



Getty Images

Over the past month, the average price of a gallon of gas has risen from \$3.52 to \$4.27 nationally, with prices topping \$4.50 in Grant County.

Fuel

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Uptmor and Simmons took a measured view of rising fuel prices. Citing prior budget adjustments and the fluid nature of fuel costs, both were mindful that any sudden reaction now might appear as an overreaction were prices to again stabilize in the coming months.

John Day city account clerk Chantal DesJardin expressed similar sentiments, stressing that the budget isn't due until April this year, so the raw impact of rising fuel costs on the city's finances won't be completely known until then. DesJardin also said she hasn't "heard of gas prices impacting the city budget enough to warrant a supplemental budget."

"Things like this are factored into budget estimates," DesJardin says. "We'll estimate a 10% increase in costs and budget for a 15% increase."

This type of contingency planning by both the school district and city government has largely cushioned those institutions from the immediate impact of sharply rising fuel costs.

For her part, Angie Jones, director of the Grant County People Mover, said there had not been any cuts to services or fare increases due to the jump in fuel costs.

However, Jones noted that on Jan 3, the People Mover had been paying \$3.30 per gallon for diesel and by March 5 it was paying \$4.49.

Jones said that given that fuel prices were at a pretty steady incline, she was not surprised.

Jones said the People Mover would have to look at increasing its fuel budget in the next fiscal year.

"What we planned on originally or thought would happen with the market clearly didn't happen, and things are really remaining uncertain at this point," she said. "So we're going to have to be a little bit more on the conservative side speculating our budget next year."

While she did not have the budget before her, she said she anticipated the People Mover would need to increase its fuel budget by roughly \$12,000-\$15,000 because its routes have not changed. She added there is no plan to discontinue any services.

Grant County Sheriff Todd McKinley said that while fuel costs are up substantially, his deputies have not decreased their patrols.

Like the People Mover, McKinley said the Grant County Sheriff's Office would need to increase its fuel budget.

He said the agency currently budgets for roughly \$40,000 in fuel costs per year. If fuel prices continue to rise at the same rate they have been lately, he said, the cost could balloon to as much as \$130,000 — especially if he is able to add more patrol deputies.

"And we're a small agency," McKinley said. "Imagine what a bigger agency would be like for just fuel."

Ballot

Continued from Page A1

"This is asking for quite a shift from the norm, and I think, like with any social change, it's controversial," he said. "But every social justice movement in history has been met with controversy, unfortunately."

Michelson noted a petition to allow women to vote in Oregon faced similar political headwinds in the early 20th century, but the story of how women fought for suffrage in Oregon has been inspirational to the Portland-based activist, who said he would "like to see this (initiative) as being part of that history of progressive ballot measures that push us forward."

But even if the initiative fails to muster the signatures necessary to reach the ballot this November, Michelson has his eyes set on 2024.

"We are planning, as we have always planned, to submit our initiative for 2024 with the anticipation that even if we qualify for 2022, it is unlikely that it'll pass on the first attempt," Michelson said. "Speaking back to the initiative that gave women the right to vote, it was voted on in six consecutive election cycles before it finally passed. It was voted down five times. If our initiative does not pass this November, we want to make sure it's on the ballot again in 2024."

'Their hearts are in the right place'

Farmers balked at the proposal, stating it wouldn't be worth the effort or the ink to do a story about the initiative. Prominent La Grande hunter Steve West, of the TV show "Steve's Outdoor Adventures," said the proposition likely would fail to gather enough signatures to even make it on the ballot.

"The people who come up with this, their hearts are in the right place because they're so attached to animals," he said. "The reality is they will never get enough votes to pass something like this. I just don't see any chance in hell that they even get 100,000 signatures to



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

A cow and a smattering of calves rest in a field along Peach Road, La Grande, on Thursday, March 17, 2022. A controversial animal rights initiative, known as IP13, appears to have been stalled as organizers failed to gather the signatures necessary to put it on the ballot this November.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

A cow drinks from the marshland along Peach Road, La Grande, on Thursday, March 17, 2022. Under IP13, slaughtering cattle might be considered a violation of animal cruelty laws.

even get it to a ballot. It's just so out there."

West said proposals like these have an unintended side effect of uniting groups that are opposed to similar initiatives.

"If anything, my bet is this is something that would solidify and unite the ranchers, farmers and hunters," he said. "It's probably going to unite the other side just to stamp it out once and for all."

Officials from the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation said they're not worried about the initiative, citing treaties that would supersede the law. They are, however, watching closely in the event the tribes need to take a reactionary approach to the proposal.

"We're continuing to watch and see how far it goes, and see what happens in July to see if they get their initiative fulfilled with the required signatures," said Jiselle Halfmoon, interim communications director for CTUIR. "Then, of course, we'll readdress it, but at this time we're pretty secure in our situation."

Law experts say the proposal is misunderstood

Russ Mead, a professor of law at Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, said what the proposal says it will do and what the two opposing factions for the proposition say it will do differ greatly.

"Oregon's animal cruelty laws have a long list of exemptions," he said. "For example, hunting and killing livestock is exempt from Oregon's animal cruelty laws. IP13 removes these exemptions. The result is not that hunting and killing livestock will be illegal if IP13 passes, it is just that when you hunt, you need to be humane. When you kill livestock, you need to be humane."

The website for IP13 states its goal is to enact legislation that would make it so that "animals on farms, research labs, exhibitions and in the wild would no longer be allowed to be intentionally injured or killed." However, Mead disagrees with the drafters of IP13 and their proposed mission statement on the IP13 webpage. The law as it is proposed, he said, would need to be considered in courtrooms to find the exact limitations and framework.

"Anyone who says any activity will become illegal with the passage of IP13 is just flat wrong," he said. "With the animal cruelty exemptions removed, the Oregon courts will need to decide what animal cruelty is."

How animal cruelty is defined in the law, Mead said, is open-ended.

"Animal cruelty statutes seldom define what is cruel and what is humane," Mead said. "For example, statutes do not specify that beating a dog

to death with a baseball bat is cruel. Or that killing a dog by lethal injection is humane."

Mead stated if the proposal did muster up the signatures, and passed in the November ballot, the proposal wouldn't turn hunters into criminals overnight.

"The Oregon courts will need to decide what, if any, hunting and fishing practices violate Oregon animal cruelty laws," he said. "I could well see the courts finding leg-hold traps are cruel. But, I would be shocked if the courts found a father and daughter fishing with a cane pole animal cruelty."

Michelson said one of the secondary goals of the proposal is to help draw attention to exemptions in Oregon statutes regarding animal abuse, and how the animal abuse laws give protections to pets, but not to livestock.

"We're one of the few states that acknowledges that animals are sentient in our state statutes," Michelson said. "Yet our animal cruelty laws largely only protect our companion animals. All the other animals, whether they're in farms or in research labs or in the wild, or in rodeos and exhibitions, they're exempt from those same protections."

Michelson noted the ultimate goal of the campaign would be to ensure all animals in Oregon have the same rights and protections that companion animals enjoy.

"Largely, what our campaign is focused on is the right for animals not to be killed or injured, to not be neglected, and to not be forcibly impregnated or forcibly masturbated," he said. "Our focus is very intentionally on that, and so we will continue the campaign until those rights are achieved."

As of Tuesday, March 15, the IP13 Facebook page has 344 followers, and its postings attract more negative comments than supportive ones. If the proposal passes — either now or in 2024 — it likely would face lengthy legal scrutiny, according to Jacob Mannis, the deputy district attorney for Oregon who handles animal cruelty cases.

"It would require a lot of things to happen before it would become the law," he said. "I assume that there would be a round of lawsuits before anything gets enforced, and then there would have to be a law enforcement agency that would investigate, a prosecutor that would prosecute and ultimately a jury that would convict, because anybody in Oregon who's been accused of a crime has a right to a trial by jury."

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