

Don't delay immigration reform until 'after the election'

A farm labor leader was in the Capital Press office the other day, and became the first in this cycle to utter what is now a familiar phrase — immigration reform will have to wait until after the election.

We heard that in 2009 and '10, again in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. We wonder which election everyone is talking about.

Proponents of comprehensive immigration reform have a lot in common with Chicago Cubs fans. Wait 'til next season.

There are some 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States.

All have violated federal law by entering the country illegally. Millions have further submitted fake papers to employers.

More than 300,000 are classified by the U.S. government as "criminal aliens," having been arrested and convicted of a crime here or in their home country.

The vast majority have not committed other crimes, let alone violent felonies. They are regular people trying to escape intolerable conditions at home. They work, illegally, at jobs in agriculture, hospitality and construction that employers say they otherwise would be hard pressed to fill.

What do we do with 12 million illegal immigrants? As we've said many times, in simplest terms there are only two choices. Either we let them stay, or make them go.

The next election won't produce new choices, or decisively eliminate the opposition to either choice.

Most Americans would concede that such a large, undocumented population running at large represents

a substantial security threat, as does an unsecured border that has proven so porous.

At the same time, even many Americans who would be happy with the repatriation of these people to their home countries aren't comfortable with the optics of men, women and children being rounded up and herded into camps to await deportation.

A recent poll by the Pew Research Center shows that 72 percent of Americans favor allowing illegal immigrants now living in the country to stay if they meet strict requirements.

So do we. Let's do it now.

Congress must offer illegal immigrants willing to register temporary legal status and a path to permanent residency after 10 years if they meet strict requirements — no prior felony convictions, no violations while awaiting residency, learning to speak English and pay a fine and back taxes. Those not meeting the requirement should be deported.

As penalty for entering illegally, those made permanent residents should not be eligible for citizenship.

We think the border must be secured. A viable guestworker program must be established, and employers must verify the work status of their employees.

It is legitimate to oppose mass illegality, and we respect the position of those who would take a harder line and suggest we favor "amnesty." Let us reason together on a workable solution.

Waiting until after the next election, or the election after that, to end up with the status quo is de facto amnesty without any restriction.



Up the creek without a puddle

It has been hard to watch our beautiful landscape go up in flames and friends and neighbors lose everything. Like most people, I wondered what could have been done in the past that would have prevented this tragedy, and what can we do in the future to reduce the risk. My concern is the lack of water available to fight fires and water reserves in general in the John Day Valley.

In 1967 a study was conducted to consider building a dam at Hall Hill, 8 miles east of John Day, for irrigation and flood control. I remember my dad saying, "In Eastern Oregon we need to save every drop of water we can." I've never forgotten that and it's never made more sense than it does today, but sadly it never happened. Wouldn't those folks have been considered geniuses today if they had made a big body of water to use as a fire-fighting aid for the Canyon Creek Complex Fire?

Early in the fight to save homes on Little Canyon Mountain we watched helicopters dropping water taken from ponds built and financed by private landowners in the Gardner Loop area. We all know safety is important to fire-fighting, and especially firefighting aircraft. Having helicopters dipping in private ponds only leaves us more susceptible to accidents and injuries. The John Day Regional Airport has a great firefighting facility and equipment, but no suitable bodies of water near by for safe, efficient dipping.

The only choice for water close by is Magone Lake, though it may be full of people, being the only recreational body of water around.

I was recently invited to a meeting at Canyon Creek Meadows to represent the "common folk," as a layman with a little common sense. Every state and federal office had a representative there. An expensive

study, conducted at Canyon Creek Meadows and paid for by one of the agencies, determined a "CATASTROPHIC" failure would occur if the lake filled with water, wiping out the population of Canyon City and John Day. I asked an agency head if this was accurate and he said maybe "CATASTROPHIC" was a little overstated. In my opinion, the consultant who wrote the report knew which word to use to "sink the dagger" and earn his paycheck. I'm sure the "anti reservoir" and "save the fish" people in the world were pretty happy to hear the dam may go away. I have nothing against fish, but if there is any species in more danger of extinction in Grant County than humans, let me know.

I've built structures all my life. I'm not an engineer or a dam builder, but as I stood at the massive rock structure, I thought to myself, "you couldn't blast this thing off this canyon with 10 box cars of dynamite."

I asked the same agency head, "What is wrong with this dam? It's not built out of dirt and gravel." He said it has a small depression on the up water side and it's leaking a little water out the face. So my layman's response was, "Of course it is. It's made out of giant square rocks. It needs to be sealed." So I said, tongue in cheek, if someone gave me a blank check I would find the best operator on the biggest excavator in town, dress up the face of the dam, cover it with nearby clay, fill it with water, take my pontoon boat up there every summer, and watch everyone enjoy it. I realize nothing is this simple.

When I asked if the reservoir could be used to fill public city water supplies in case of a bad drought year, the agency answer was, "Oh no. This reservoir doesn't hold

enough water to go that far down stream and fill city reservoirs."

Am I missing something here? I was also told if the dam broke it would wipe out the population of Canyon City and John Day.

It's my understanding a public official has not given up on saving this critical asset, and I will back any attempt to save water behind the rock structure and any other dam or reservoir constructed in Grant County.

It is a long shot to think I can change fifty years of thinking. We are more conscious of our environment, and we should be. We are concerned about the welfare of animals. The problem is the pendulum of overreach has swung too far. It seems humans are to blame for everything and we are the only ones who can fix anything. "No" is not an acceptable answer when it comes to saving water for our benefit and that of our furry friends and fish.

Years ago community leaders in Unity, Heppner, Pendleton, Prineville and Baker Valley were smart enough to build reservoirs. We should embrace the opportunity, now, to be as wise as our neighboring communities were, and start the discussion of saving water in our valley.

Our communities have smart, reasonable people. We need proactive positive thinkers to start an open discussion about solving short and long term water issues. If you think it's worth pursuing, I will do my part to make it happen.

Bruce Ward is a local contractor, Chairman of the Grant County Economic Council and a board member of the Grant County Chamber of Commerce. He can be reached at bruceward@live.com

A full version of Bruce's opinion can be found in the opinion's section at www.myeaglenews.com.

CORRECTIONS

The last line in the page A2 article "Dousing the scorch of fire with lemonade" was cut off in the print version of last week's issue. Morgan Cole, 8, of Kimberly, and her cousin, Hannah Dial, 10, of Dayville, who raised \$283.32 selling lemonade and baked goods in front of the John Day River Trading Post in Kimberly Aug. 29-30, plan to give the money to the Bank of Eastern Oregon John Day branch for fire relief.



The Eagle/Sean Ellis
Squeeze-In owner Shawn Duncan, center, talks to a customer paying his bill at the John Day restaurant. Last week's front page photo caption was incorrect. We regret the error.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Questioning the use of funds

To the Editor:

In order to obtain an Oregon driver's license you must be familiar with the rules regarding passing over center line striping, i.e., a solid line in your lane means no passing. All blind curves and hills are so marked.

During the past week you may have noticed, as I have, that ODOT has been busy installing new signs between John Day and Prairie City (50 in all) and probably everywhere else in Grant County. These signs are completely redundant with regard to identifying passing and no-passing zones.

At the end of each solid line a "Pass With Care" sign has been installed and at the beginning of each solid line two "No Passing" signs installed.

My perception is that anyone who would pass over a solid line would also ignore these signs so don't give me the "It will save lives" argument. Fifty signs in 13 miles, where we already have too many signs! This is part of the Jour-

ney Through Time Scenic Byway. What a waste of funds!

Don Schultz
Prairie City

Fly-In cancel benefits no one

To the Editor:

I fail to see the logic in canceling Grant County Regional Airport's annual Air Search Fly-In scheduled for Sept. 12 in "respect for the victims of the recent Canyon Mountain Complex fires."

Cancellation benefits no one. Fortunately no one was killed or seriously injured, and many of the victims had insurance to cover their material losses.

The gesture is appreciated, but more good might have been accomplished had Grant County Air Search taken donations at the Fly-In to benefit those who were adversely affected. And it would have been a golden opportunity for the group to publicize their interest in community welfare as compared to many of their past service activities which include picking up roadside trash

and manicuring the airport landscaping.

I am disappointed but not surprised.

Joe Intile, MD
Mt. Vernon

Heartsick over the fires

To the Editor:

We were heartsick to learn of the devastating fires near Canyon City and the surrounding area. Friends forwarded the August 19 edition of the Blue Mountain Eagle containing articles about the tremendous losses, stories of neighbors helping neighbors, photos and information of ways to help the victims and community.

We lived near Canyon City for three short years but still have good friends there and return every October to spend a few days.

You're in our thoughts and prayers and we sincerely hope your area will remain fire-free for a very long time.

Al and Robin Near
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho



Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

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1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(including online access)
Grant County\$40
Everywhere else in U.S.....\$51
Outside Continental U.S.....\$60
Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
Blue Mountain Eagle
195 N. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845-1187

USPS 226-340

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