

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$15. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

## How to build a fire

Sometimes trying to start a good fire can be frustrating. So if you've ever had that issue, here are a few tips: Make sure the area is super dry and start with good, dry tinder. You'll need a good ignition source...torches work great. Be sure to fan the flames; good air movement is a must. In fact, if you can wait until a windy day to start your fire, you'll find it will grow much quicker. If you need someone to monitor your fire, Governor Newsome is a great choice...especially since he may be looking for a new job soon. And remember, water is detrimental to a good flame. But if you happen to be in Southern California, don't worry about fire hydrants...they're just for looks.

Please know, I'm not trying to make light of the horrific California fires, and I pray for those who have lost so much. The devastation is sickening. But the idiocracy of those responsible for the safety of the people of LA is unbelievable, maddening, and deserves to be mocked.

I used to think there wasn't anyone worse for this country than Biden. But he and Newsome are tied for first place at the moment. Newsome has put millions of people in danger and made it impossible for firefighters to do their jobs by making valuable water resources unavailable...because saving Smelt fishes are a bigger priority to the Climate Change god.

Then there's the DEI/LGBTQ worship. So...question...how many of you would like to see me responsible for saving your house during a fire? Ya...me neither. I'm old, small,

and struggle to pack the airway kit to a scene. I don't currently identify as a 22-year-old buff male, but I bet if I did, I'd be a shoo-in for Fire Chief...especially if I was "of color." So, I just wonder how many qualified firefighters have been passed up to make the DEI folks happy? And I wonder how the fire victims feel about funds being redirected from their fire department to a "Midnight Stroll Transgender Café" and an all-gay men's choir. And maybe they would even like to have those anti-vax firefighters back. All this while 60 Oregon fire trucks sit in Sacramento waiting for "smog clearance" so they can help. It's time for the "Woke" to wake up and admit their agenda is not working.

When I think of the anti-God, Liberal agenda, including the pure evil coming from Hollywood, I wonder if God is trying to get our attention. Ignoring Him has consequences...Sodom and Gomorrah ring a bell? We will all spend eternity in heaven or hell. Our last day may be today, or in 20 years, but all our "stuff" will mean nothing then. Jesus died in our place as payment for our sins, but we need to pray, repent, believe and surrender to Him. God loves us enough to give us a choice...the decision is ours. Can He still bring something good out of devastating fires? Yes, He can. Let's look to the one who can calm the wind (and make more fish). "Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah" (Acts 3:19-20).

Susie Crosby  
Prineville, OR

## Death Notices

**Harold H. Holtz**—Harold H. Holtz, 95, of Ione, OR, passed away on Friday, Jan. 10, 2025, in Kennewick, WA. A funeral service will take place at the Ione Community Church at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025, with a concluding graveside to follow. Sweeney Payton Mortuary is entrusted with the arrangements (sweeney-paytonmortuary.com).

**Judy Campbell**—Judy Belle Maime (Alexander) Campbell, 87, of Heppner, OR passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025. A memorial service will be announced later. Sweeney Payton Mortuary is entrusted with the arrangements (sweeney-paytonmortuary.com).

## First baby of the new year

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the family is so blessed in the coming year; it makes me tear up thinking about it," Wilson said.

Clabaugh is now a stay-at-home mom, and Warren does commercial construction, specializing in HVAC systems.

In their spare time, the parents enjoy being together outdoors and exploring in their Jeep.

"We loved the cart that was gifted to us by the Family Birth Center," said Clabaugh. "We can't wait to take Waylon in it on our adventures."

# Farm Bureau says new farm worker housing rules will force out farm workers, shutter family farms

Oregon's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has made changes to the state's farm housing rules—changes that have some in the ag industry concerned for the fate of family farms.

Last week, OR-OSHA adopted updates to its Division 4 – Ag Labor Housing (ALH) rules.

This rulemaking is a result of a multi-year stakeholder engagement process beginning in 2018, when a rulemaking advisory group began meeting to discuss changes to Oregon OSHA's agricultural labor housing rule.

The group consisted of growers, employer representatives, agricultural associations, housing operators and worker representatives, as well as agency personnel.

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed rulemaking activities, which Oregon OSHA resumed in 2021 and has continued through 2024.

"The adopted rule changes substantially raise the protective standards for indoor and outdoor fa-

cilities that operators must include when they provide housing," Oregon OSHA stated in a summary of the changes. Changes run the gamut from site requirements to electrical outlets to driveway signage.

While the changes made last week mark an end to regulatory uncertainty after a tedious and emotionally draining, six-year process, they also signal the beginning of a new chapter of what many fear are unsustainable state policies for farm workers and farm families alike.

"Small and mid-sized farms are being pushed to the brink—faced with an impossible choice: spend \$400,000 to \$1.5 million per operation on new housing to meet these requirements, or risk losing their workforce," said Angela Bailey, President of the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB). "After years of devastating crop losses and brutal market conditions, taking on massive loans isn't just unrealistic—it's operationally fatal."

"Meanwhile, off-farm workforce housing is vir-

tually non-existent in many rural areas," she added. "So, where exactly does OR-OSHA expect workers to live during the critical harvest season? This is a disaster in the making for family agriculture in Oregon."

OFB's Executive Director Greg Addington said that his group and other agriculture organizations participated in good faith for years during this rulemaking.

"We are not just disappointed—we're outraged by OR-OSHA's shortsighted and heavy-handed approach to these rules. This isn't just bad policy; it's outright hypocrisy," Addington said. "While the governor claims affordable housing is a priority, OR-OSHA's reckless decisions will, without question, eliminate access to safe, low or no-cost housing for farm workers near their workplaces."

Addington also said the rules will create workforce shortages during peak harvest periods.

"The outcome of this process confirms a blatant disregard for stakeholder concerns," he said.

OR-OSHA eventually decided against prohibiting farmworker housing within 500 feet of livestock facilities, so long as certain conditions are met, which prevents upheaval of local dairy farms and ranches. OFB states that may be the only positive outcome of this rulemaking, which all but ensures the end of many family-based farms that grow famous Oregon crops.

OR-OSHA has expressed a commitment to provide "technical assistance" to support the Oregon Department of Agriculture in providing \$5 million in grant funds to registered operators for existing on-farm housing compliance with the rule change.

In addition, Oregon OSHA says it will support additional funding for infrastructure improvements once the existing grant funding is exhausted.

Meanwhile, though, Oregon agriculture is facing a crisis. USDA data shows net farm income is projected to drop another 4.4 percent in 2024, following a massive 19.5 percent decline in 2023 compared to 2022.

Over just two years, U.S. farms have lost \$40 billion in revenue—the largest two-year drop ever recorded.

On average, farmers are losing between \$97 and \$373 per acre across all crops. For example, Oregon's 720,000 acres of wheat are seeing losses of about \$125 per acre, amounting to \$90 million in 2024 alone—and that doesn't even include the steeper losses from 2023.

Multiply this impact across Oregon's 200-plus commodities, and it is clear, states the OFB: local farms simply don't have the resources to rebuild worker housing that OR-OSHA has previously deemed safe—but now doesn't—and already meets federal housing standards.

## BEO partners with high schools through mascot card program

Bank of Eastern Oregon has announced that its school mascot debit card program contributed more than \$7,261 to participating area high schools in 2024.

"The school mascot cards provide much needed extra funding for these student body programs," said Becky Kindle, EVP and Chief Operations Officer.

Initiated in September 2013, the Bank of Eastern Oregon mascot debit card program serves the high school associated student body programs of Heppner, Riverside, Irrigon, Ione, Condon and Weston-McEwen in Oregon, and Colfax, WA. Three new area high schools will be added in 2025.

The program generates \$0.05 per transaction performed with each school mascot card to that school's program. The annual renewal fee of \$10 for each card also goes directly to the ASB after the first year.

"Bank of Eastern Oregon is committed to supporting our rural communities and their schools. The mascot cards are a great way for fans to show their mascot spirit and help generate funds for local high school ASB accounts," said Kindle.

"We encourage everyone in the surrounding communities of Heppner, Ione, Boardman, Irrigon, Athena and Condon to sign up at their local BEO branch for a mascot card," Kindle added. "It's easy and a great way to contrib-

ute to these student body accounts in support of future activities."

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