

Brown needs to govern from center

Kate Brown was re-elected as Oregon governor with 49.99 percent of the vote in the latest statewide results.

She should never forget that number. Neither should her Democratic colleagues in the Oregon Legislature. Even if her tally edges past 50 percent in the final results, voters did not seem very enthusiastic for her policies or her performance.

Oregon needs a new Kate Brown, one who will govern from the center instead of one who is seen as placating the public-employee unions and their allies who not only helped keep her in office, but also added to their Democratic majorities in the Legislature.

Brown has resolutely opposed significant changes in the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System, even though the pension system's \$22 billion unfunded liability is grabbing ever-larger pieces of city, county, school and state agency budgets. It remains confounding that the governor and unions are willing to sacrifice current jobs — and the public services those employees perform — to prop up pensions.

A number of worthwhile changes have been proposed by state Sens. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and Tim Knopp, R-Bend, the League of Oregon Cities, the Oregon School Boards Association and other individuals and organizations. Meanwhile, the need for PERS reforms is an ongoing topic at the annual Oregon Leadership Summit because so little has been accomplished during Brown's tenure.

Yet Brown and her cohorts argue that the proposals would

accomplish too little, would be unconstitutional and would break contracts. Not so.

Certainly, any changes could not be retroactive. The Oregon Supreme Court has been clear. But going forward, even small changes collectively could have a significant impact on PERS' stability. As to the legality of some proposals, only the courts can determine that; it is worth legislating those good ideas and putting them before the courts.

The current pension system pits job-seeking and current public employees against retirees and those close to retirements. That is insane, which is why everyone should have a stake in meaningful PERS reforms.

Now that Brown no longer has to curry favor to gain re-election, she should strive to govern from the moderate center and represent all of Oregon, not just the urban population centers whose Democratic voters propelled her re-election.

She must set well-defined, achievable goals in key areas — improving mental health care for youth and adults, lengthening the school year and boosting graduation rates, combating homelessness, developing affordable housing, strengthening foster care while reducing the need for it, expanding substance-abuse treatment and fighting the opioids epidemic and expanding economic opportunity throughout rural Oregon.

Brown tends to have so many priorities that they become meaningless. To be an effective governor, that must change. PERS reform is the place to start.



FARMER'S FATE

Magic scissor moments

By Brianna Walker
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

As any farm family knows, harvest is busy. Not the "let me check my schedule" kind of busy. It's more like "the entire summer is only double-booked, I am sure we can squeeze a little something more into it." So it goes. As my boys say, "from can see to can't see."



Brianna Walker

I hope that my kids are learning not only the value of hard work, but how rewarding tired muscles can be from an honest day's labor. Agriculture isn't the easiest of occupations, but there's a grittiness to it — an earthiness that helps rejuvenate your soul. I recently got a letter in the mail from an old friend who said he felt that people in agriculture were the best people in creation. I have to agree. There's no place I'd rather raise my family.

That being said, however, all work and no play, makes Jack sad, stressed and gray. It was with excitement that I climbed out of bed. We had plans to spend the entire weekend at the river. To say I was excited is like saying a starving honeybee suddenly thrust into a field of lush sunflowers would be mildly happy.

I scurried around the house trying to get everything ready for our weekend of fun. I began carefully packing food into bags.

"Mommy, what doing?" my 2-year-old asked.

"Packing food for us to eat," I answered.

"Why?"

"Because we'll be hungry." "Not hungry now. Why hungry later?"

"Because we'll be playing so hard, we'll work up an appetite."

"Why appetite?" The questions came hard and fast, and my patience disappeared with nearly the same speed. Soon I forgot careful packing and instead started throwing food into bags — I just wanted to be on the road.

With the food packed, I started on our clothes: swim wear, towels, pajamas, etc. Hardly had I opened the dresser when I heard my 9-year-old hollering, "Mom! Ma—uuuuuum! The goats are out!"

Just then, I heard a trampling of little hooves on the deck. I dropped the clothes back on the bed and turned to head outside.

"Why goat out, Mommy?"

"I don't know, Bug, but Mommy has to help your brother get them back in."

"Why?"

"Because if we leave them out, they will jump on top of Daddy's car, and that makes Daddy really mad."

"Me wanna come too," he said grabbing hold of my leg.

"No, sweetie, Mommy will be right back."

"Noooooooo. Me go with you," he wailed.

"Mom, they are eating my mimosa plants!" my 9-year old cried out — punctuated with a loud crash from the deck. I rubbed my temples. I just wanted to be at the river. The bedroom door burst open, "I chased them away, but not before they knocked the table over."

"Here, little one, watch your brother for a minute, and I'll put the goats in."

The littlest goat was already standing proudly on the T-top of my husband's Trans Am when I walked outside. I lifted her over the fence and ran the other ones around through the gate. I fed the sheep and, walking back to the house, saw both my boys laying on their tummies in the yard, each with a pair of scissors clipping the grass. I smiled at them as I walked past, but they were both so engrossed in the task they barely noticed. They stayed occupied cutting grass while my husband and I finished packing our weekend supplies, and then we were off.

Two days filled with sun, sand, surfing, water skiing, books and fun. My oldest learned how to double-ski, and my littlest learned how to wake-surf with me. It was just the weekend we needed to rejuvenate from the stress of harvest. Watching my kids build sand castles, I reminded myself never to get so busy making a living that I forget to make a life.

That night, as we tucked the kids into bed, we asked them what their favorite part of the weekend was. Without a second's hesitation, my 2-year old responded, "Cutting grass!"

I gave him an extra big hug. I had long forgotten about that. I always say, "Take the vacation. You can always make more money, but you can't always make more memories." I had gotten so caught up in trying to give my family something big and fabulous for memories that I had failed to remember that it's the little things that give life its magic. May you always discover and enjoy your magic scissor moments!

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

WHERE TO WRITE

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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.
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- **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).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** —

(For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
- **Rep. Lynn Findley, R-Vale** — 900 Court St. NE, H-475, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/findley. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov.

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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.
- **Pending Bills:** For information on bills in Congress, Phone: 202-225-1772.

Progress can be made in Long Creek

To the Editor:

I encourage those who supported me for Long Creek City Council to continue to do so by caring about this community. There are issues that need to be addressed. I am going to try to do my part. Let's all try to work to improve Long Creek. Remember, you do have a voice!

We can strive to encourage the city to do something positive and take action on the challenges facing us here. Ordinances come to mind — enforcement of standing ordinances, supporting new ones! This is a lovely area, but it languishes under increased blight (on the 395 corridor in particular) and apathy. The city did work to slow the

dangerous speeding through our town, so I know progress can be made.

Leslie Barnett
Long Creek

Make a stand against lies and hate

To the Editor:

We now have a president who is a habitual liar at best, but more likely, a pathological liar.

When Bill Clinton lied about his sexual misconduct, Republicans tried to remove him from office through impeachment. Our current president has lied over and over again about his sexual affairs. Where are the Republican leaders now?

When America elected Barack Obama for president back in 2008, even though he was not the candidate of my choice, I thought America had become a better place by its willingness to elect an African American. Boy, did I get that wrong — the haters started crawling out from under rocks all over the country. President Trump has spoken a dialogue that has contributed to hatred and division among Americans.

This downward spiral will continue as long as this vile man is our president. It's past time for moderate Republicans to become bipartisan and to stand up against Trump's hate-mongering.

Terry Steele
Ritter

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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