

# PERS needs productive reforms

The message to Oregon legislators from Gov. Kate Brown's staff last week was that PERS has an immediate problem.

Yet the solutions proposed by the governor are modest at best.

The problem is the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System has too little money to pay its projected pension benefits. That gap, whose size ranges from \$15 billion to more than \$20 billion depending on what assumptions are made, is PERS' unfunded actuarial liability. And to fill that gap, schools, cities, counties and the state are spending increasingly larger shares of their budgets on PERS.

Each PERS employer, of which there are about 915, has its own unfunded liability. School districts generally are in the worst shape, with their unfunded liability averaging 176 percent of their payroll.

Brown will ask the 2018 Legislature, which convenes Feb. 5, to pull money from other sources and put it into an account to help school districts pay for PERS. Brown suggested that money could come from Oregonians' unclaimed property, increased collections of debts owed to the state, lawsuit settlements, a potential tax amnesty program, higher-than-usual capital gains and estate taxes and other sources. Revenue from new Oregon Lottery games also could help schools, along with community colleges and universities, pay for PERS.

The governor's proposed legislation also would create —

but not pay for — a matching fund to encourage employers to act faster, instead of letting their current budget needs overwhelm their eventual PERS obligations. For example, the state might match 25 cents for every dollar paid by a PERS employer. It would be up to the 2019 Legislature to fund that matching program.

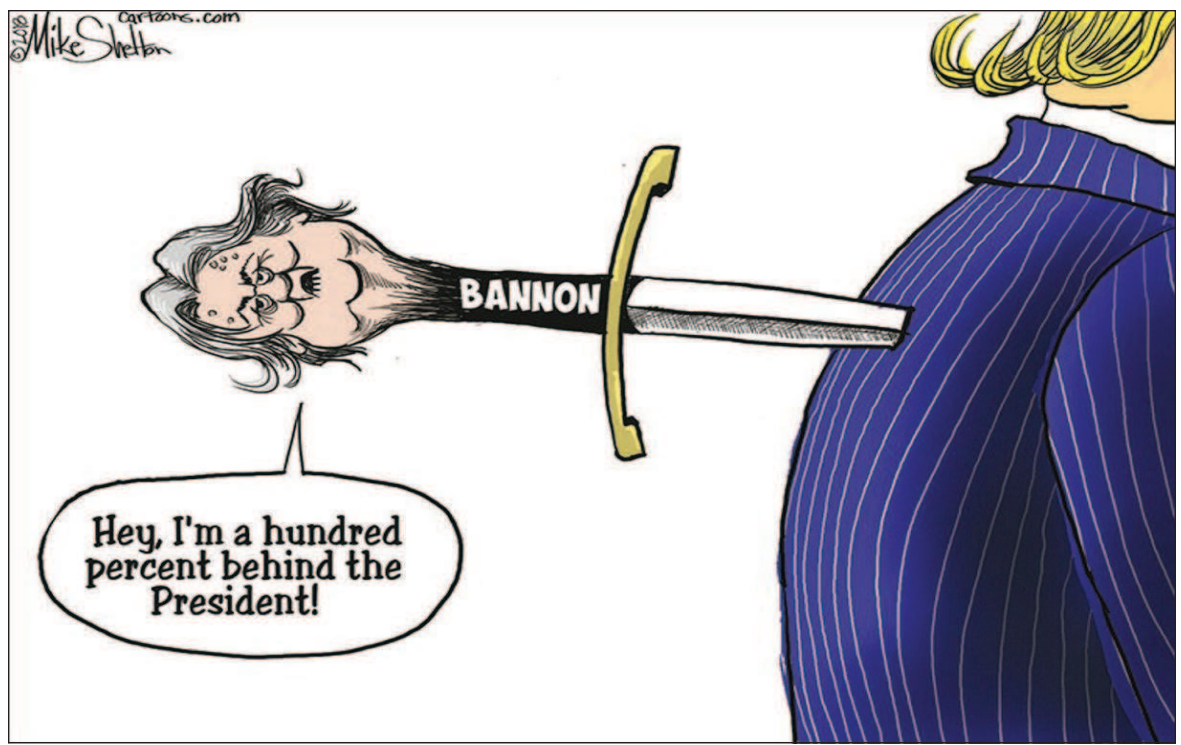
Those are good ideas. Still, it's disappointing that this is all Brown could come up with from last year's blue-ribbon task force on the PERS unfunded liability. And it's even more discouraging that Brown won't take up PERS benefits reforms. Not in this year's legislative session; maybe not in next year's, either.

Brown says she doesn't want to try approaches that will be thrown out by the Oregon Supreme Court. Instead, she and the Legislature must recognize their Catch-22: The only way to know whether further reforms will pass legal muster is to enact them and have them tested in court.

Of course, that will require going toe-to-toe with the unions in an election year, and we're not convinced Brown will do that, either.

Instead of shying from productive reforms, the governor and legislators should embrace them with the knowledge that they dare not count on the PERS savings until the subsequent litigation ends.

That would be a more courageous approach than Brown's modest PERS proposals for the 2018 Legislature.



## FARMER'S FATE

# Farm hair, don't care

By Brianna Walker  
For the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

I have always fancied myself a soul from the '50s — with TV role models like Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver, Andy Griffith and Aunt Bee and music from Elvis, Chuck Berry, and Jerry Lee Lewis. Sometimes I imagine myself living in "the good old days," but then I remember that women needed lipstick and town gloves to be properly dressed. When I step out the door to face the day, I check for sunglasses and a pocketknife — to me, that accessorizes any outfit.

Years ago, a Mary Kay salesperson was encouraging me to wear more makeup, saying how much more confident I would feel. One look at the price tags, and I knew she was right — I would feel confidently broke! Attempting to say no, I told her I preferred the natural look. She quickly flipped through a few pages and showed me 18 cosmetics I could use to perfect the "all natural" look! My mouth smiled, my head nodded and my brain silently screamed, "If I'm going to paint something, my husband has a whole fleet of implements that could use another coat of John Deere green!"

But the lack of sophistication in my morning make-up routine may be the cause for my recent string of skin care vexations. Let me start at the beginning. Earlier this year, a cousin pointed out that I have finally been blessed with white hair. In that moment, I experienced the first four stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining and depression. I tried all summer to get to stage five — acceptance — without success. Then one morning, standing in front of the mirror, trying to assure myself there were no new ones, my husband made all the frustration go away.

"They're not white hairs," he

said, "They're wisdom highlights!"

So he sports his "chrome" beard, and I have my "wisdom highlights" and all OK again — until my birthday. I must have triggered a magic number in a database some-

where, because everywhere I go I am bombarded with skin care, wrinkle cream and anti-aging serum.

My skin care rituals are pretty minimalistic — usually just a baby wipe before bed. I've never thought of this as laziness. I like to think of it as energy-saving mode. But maybe it's not working as well as it has in the past. After one salesperson worked especially hard to get me to buy their product, I have to say I took a good, long look at my wrinkles in the mirror that night. Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.

The weeks passed with more salespeople trying to sell me skin care. And I kept making flippant comments like, "Who needs that when I can wake up like this?" Then last week, after a straw delivery, I stopped at a local department store to pick up some essentials.

I was wearing dirty blue jeans, cowboy boots and a shirt that probably still had a little straw stuck to it. I rounded a corner of the store with my cart, and that's when it happened — I inadvertently made eye contact with a cosmetic saleswoman. I quickly attempted to correct my mistake, but I couldn't get the cart to change direction. Before I knew it, she had pressed a box into my hand. A product valued at the low price of only \$199.

"It's supposed to clean and hydrate, and exfoliate," and every other wonderful thing skin care prod-

ucts can do.

I wanted to throw the box down and run, but instead, I stood rooted to the spot, nodding politely. My brain was still screaming run, when she took a cotton ball and dabbed some of the miracle goo on it. She pushed up my sleeve.

"Let me show you how much this stuff cleans," she announced as she wiped the cotton ball across my arm.

The arm that had been hit with a rotten cantaloupe while picking melons, had been covered in sweat from loading hay and the arm that I'd held up to deflect the dog slobbers from the hound. I held my breath as she held up the dirty ball of cotton.

"See?" she said triumphantly. "Just look at all that dead skin residue that this will remove! Most of us don't realize just how much dirt stays on our skin, which contribute to fine lines. That's why this stuff is so amazing..."

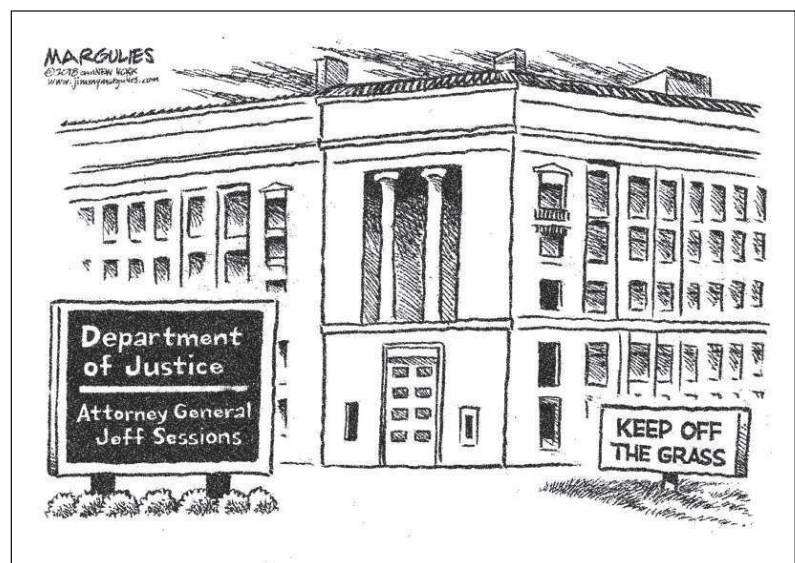
Honestly, I was surprised it wasn't dirtier. Those baby wipes must do a good job after all.

"Isn't it just terrifying how much debris is on our skin?"

We had just come back from my husband's 20-year high school reunion, and what's really terrifying, to quote Kurt Vonnegut, "is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country."

Compared to that, what are a few wisdom highlights and twinkle wrinkles? Those little lines that scurry all around my face, they tell the story of my life — all 38 years of it. I'm not opposed to skin care, but next time I receive before-and-after photos of the latest in skin care revolution, I just may start humming, "Maybe she's born with it, maybe it's an Instagram filter."

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.



## WHERE TO WRITE

### GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. 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: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflong-creek.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:

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- **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.

## 'Suppression and civil rights violations'

To the Editor:

What a more appropriate venue for a public meeting than using it as an opportunity to attack members of the public. Perhaps there is no truer character display of power-grasping collaboratives and a federal agency than to belittle citizens, their observations and opinions and to publicly and aggressively castigate them with insults. On Dec. 8, The Outpost Restaurant was the scene of the Harney County Restoration Collaborative meeting with the local Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative and Forest Service representatives. Two local citizens attended this public meeting by invitation from HCRC. Their attendance, clearly not welcomed by all, and their attempt to participate in discussion was oppressed, verbally insulted and attacked to the point of perceived violence. This brings to mind the long-forgotten Grant County Ordinance 94-04, an Emergency Ordinance (1) to protect the public peace, general welfare, health, and safety of the citizens from violations of the constitutional rights of the citizens (et al) such as the Civil Rights Act, 18 USC 241 et seq, and public

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

meeting laws. One of the public attendees was a female very active in county matters who had already been demeaned by the BMFP, denied membership because of her associations and her participation in public meetings. This last attack strongly indicates suppression and civil rights violations. We should thank Mr. Hannibal of the BMFP whose actions clarified the accepted character of these organizations and the perceived violent nature hidden within. The involvement with Grayback, Iron Triangle, BMFP and the Forest Service will be noted as well as the shadowed persona of those who approve of these actions. Regarding the ones refused membership because of associations, that pendulum swings both ways for those who claim to represent our county through associations with those aforementioned organizations.

Judy Kerr  
Canyon City

## End the sugar cartels

To the Editor:

Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) is in the pocket of the nation's beet and cane sugar cartels! Wyden continually votes to maintain the U.S.

Sugar Program. Why? It is really quite simple: Sen. Wyden received well over \$72,000 in political donations from the sugar cartels since coming to Washington in 1981.

Thanks to Sen. Wyden and others, the U.S. Sugar Program continues. The Sugar Program is a Soviet-style command-and-control scheme that restricts planting and imports. This inflates the price of sugar in the United States to almost double the world price. So, when you go to the store to buy a snack cake or anything sweetened, you pay more! According to the Congressional Budget Office, the program means Americans pay \$3.5 billion every year in increased grocery costs, which breaks down to upwards of \$50 per family.

In Sen. Wyden's 36 years in office, he repeatedly voted against sugar reform, costing each Oregon family an additional \$1,800 for groceries. You have to ask yourself, is my senator really fighting to make life better, or is he just another politician in it for the campaign contributions? It's time for Sen. Wyden to step up and end this costly government giveaway to the cartels!

Nicholas A. Pyle, president  
Independent Bakers Association



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