

The state of our state

How is Oregon doing as a state? Gov. Kate Brown answered that question only in the broadest sense during her State of the State speech this week: “Oregon’s rising economic tide should be lifting all boats. Yet many hardworking families are still under water.”

Her answer is a plan she dubbed “Future Ready Oregon,” including:

- Focus the state’s economic development efforts on people of color and rural Oregonians.
- Address Oregon’s housing shortage for working families.
- Make it easier for construction workers to start their own business, especially if they will build low-income housing in rural areas.
- Invest more in career-technical education and hands-on learning.
- Expand apprenticeships in good-paying jobs that need workers — information technology, health care, advanced wood manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing.
- Make it easier for individuals to enter the health care field, enabling them to train for various health-care sectors at once.

These goals are worthwhile, and align with Eastern Oregon’s interests and needs. Anyone making these statements at the opening of a legislative session should be applauded.

Rural Oregonians and people of color were left behind amid the economic boom experienced in Portland and

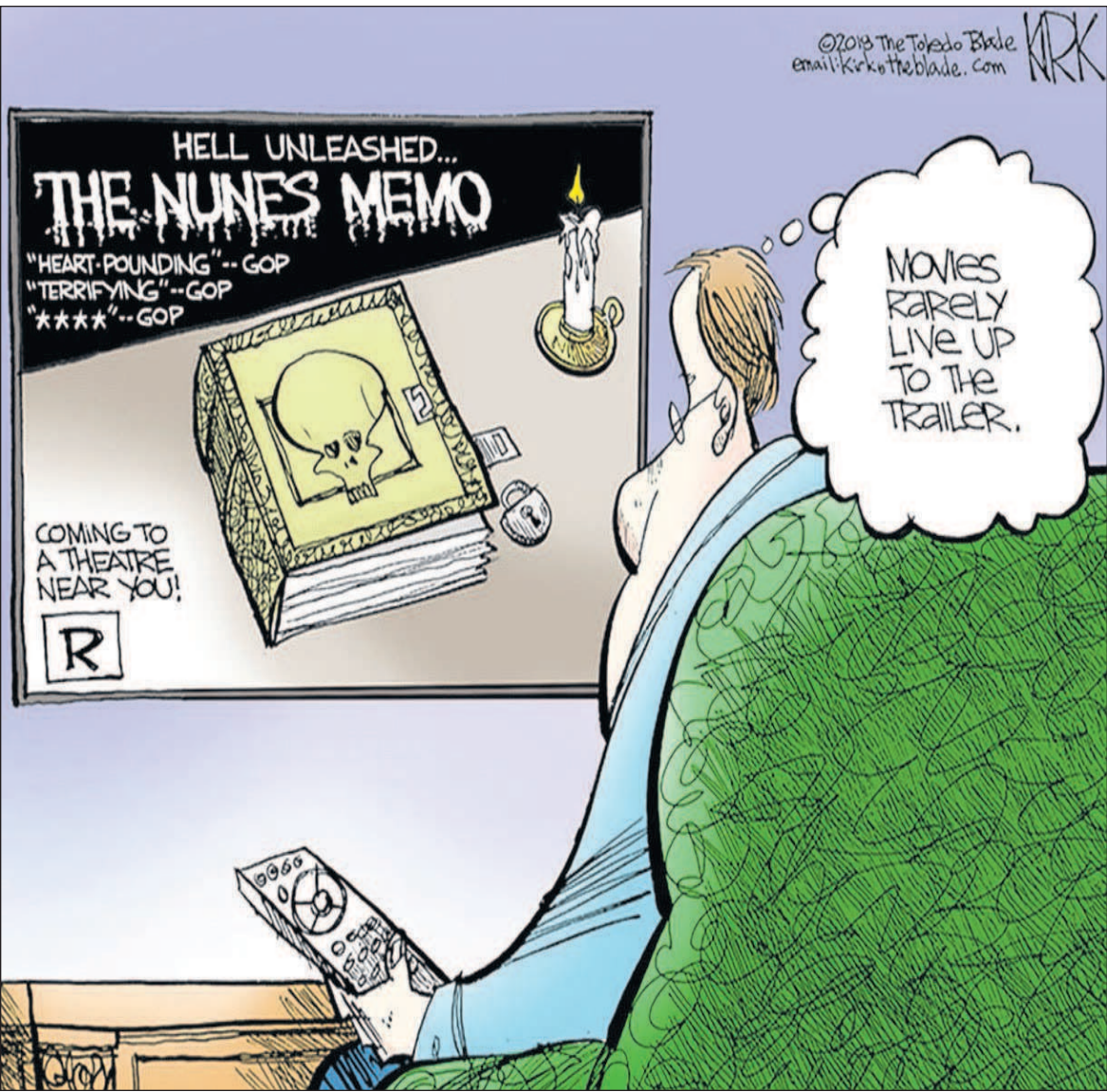
other metro areas. Meanwhile, much of Oregon suffers from a shortage of housing for low- and middle-income residents. And certainly, Oregon’s education and training systems should better align with projected job opportunities. As Brown said, “The goal is to close the gap between the workforce that we have and the workforce that we need to fuel Oregon’s economy.”

She went on to say, “Over the course of the next year, through a series of executive actions, policy positions and legislation, Future Ready Oregon will build these pathways for adults to get the right skills for the right jobs of Oregon’s future.”

Brown spoke in broad terms that left many people in the Oregon Capitol, including some of her fellow Democrats, wondering what she had in mind. And despite Brown’s calling her plan “a new way of thinking about the economy,” previous governors, education officials and business leaders have said similar things.

That’s where Brown must distinguish herself, and show rather than tell. It’s an election year and she would like to keep her job come November. Serving the greater good of all Oregonians won’t be of much interest to her urban Democratic base, but will define her credibility with the rest of us.

This was not a bold speech. But it was a pragmatic speech. Oregon — both rural and urban — will benefit if Brown can make these ideas stick.



GUEST COMMENT

Businesses support fossil beds

By Grant County Chamber of Commerce
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

As the voice of local businesses throughout Grant County, the Grant County Chamber of Commerce is writing in support of the John Day Fossil Beds National Park, and urges our federal elected leaders to support a dedicated funding stream to address the estimated \$11.3 billion in deferred maintenance needs that currently exists in the National Park Service.

The Fossil Beds are more than a stunning backdrop, an amazing place for recreation and a world class record of our plant and animal past. John Day Fossil Beds National Monument is an economic powerhouse for our region, as businesses throughout the county can attest. It is a major tourism draw, and those visitors to our region spend money in John Day stores, hotels and restaurants.

How much do they spend? This past May, the Blue Mountain Eagle published a story titled “Fossil Beds generate \$10M in economic ben-

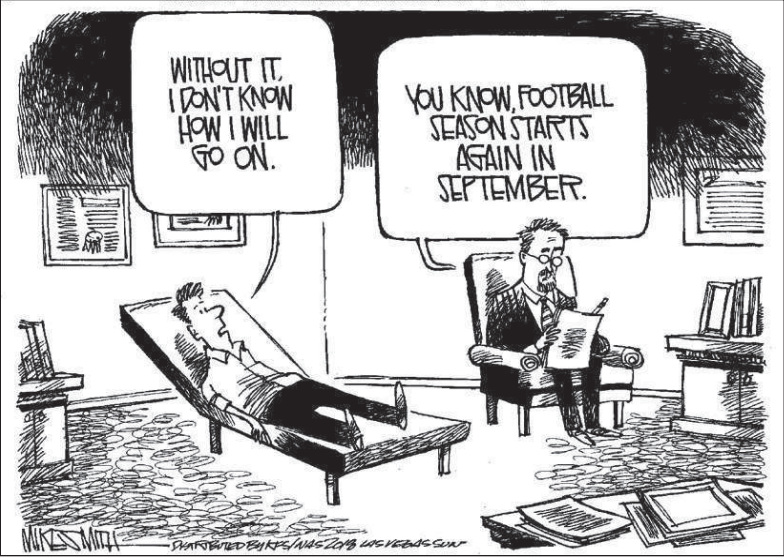
efits in 2016.” The article showed that over 210,000 Fossil Beds visitors spent \$9,995,400 in communities near the park and that spending supported 153 jobs in the local area. 2017 numbers are likely to be even greater, given the influx of visitors that flocked to the Fossil Beds during the eclipse.

Local businesses know that visitors who come to our part of Oregon are likely to come back. The trick is getting them here, and the Fossil Beds is one of the best draws we have. It makes sense to ensure that its critical infrastructure, such as trails, roads, buildings and water/sewer/electrical systems, can keep up with the demands of increased visitation. As the Eagle’s recent article pointed out, there is a critical backlog of infrastructure repairs in the National Park System: \$11.3 billion nationwide, \$105.5 million in Oregon and \$1.5 million for the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. It is the responsibility of our leaders in Congress to make sure that these parks have the resources necessary to keep the lights on and keep the visitors safe.

The bipartisan legislation introduced in Congress to give parks the funds they need to tackle repairs is called the National Park Service Legacy Act. It does not raise any new taxes, does not divert funds used by local or state governments and expressly prohibits funds from being used for new land acquisition.

This is about supporting John Day businesses that benefit from Fossil Beds tourism. This is about supporting jobs in our cities and our counties. The 153 jobs supported by the John Day Fossil Beds is not insignificant. That number can grow if we address this problem, as contractors and tradespeople would be needed to make infrastructure improvements.

Any business owner knows that preventative maintenance is easier on the budget than letting an asset decay to the point of replacement. We support giving the National Park Service the funds it needs to maintain critical infrastructure for the John Day Fossil Beds. Let’s keep the visitors coming and coming back to John Day and Grant County.



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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 - **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@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.
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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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

‘The sorry condition of the roadside’

To the Editor:

I drive between Mt. Vernon and John Day daily and have watched the accumulation of litter and trash along the road that John Day Taxi has responsibility for under the Adopt-A-Highway program. The last several years, the same area was kept clean on a regular basis. The area is what visitors first see entering John Day from the west. The littered condition in the ditches is a shame and an eyesore. I will be contacting the Oregon Department of Transportation about the sorry condition of the roadside.

Ron Ballard
John Day

In compliance with Adopt-A-Highway

To the Editor:

In response to complaints about the John Day Taxi’s participation in the Adopt-A-Highway program, I adopted mile 160-161, roughly from the golf course to Mill’s Lumber Supply on Highway 26, about a year ago. My crew and I have

picked it up four times since then. The issue I have here is that the litter patrol refuses to pick up my adopted mile, which creates community discord due to litterbugs who do not love our beautiful community as much as we do.

My contract with ODOT requires me to pick up litter four times a year. Despite what the misinformed complainant in the letter to the editor wrote, I am not responsible for keeping the roadside clean of litter and trash. I don’t know the frequency that the litter patrol cleans it up, and I’m not aware of a rule that says they are not required to maintain adopted miles.

So we’ve got a challenge here: In order to keep our community looking good for tourists, business folks thinking about locating here and our neighbors, we need to keep our streets clean and looking good. I understand this. That’s why I adopted the mile. I don’t need the advertising. My little section of the road really requires daily attention due to litterbugs and wind. I can’t do it, and apparently, the litter patrol won’t.

Richie Colbeth
John Day

Standing up to bullies, abusers

To the Editor:

I believe that most of us Americans have been victims of bullying and/or some form of abuse at some time in our lives.

As a former counselor and therapist, I worked with and tried to help many victims of “everyday bullying” as well as various forms of abuse.

Their biggest problem and issue was that they did not stand up to their bully and/or abuser.

The best question that I have ever heard a counselor/therapist ask a client/patient relative to this was, “What parts of yourself don’t you love and like that allows you to let this bully/abuser to continue to mistreat you and abuse you like this?”

This question prompted many people to finally make some serious changes in their lives and to finally walk away from and leave their bully/abuser.

Stewart B. Epstein
Rochester, New York

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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