

# Voters should inform tax reform

As state legislators entertain proposals to change Oregon's property tax system, we hope they will remember the will of the voters.

In the 1990s, voters clearly indicated they wanted limits on their property taxes and a predictable tax structure.

In 1990, they approved Measure 5, setting a maximum property tax limit of \$15 per \$1,000 of real market property value.

Although it was replaced before it was implemented, voters approved Measure 47 in 1996, calling for a 10 percent reduction in property taxes.

Voters approved Measure 50 in 1997, replacing Measure 47 and implementing the tax reduction by basing taxes on a new assessed (taxable) value that was 10 percent less than the previous taxable value based on the real market value.

Measure 50 also limited the amount the assessed value could increase each year to 3 percent and set permanent tax rates for each district. The result was a very predictable tax structure.

Instead of a system based on real market values that was

susceptible to volatility based on changes in the market, property owners now know what their tax bills will be from year to year.

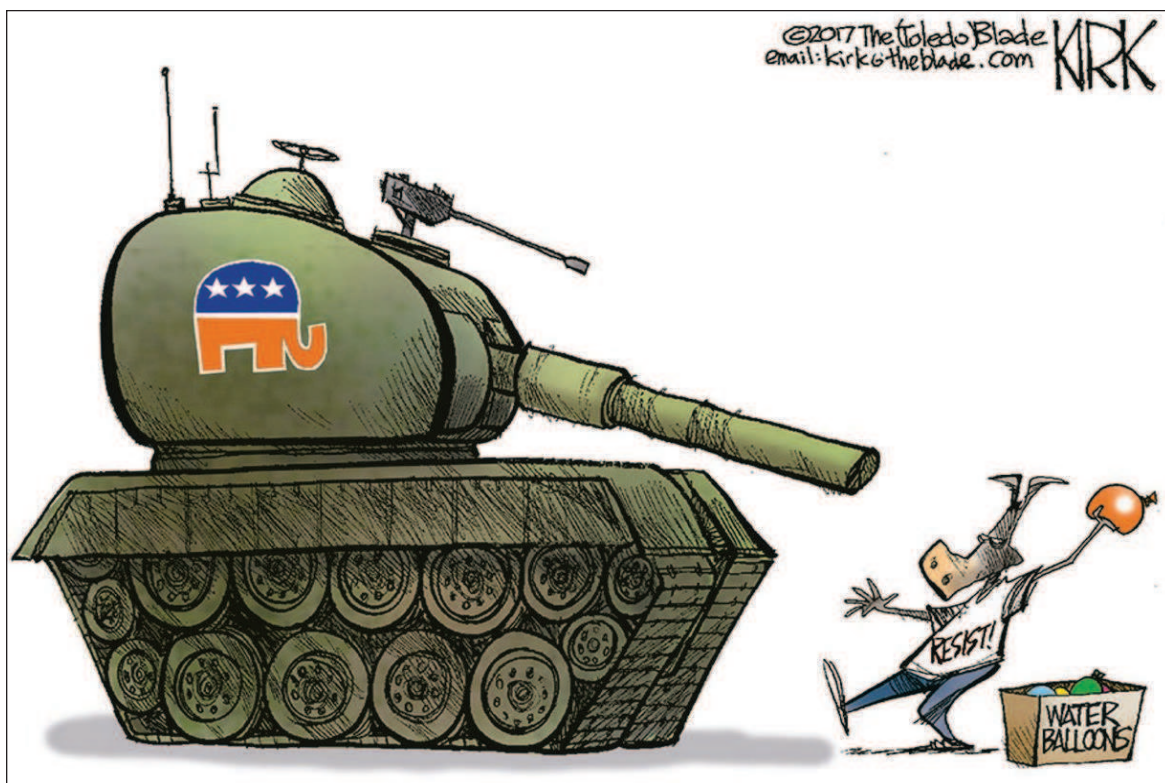
Taxing districts that rely on property taxes for funding can also predict what they will receive each year.

Further, having an assessed value that has typically increased less than the real market value has provided a cushion for these districts. Unless the real market value dips below the maximum assessed value — the lesser being used to calculate taxes — these districts are not susceptible to devastated budgets if the market crashes.

If changes are going to be made to Oregon's property tax system again, the voters should determine how it will affect them.

One proposal — to allow voters to choose to pay taxes in excess of the Measure 5 limit — would do precisely that. If voters want to pay higher taxes to help their local districts, they should be allowed to do so.

The Legislature, however, should remember who they serve and leave property tax decisions up to the voters.



## FARMER'S FATE

# Farm commodities and indecisive squirrels

By Brianna Walker  
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

"I think we should plant some timothy grass for next year," my husband said one morning. "I've been looking at the market prices and talking to some people, and I think that the north field would be a good one for it."

He then showed me some figures he'd jotted down, and all the reasons why it would be a good idea.

"OK," I nodded in agreement, while trying to get the tea pot on the stove with a baby hanging off my leg and the cat screeching to be let out and the dog barking to come in.

"See these figures?" he asked, pushing more information across the table towards me, so I glanced at them. "I think this would pencil out a lot better than the alfalfa that's planted there now."

I nodded, trying to unload the dishwasher while keeping the hanging baby on my leg away from the shiny dishes. Every once in a while I'd get too close and he'd "help" by plucking a dish out of the drainer and dropping it on the floor.

"But then again," my husband was saying, "we could maybe grow corn in that field..." He started furiously scratching in his notebook.

"Momma, we need to eat breakfast so we can be filled up like squirrels," my son said.

I had to smile. He's been learning metaphors and similes in school, and our life has become one bizarre simile after another.

The tea pot whistled.

"The French toast will be done in a minute," I answered him. "Do you want some tea while it's cooking?"

He nodded, and I poured three mugs of hot chai. I set one in front of my son and started sipping on another one.

"Are you going to drink both of those cups? Or are you going to share?" my husband bantered, finally taking a moment to look up from his crop planning.

"You know my caffeine intake is only recreational on Sunday. The rest of the week it's medicinal," I exclaim, grudgingly passing him the second mug of tea. He rolled his eyes at me, and took a big sip before delving back into his world of commodities and pricing.

"I think we could really make it work," he said.

"So let's plant some timothy," I agreed.

"No, not timothy. I think that Austrian peas would be really successful. It would allow..." his voice faded into the cacophony of our home as the cat was now yowling to come back in and the dog was barking to go out. "...more successful than barley..." he was saying. Sometimes I think successful is just getting the laundry out of the washing machine before mildew sets in.

"Yes, successful." I nodded.

I reached for my cup of tea — it

was empty. How? When? I poured myself another mug. I don't drink that much, I told myself. I only consume tea on days that start with T: Tuesday, Thursday, Today, Tomorrow, Thursday, Thunday. My reverie was broken with loud bagpipe music coming out of my son's room.

"Momma, don't you think that is a sad song? Sad, like when you are out of cookies..."

"Well? What do you think?" my husband was asking.

"Uh, huh, Austrian peas — sounds good to me."

"Austrian peas?" my husband questioned. "I was talking about growing pumpkins."

"Pumpkins?"

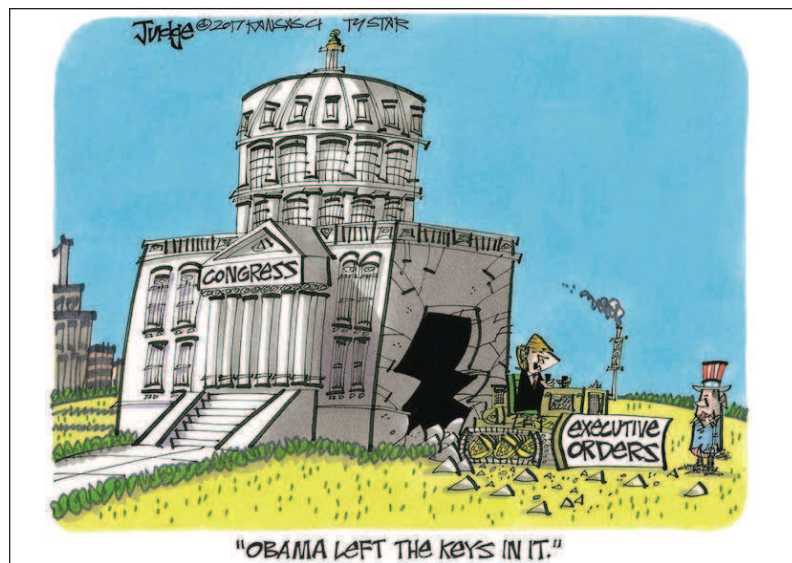
"Yes, I was thinking that..." he went on showing me more scribbles in his notebook. The cat started yowling again at the door. Cats don't believe in the adage "When life shuts a door, a window opens." No. The cat's philosophy is "When life shuts a door, open it again. It's a door. That's how they work!"

"Or barley? What do you think of barley?" my husband asked again.

"I don't know, I don't care! Just pick something and plant it. Right or wrong. Make a decision and stick with it! The road of life is paved with flat squirrels who couldn't make a decision!"

My husband looked up surprised, then replied, "I'll remember that next time you're shoe shopping."

Brianna Walker is an independent columnist who writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



## WHERE TO WRITE

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- **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.
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- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. 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.
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### 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.
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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 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.

## Forest commissioners unaware of proceedings

To the Editor:

I want to add my challenge for Mark Webb as expressed by Dave Traylor. Please come forward with any proof that you have that shows that Dave or any other of the Public Forest Commissioners were ever in any meetings or even knew anything about the Public Forest Commission coming before the Circuit Court, especially to be abolished after having been in place all these years.

You never raised any questions until your friend, King Williams, was resoundingly beaten in his attempt to remain on the commission. Now you didn't have ears there to hear what was really going on in the meetings, so you cooked up this scheme to blow the will of the voters off and do away with the commission, at least this is how it appears to me!

So I'm asking you to show what you have that lets the public know that Dave Traylor or anyone else on the commission knew about this action being taken before it happened. If you don't have the proof, then you need to make a public apology here in the paper as well as a public meeting at the choosing of the

members of the Public Forest Commission!

Nicky A. Sprauve  
Canyon City

## Local politicians in governor's pocket

To the Editor:

It appears that some local people are residing on the wrong side of the state. According to a Western Governors' Association social media video, several local politicians and status seekers are snugly ensconced in Gov. Kate Brown's pocket and making a power play in Grant County. The director of the Blue Mountain Forest Partners, the Grant County Court liaison with the Forest Service and other locals named in the video can take a bow.

There is a concerted effort to discredit county voter-approved initiatives and a 2013 ordinance approved by the local County Court and sheriff. Although recently Commissioner Britton wanted his signature deleted from the Road Ordinance because he "changed his mind." A natural resource plan was challenged and defeated by ex-county judge Webb and King Williams in a Circuit Court decision; at Mr. Webb's instigation, the county Public Forest Commission, approved by voters 12 years ago

while he was seated judge, was nullified and commission officials were removed from November's voter ballot with no advanced notice by a Circuit Court decision; the 2013-01 Road Ordinance is being challenged and apparently the County Court has approved payment for an investigation even after legal counsel determined it was enforceable (your money folks). I foresee many initiatives targeted for destruction, and to date, some members of the County Court have refused to stand behind voters' choices.

Any further invalidation of county voter-approved initiatives and ordinances will surrender more local control of resources and road access of our public-owned land more fully into the hands of the federal government, namely the Forest Service, and will enable BMFP to assume a major role in Forest Service decisions.

Other initiatives that might appear on Mr. Webb's (and the BMFP) agenda are the UN-Free Zone and Citizens Participation in the Stewardship of Natural Resources on Public Lands passed by voters in 2002. Your public lands, your resources, your ordinances/initiatives and your votes all going to please Gov. Brown and the federal government.

Judy Kerr  
Canyon City

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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