more likely to perceive it as a socially acceptable behavior and experiment with it.

Grant County's tobacco use rates rank among the highest in the state at 26 percent — significantly higher than the state average of 18 percent. Youth use rates are more than double the state average.

We applaud the fair board for their leadership in the decision to make this year's fair smoke free. Together we can reduce the toll of tobacco in our community.

Sheila Comer is the coordinator of the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program in Grant County.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### If my house catches on fire ...

If my house catches fire I would really like our wonderful volunteer fire department to get there ASAP; however, is it really necessary to blow that siren to wake up everybody for miles around at 2 o'clock in the morning?

I'm guessing that system was probably instituted 30 years ago and it's been alerting the firefighters wonderfully since then. But this is the 21st Century and everybody has cell phones, especially emergency personnel.

My daughter used to be able to gather a crowd for a party in minutes using hers; can't the fire department use cellular phones instead of blasting everybody not involved awake?

Richie Colbeth  
John Day

### Are our city ordinances legally supportable?

I am going to build a three-story, 40 X 50 foot dove cote for the invasive Asian dove right here in Canyon City, blocking your view and probably altering the wind currents down the valley. What do you mean, I have to follow a city ordinance?

Our ordinances are apparently not legally supportable documents if you adhere to the decision announced by the Forest Service spokesman and chairman of the Blue Mountain Forest Partners on July 7, 2015 at the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision meeting. County Ordinance 2013-01, signed by the Grant County Court members and the sheriff which

prohibits all access closures on public lands without concurrence from the County is not a legal document and the federal government is not required by law to adhere to it. In one sweeping declaration, the federal government may have effectively provided grounds to cancel our county and city ordinances.

Was it a consideration when two members of the County Court were hesitant to stand behind their signatures and support the validity and legality of the ordinance? Did the Forest Service's legal counsel consider that when they determined it lawful to make the decision to nullify a local ordinance? How can one person or one entity make decisions that affect so many people?

You will have to excuse me now; I need to start laying the foundation for my dove cote.

Judy Kerr  
Canyon City

### Stall & Ignore, the new US Forest Service tactic

For several years it was a shell game. Throw out enough varying plans, subparts, and meetings, with different catch phrases for what equated to closing roads and restricting overall motorized access. The Forest Service hoped to either disenfranchise enough of the public, or aggravate enough, to make them quit. Unfortunately, I, and the people of Eastern Oregon, have not wavered under that approach and have actually become more proficient in keeping tabs on what the USFS is doing.

Now, we return to the tactics of Monica Schwalbach, the initiator of

the first Record of Decision to restrict motorized access on our forest, which is to ignore and stall hoping the people simply fall out and go away. No more prime an example exists of that than my dealings over the last month with the current forest supervisor and former understudy to Ms. Schwalbach, Mr. Tom Montoya.

For the last month, I have requested information as to who makes up his interdisciplinary team for the development of the Subpart A report of travel management on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. My initial request was June 6, 2015, as of July 6, Mr. Montoya had not answered my email. I believe we should know who is planning our future access to the Blues.

Since then, Mr. Montoya has instructed me that he has received my email and has moved my request into a FOIA request. I am not sure if that is the proper procedure for such a simple request as who sits on a committee, but it is an effective tactic to stall information sharing. He also indicated I had the incorrect email address, but yet my email was never returned as incorrect, so I will have to take him at his word.

I again request from Supervisor Montoya a list of who makes up the ID team for the development of the Subpart A report, and what tools, models and best available science they are using to plan the minimum roads needed for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Maybe in a more public form Mr. Montoya will answer the question, but as of this afternoon, no such information has been given.

John George  
Bates, Oregon

## WHERE TO WRITE

### Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct e-mail because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

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

### Salem

Gov. Kate Brown, D — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html.

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



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