

OUR VIEW

# U.S. needs a realistic oil and gas policy

President Biden has blamed the Russian invasion of Ukraine for rising fuel prices. But figures show prices have been on the rise for more than a year. The invasion and the ensuing bans on Russian crude have only made the situation worse.

The price and supply volatility suggest that the United States needs to revisit its policies towards the domestic gas and oil industry even as the country works to transition to alternative energy sources.

A year ago, the spot price for a barrel of West Texas Intermediate — a benchmark crude oil — was \$62.29 a barrel and the average price of a gallon of gas in Oregon and Washington was \$2.89.

As post-COVID demand outstripped supply, oil prices rose to \$91.70 a barrel on Feb. 18, the last day of trading before the invasion.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average retail price of regular gas in Oregon and Washington was \$4.32 a gallon on March 7, up 46 cents from the week before and \$1.43 over the year before.

The average retail price of on-road diesel in Oregon and Washington was \$4.978 a gallon on March 7, up 68 cents from the week before and \$1.75 over the year before.

The United States is still a net exporter of petroleum, pumping 11.6 million barrels a day, and the Energy Department forecasts that production will increase by another million barrels by the end of the year.

The alternatives are expensive, even with subsidies. Proponents favor pricing fossil fuels out of the market and forcing consumers to make the transition. That requires regulatory and policy measures that limit oil and gas production.

For the most part, the administration is favorable to that strategy. Throughout the campaign, candidate Biden said he'd "get rid of fossil fuels." While he has yet to succeed, his policies have made permitting and production more difficult.

But now the president wants oil companies to start pumping to bring down gas prices, as if a spigot can be turned on. It takes a year or more to get a well drilled and producing, and oil companies make expansion plans based on long-term financial forecasts.

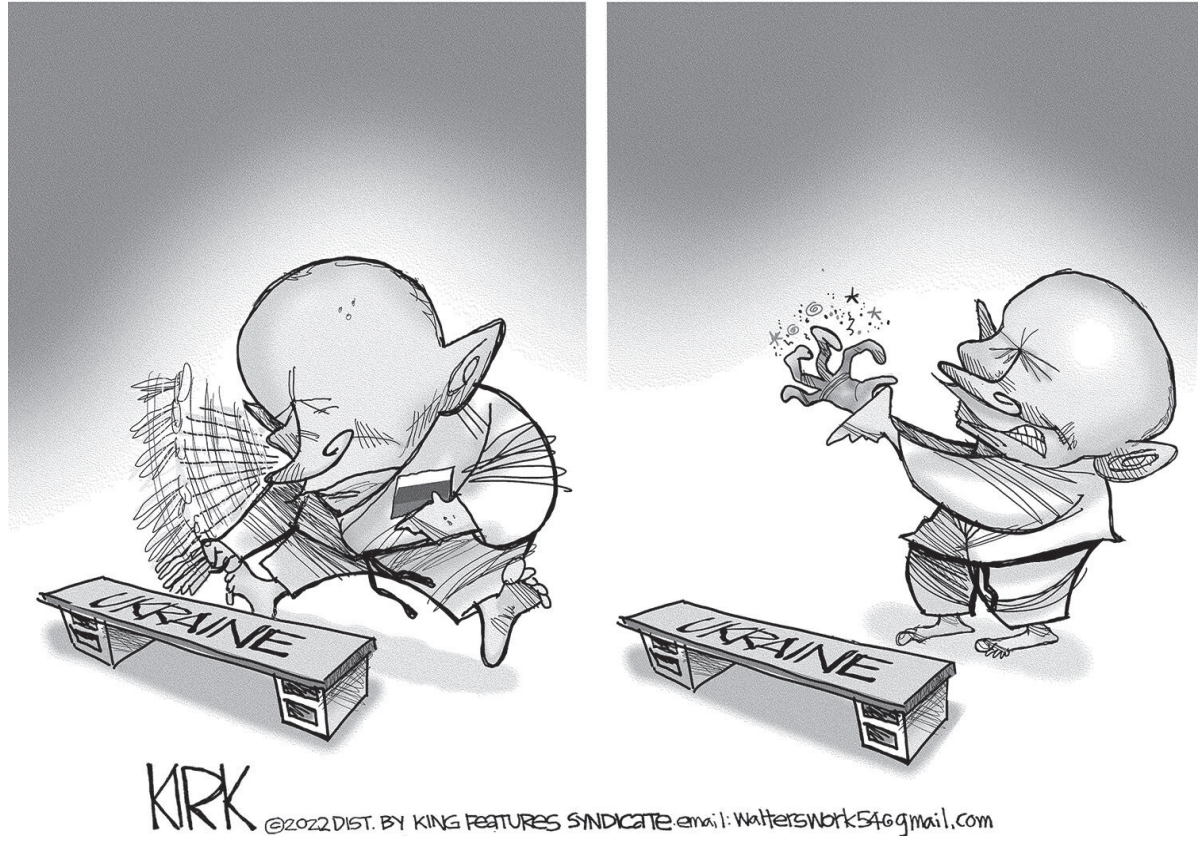
Why would oil companies plan to expand production during an administration that's committed to getting rid of fossil fuels?

We have no animus towards alternative energy sources, at least those that don't impact productive farmland. But we live in the real world where the needs of everyday life cannot yet be met by wind, solar panels and batteries. Trucks, tractors, combines, tanks and fighter jets are still powered by fossil fuels.

It's possible that one day our personal and commercial lives won't be powered by fossil fuels, but that day isn't today, it won't be tomorrow, nor probably any day in the next decade or more.

Until that day arrives, it only makes sense that U.S. policy facilitates enough oil and natural gas to ensure our commercial and strategic energy needs are met.

# THE BLACK BELT



# FARMER'S FATE

## Love and cement on Valentine's

For people who love, even water is sweet.

— Chinese proverb  
Valentine's Day isn't a holiday that we typically celebrate — unless eating copious amounts of conversation hearts counts as celebrating. I don't eat chocolate and I'm too practical for cut flowers.

Fifteen years ago, I did get a pair of Muck boots on Valentine's. I was wasn't sure how romantic that really was — but my husband assured me it oozed love and hearts.

"Just think of all that quality time we'll spend together changing pipes," he grinned. I am sure I rolled my eyes at the time, but those boots have been a staple in my life. I wear them snowmobiling, four-wheeling, snowshoeing, changing pipes, to the barn — and of course to town. In hindsight, it really was the perfect Valentine's gift.

But other than that, we have never really gotten into that February holiday — until this year. OK, I'll be honest, it had nothing to do with Valentine's — I was just looking for another reason to play with my new toy.

For Christmas this year, my husband had upgraded my vinyl design cutter to one that was twice the size. And I was having a ball. Decals for the semi, a few wooden signs, stickers for the kids' rockets, and even a few mugs.

So Valentine's seemed the perfect way to continue my fun by making everyone shirts. I discovered, though, that Christmas is the only holiday where I feel obli-



Brianna Walker

gated to wait for the actual day to pass out gifts. I was so excited I passed out the gifts on the 13th. I don't know who seemed more surprised, my husband or the kids.

I have always rolled my eyes at celebrating a day "that is an overly commercialized way to make money off of love." And now here I was passing out presents? Whatever happened to the woman that used to live in my body?

I shrugged aside their questions and encouraged them to open their gifts. The kids pulled out their shirts and were as excited as farm boys can be about new clothes. My husband pulled his out and looked a little confused but was nodding appreciatively. It read: "I have everything I need." He looked up when I unzipped my jacket to reveal the shirt I had made myself. It said "I am everything." He rolled his eyes at my arrogant humor.

"Muck boots and me, what else is there for Valentine's?" I laughed.

The next day, on Valentine's proper, we were scheduled to pour concrete for a center pivot. Nothing more romantic than screeding cement in the rain. So wearing my old Valentine's Muck boots and a rain jacket, I watched the cement slide down the truck's chute into the forms. We were cold to the bone but basically finished, just running a trowel around the outside to edge it.

Unneeded until we started driv-

ing machinery home, I sought shelter in the cab of the pickup. I had just started playing with the dials of the radio when my husband jerked open the passenger door, "Take me home — my leg!" He winced as he pulled himself into the passenger seat. I glanced down. The denim of his jeans was wet with blood from his knee down on one leg.

Questions flooded that quick ride home. He had slipped getting into the skid steer and fallen, gashing his leg pretty good in the process. His jeans and socks went straight in the trash when we got home — it would take more hydrogen peroxide than they were worth. Thirty minutes later, his leg was cleaned, iced, elevated and wrapped in purple and red vet wrap. Once the ibuprofen had kicked in, we even drew hearts on his bandage.

"Ya know, if you wanted to spend Valentine's with me, you could have just asked!" I teased. But in my heart I was relieved that it wasn't worse.

As I mopped up the last of the blood, I thought about love and Valentine's. Anyone can catch your eye, but it takes someone special to catch your heart — and clean up the blood from that pumping heart.

It wasn't the Valentine's that I expected. It wasn't the Valentine's romance from a movie. But it was still with my family — in my comfortable, old Valentine's Muck boots. And when we're together, I truly do have everything I need — no matter the situation.

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



## Let's give M110 a chance to work

To the Editor:

I'm writing in response to Jim Carpenter's opinion piece on Measure 110 and the problem of meth in rural communities ("M110 Makes Meth Problem Worse," March 3, 2022). Mr. Carpenter's assertions presuppose an association between drug use and crimes against persons and property. While I won't deny that the use of illicit drugs is strongly associated with other crimes, this type of thinking is essentially advocating for the incorrect assumption that drug use always precedes other crime. He is effectively arguing for the ability of the police to arrest someone on the assumption of a future crime based on drug use. This is not only immoral, it is un-American and unconstitutional.

I would also argue that if the type of law enforcement that Carpenter is advocating for was going to work, it would have done so already. Meth is a national problem that is particularly bad in rural

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

communities. Punitive measures have completely failed to stem the tide of meth production and use in the United States. This type of thinking is outdated and counterproductive. A criminal penalties-focused approach will only serve to dehumanize those most vulnerable to this continental-scale drug epidemic and create further barriers to rehabilitation. For better or worse, M110 represents a new approach to a problem that previous methods have thus far failed to solve.

A recent Blue Mountain Eagle article correctly pointed out that the type of access to treatment that M110 sought to create has failed to materialize in Grant County. This is the problem we should be focusing on. The meth epidemic is a national problem afflicting communities like ours from coast to coast. Those that Mr. Carpenter simply reduces to "methamphetamine users" are human beings, and it is important to remember that. A community-level response, not fearmongering, is needed. Our politicians, district attorney included,

should be providing the leadership on this issue. Grant County and its people deserve better.

Alexander Rice  
Canyon City

## Lack of worker training a key issue

To the Editor:

The article on me in the Eagle on March 16 ("County Court Race Will Be Three-Way Contest") left out the most important point I made to the reporter. The most important point to me is the lack of union-trained building trade workers in Grant County.

It takes months to get needed home repairs and significant new construction is almost impossible because of a lack of trained tradespersons to do the work. Meanwhile, most young people leave the county for training and good jobs as soon as they graduate from high school.

I see this as one of the most important issues that needs to be changed in our community.

Scott Knepper  
Prairie City

**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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 • **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: 503-986-1180. Website: 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, oregonlegislature.gov.  
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Published every Wednesday by ecMEDIA group

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

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**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
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One year .....\$51  
 Monthly autopay ..... \$4.25

*Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery*

**Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.**

**POSTMASTER**  
send address changes to:  
 Blue Mountain Eagle  
 195 N. Canyon Blvd.  
 John Day, OR 97845-1187  
 USPS 226-340

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