

# Measure 97 bails out PERS

The bill to provide outsized pensions to government workers in Oregon is coming due. A new report on the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) says that contributions to the fund will need to increase \$885 million in the 2017-19 biennium. Such massive increases are projected for subsequent years as well. The increases are the result of providing public employees with pension benefits far beyond Oregon's ability to pay.

The campaign to raise taxes to continue this largess has begun. Gov. Kate Brown last week endorsed Measure 97, a \$3 billion-a-year general sales tax increase disguised as a toll on large corporations.

The governor said the tax is necessary to provide stable support for schools and other government services. If our governor were as transparent as she claims to be, she would admit the obvious: Measure 97 raises taxes to underwrite PERS.

Gov. Brown's smokescreen became apparent in April. She avoided mention of the PERS crisis in her State of the State address then later told a reporter: "There isn't a path forward" to reform the retirement system.

The reality is quite different. Oregon's Supreme Court predictably struck down in 2015 bipartisan legislation that reduced benefits already earned by state employees. However, the justices made clear that future benefits could be changed.

Among the available options:

- Reduce the assumed rate of return on PERS investments. Currently, participants are guaranteed

a 7.5 percent return. Returns should match market rates.

- Require participants to contribute to PERS. That's the case in most private-sector retirement plans. While public employees are required to contribute to a second benefits plan, that benefit is often paid by taxpayers via the employer.

- Change the retirement age. The federal government adjusted the retirement age to protect Social Security. Oregon should do the same. The average state worker retires after 22 years of service and earns a PERS benefit equivalent to 56 percent of their final average salary. Those who retire after 30 years received 81 percent of their final average salary. Astonishingly, 7 percent of PERS retirees earn more in retirement benefits than they did while working.

- Cap earning levels. Mike Bellotti receives \$513,612 annually in retirement benefits as the former athletic director and football coach of the University of Oregon. There's no logical reason state taxpayers should foot the bill for such gold-plated state workers in the future.

These reforms would reduce the cost of PERS and ensure its long-term sustainability. They would also allow our schools and local governments to spend more to address real needs without raising taxes. Instead, Gov. Brown is doing the bidding of Oregon's public employee unions, who are heavily financing Measure 97. These same unions are pouring money into Brown's election campaign and to those of legislative leaders. They, not school children, are the true beneficiaries of Measure 97.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Forest Service is a plus for community

**To the Editor:**  
There is a thing in Grant County that I do not understand. I believe it started with the Reagan Administration. This president, the head of government, was well known to denounce publicly our country's government. That never made sense to me. This denouncement of government has only progressed in Grant County to the point of hatred towards the Forest Service.

As a child in Prairie City, I saw the Forest Service as an important part of our social fabric. They were the kids I went to school with, my first Boy Scout leader, close friends and neighbors. I cannot imagine what life would have been like without their many contributions to the community. Two of the closest friends I ever had in my life were Forest Service employees.

Those of us who worked in the woods occasionally encountered some really difficult bureaucratic jerks; but far and away, those were a real minority. Off and on through the years, I heard some good ol' boy or another calling them "educated fools." I remember my dad saying, "I don't want to hear you boys using that term. A good education is something to admire."

In current times, the relationship between the Forest Service and some citizens has deteriorated to an all time low. As an example, the conflict between Sheriff Glenn Palmer and Forest Service Superintendent Steve Beverlin is a disaster. To any thinking person, it should be obvious that Beverlin has been the grown up in all this. Additionally, it is a mystery to me how some of the harshest government critics cash their government pension checks as they spew hatred for the Forest Service.

I know I have been all over the board here, so let me conclude that "Irregardless, them thar educated fools" make better neighbors than the government haters do.

**Terry Steele**  
Ritter

### Those who want recall should pay for it

**To the Editor:**  
Just read in our local paper here in Grant County, Oregon, that it is going cost the county \$3,000 for a recall election of a county commissioner.

All because some people are upset about his vote on something. As I see it, whomever the group is that wants someone out of office, maybe they should pay the \$3,000 up front instead of the rest of us taxpayers who may or may not agree with the recall.

**Eddie Smith**  
Prairie City

### Vote no on recall of Commissioner Britton

**To the Editor:**

I'm writing in support of County Commissioner Boyd Britton. I'm retired now and no longer live in Oregon, so some may say I lack standing in Grant County. That said, I worked with Mr. Britton for a number of years since his first election as commissioner until my retirement, most notably on the Southeast Regional Alliance, and can tell you from firsthand experience that Grant County has no better advocate. Those meetings included federal, state and other county representatives and were sometimes contentious. Mr. Britton was always a gentleman and always put the interests of Grant County first. I encourage the good people of Grant County to vote "no" on the recall and keep a good man in office.

**Bruce Buchanan**  
Walla Walla, Washington

### Vote no on recall

**To the Editor:**  
The recall of Boyd Britton is a bad decision, based on personal interpretation of events rather than an impartial view.

First, the cost of having an investigation done on the cause and handling of the Canyon Creek fire would have cost the county a great deal of money. The time and cost to investigate the fire to have it come up with the same result that you have now is too expensive. (Example: The Cattlemen's Association and that lawsuit on the Murderer's Creek allotment. How much money did that cost, and how long did it take?) I'm not sure what benefit to the county a second investigation would have produced.

Rebuilding was the priority, and Mr. Britton was assisting in every way possible to help residents. I believe the vote by the three commissioners was correct.

The county ordinance cited in the petition is illegal and unenforceable (per OGC input). Mr. Britton kept conversations open between the County Court and the Forest Service. He was willing to sit down with the forest supervisor to discuss issues and then take those issues to the court for a decision. There was no reason for him not to participate in the discussions and/or decisions of road closures or other FS and county issues. (Recuse applies to judges, prosecutors or jurors.)

The amount of work Boyd does for the Forest Service and the amount of money he receives for it is a drop in the bucket of his total income.

We have confidence in Boyd to do the right thing at the right time. Recalling Mr. Britton is a bad idea.

We are going to vote "no" on the recall. We encourage you to do the same.

**Tom and Sandra Sutton**  
John Day

### Farm Bureau supports Commissioner Britton

**To the Editor:**  
Grant County Farm Bureau would like to express their support for County Commissioner Boyd Britton. Boyd has long been a supporter of agriculture in Grant County since he became commissioner.

He has been a vocal advocate for the farming, ranching and timber industry at the local, state and federal levels. Grant County is a natural resource-based economy, with timber and agriculture being the top two economic drivers in the county. Since Boyd has been in office, he has worked tirelessly to bring natural resource-based jobs back to Grant County.

He was an integral part in increasing timber output in the county. As a small business owner, Boyd understands the struggles and intricacies of running a business and employing people.

Having someone in public office with that kind of knowledge is a great asset in trying to develop economic opportunities that provide family wage jobs for the people of Grant County. So please join with us in voting no in recalling Boyd Britton as county commissioner.

**Jeff Thomas, president**  
Grant County Farm Bureau

### Northern county EMT service concerning

**To the Editor:**  
I am deeply concerned by the fact that we no longer have active EMTs or ambulance services in the north side of our county.

Response time is always critical in an emergency, and now when we dial 911 we will have to wait for an ambulance to be dispatched from John Day, and that is if they have not already responded to another call elsewhere.

It only makes sense that if there is an emergency call on the north side of our county that our ambulances would be able to respond more quickly to the scene. It isn't a matter of "if" we will need an ambulance, it is "when," and if there is no one to respond, lives will be lost.

We have willing EMTs who have dedicated themselves to serving our communities, and those communities have worked very hard to support our EMTs and maintain a working ambulance that could respond to an emergency. These volunteers are vital to the health and welfare of our communities.

Everyone should be aware of how serious this is, and whatever unresolved issues there are, please get them settled. The very lives of the people that live here depend on it. Nothing should be more important than that!

**Linda K. Hunt**  
Long Creek

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## WHERE TO WRITE

### GRANT COUNTY

• **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.

• **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.

• **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net

• **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.

• **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-820-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.

• **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.

• **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtv@ortelco.net.

• **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.

• **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.

### 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).

• **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.

• **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.

• **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

• **The White House**, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

• **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D** — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne\_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.

• **U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D** — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-3753. Email: senator@merkley.senate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.

• **U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R** — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct email 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.

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