

Master's Annual Address
145th Annual Session
Oregon State Grange
Susan M Noah, Master

Introduction

2018 marks only the third time we have held our annual meeting in the beautiful city of Astoria. In 1917 when we met here for the first time. State Master C.E. Spence touched on a variety of topics that year including our Nations entry into the first world war. We met here again in 1948, shortly after the second world war and in both cases the Master's Address went on to remind our members of the duty they have to carry out the policies being set, regardless of whether those policies are popular or not. He advised the Grange to be cautious in the determinations of the public policies of the Grange and when you favor any measure be prepared to support your representatives in their efforts to carry out our instructions. As we meet here in 2018 I urge you to keep these thoughts in mind as we start our week of deliberations and to take seriously the job you have of establishing current policies for the Oregon State Grange.

Agriculture

The region we are in this year is the home to an abundance of agricultural products. The area offers salmon, shrimp, Dungeness crab and more. And, we cannot forget dairy with the high-quality milk and world-renowned cheeses, and of course ice cream! But even with an abundance of agricultural products this area is familiar with the food security issue. Following the 2007 storm Clatsop County was completely cut off from the more populated areas west of the coast range, which meant many were relying on the food bank to feed their families. Now this area is making efforts to make sure that the next time a storm or other extreme event happens they are more resilient and better able to care for all residents. They have taken up the challenge to help educate their population about food insecurity, something that all of us needs to pay attention to. The Grange should strive to educate urban populations as to the importance of supporting and building our agricultural community and take up our own challenge to help with food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a very real problem here in Oregon and across the US. Food security means, access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy more than a half-million Oregonians now suffer from food insecurity. That means they either went hungry or didn't know where their next meal was coming from at some point during the past year. The Oregon State Grange has challenged each of our Community Granges to do something to support their local food bank this summer. As an agricultural organization we must do our share to shed light on this problem.

If you have been following the new farm bill you will have noticed that one of the largest sections of this piece of legislation is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. Who knows if the farm bill will pass through congress this year, but if it does the SNAP program may look quite different. One good thing about the program is the emphasis it places on nutrition education. When the original Food Stamp Act was amended to include a provision for an optional nutrition education program to be paired with the distribution of food stamps, SNAP education was born. Since then several states have taken the opportunity to teach SNAP beneficiaries how to buy low cost, healthy foods and live healthier lives. The SNAP program is not without flaws and there are many who believe that it should be changed substantially. What ever happens to this program, there will most likely always be a need to help with food insecurity, and I know the Grange can rise to the occasion.

While reading about food security I also ran across another issue that I found interesting and timely. In today's world with so much agriculture coming across our borders the threat of agroterrorism is growing. It used to be that pests or invasive species came into the country in an unintentional manner, now we need to focus on the deliberate introduction of these threats. One of the protections the US has against these threats, whether deliberate or accidental is through the US Customs and Border Protection, and their most effective tool is the use of "detector" dogs. These canines are trained to screen passengers and cargo to prevent the introduction of harmful pests and foreign animal disease. A trained agriculture dog can scan a piece of luggage for forgotten or smuggled fruit in seconds as opposed to the time it would take a person to visually inspect the same. We have always known that dogs can be a wonderful helper on the farm, and now we see that they are helping the agricultural community in many ways.

Water Resources

On December 7th of last year, a panel of seven people on Oregon's Water Resource Commission adopted Oregon's 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy. This is an update of a water resource strategy first adopted in 2012, with provisions for updates every five years. With the extreme weather events in recent years, the future events of possible climate change, and topographic catastrophes such as earthquakes the panel desired to update the 2012 document to fill in gaps in information and strengthen ideas first set forth in 2012. Overall the commission worked to set policies that will support the population growth, protect wildlife and make our communities better able to endure climate change and extreme events including drought, fires, winter storms, floods and earthquakes. As our water infrastructure ages and the population grows there will be more and more pressures put on our water resources. It is up to us as part of the voting public and as Grange members to make sure that Agriculture has a voice and a place at the table.

Since 2012 Oregon has made a number of advancements in the area of water management including dedicated funding for measurement and monitoring and expanded invasive species prevention efforts. Guidance Reports have been published to help customers with water

related permitting, allocations of conserved water, water management and conservation plans as well as long term demand forecasts.

Still, even with the advancements that have been made there will be changes coming as a result of the aging infrastructure, a warming climate and a larger population. There is water scarcity in the eastern part of our State that is affecting ranchers and will eventually affect the price and very quality of our food supply. The Governor of our State has already issued a drought emergency in several counties in the eastern part of the state and recently in Douglas. Douglas is the first county west of the cascades to receive a drought declaration due to low snowpack and low stream flows

Along with the affect on agriculture, wildfire is a very real result of a prolonged drought, bringing damage to homes, farms and our natural resources. As we go into this season make sure that we are responsible with this most precious resource and that we constantly advocate for the agricultural uses that our farmers and ranchers so desperately need. And when necessary I hope that our Grange halls are open and welcoming to house, feed and take care of the firefighters who are called upon during the wildfire season.

Education

This coming year the State Grange education committee will promote the programs and efforts of Ag in the Classroom to increase agricultural literacy. Many Granges have supported the Dictionary Project for many years, and I know that our support of that program will go on, but there are areas where the Dictionary Project is being served by other organizations. For those areas I propose that partnering with Ag in the Classroom would be an ideal way to serve our communities. Ag in the Classroom has several ways that our Granges could become involved. One is by purchasing agricultural books for classrooms, or by purchasing the Get Oregonized text books. We already have policy supporting the use of Get Oregonized, we should take the next step of providing these for classes in our areas. Taking part in their Literacy Project as volunteers is another way to become in involved. Each year Ag in the Classroom selects a book that focuses on an aspect of Oregon's agriculture and a lesson plan is developed around that subject. The book and activity materials are provided by them and each classroom receives a copy of the book to keep for themselves. Trained volunteers then schedule times to visit schools throughout the state of Oregon and read to students grades K-4. The volunteer also lead a hands-on lesson that meets Oregon standards to reinforce the book's message. This year that book is Apples to Oregon. The 2018 year is already over, but now is the time for us to start thinking of this program and ways we can make a difference.

Connectivity

The Grange has focused on rural access issues practically since we were established. First for rural free delivery, telephone service and electrification and now to broadband for all. Our National Master has been appointed to an FCC commission and is now working to see that every American in all areas have available to them technology that will facilitate education, health care, science and business. The Oregon State Grange has joined with a group called Connect Americans Now that is working in support of utilizing TV white space spectrum for

broadband deployment. This group of concerned citizens, local organizations and rural advocates are committed to eliminating the digital divide that is holding back rural America. The goal is to bring rural Americans who currently lack connectivity, safe and affordable broadband access by 2022 so that they can take advantage of the economic and educational opportunities that exist in other communities.

Citizenship

With our mid term elections just finished in Oregon we saw one of the lowest voter turnouts with only 33.6% of the eligible voters mailing or dropping off a ballot. This has been the lowest turnout since the 1970's. The Oregon Secretary of State website lists some of the reasons why people do not vote. Apathy is the number one reason, people don't care or don't feel a responsibility. Others don't believe there is a difference in candidates, some for religious reasons and some that are disenfranchised, like criminals, minors or those in the county illegally and finally those who are just against voting.

Our Declaration of Purposes stresses that no one gives up the inalienable right and duty which belongs to every American citizen. On the contrary it says that every member should do all in his or her power to influence for good the action of any political party to which he or she belongs. So, while the Grange is and hopefully always will be a true nonpartisan organization it is up to us to be leaders and to take a role in the civic awareness of our state and nation.

While adhering to the Granges nonpartisan values it is still possible to promote the ideals of citizenship and to educate our members and the voting public through candidate and issue forums. Encourage voter registration, hold a voter registration drive at your hall. And most important, make sure that you take the time to be an informed citizen and vote.

Conclusion

The voice of the Grange is not as loud as it once was, and we cannot overpower other interests by the mere weight of our numbers, but our strength lies in the justice of our causes. Therefore, we must be diligent in the consideration that we give to the policies we adopt. We should act wisely and unselfishly and keep in our minds the welfare of our state and nation. We should all continue with our efforts to promote the policies we adopt as Grangers. Work with our elected officials to implement the actions we wish to see taken, and work to increase our own knowledge base so that we are well informed and ready to make decisions.

There can be no doubt as to the tremendous amount of good that has been done by the Grange in the past 150 years, nor is there any doubt that there is still a need for groups such as ours to deliberate, discuss and develop policy that we can be proud of. This week we will continue our efforts to set forth positions and ideas worthy of the Patrons of Husbandry.

