

Your voice matters



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There seems to be a consistent theme as we approach every election cycle: your voice matters.

And unless we use our voices to change the trajectory of the discussion in our state, and nationally, we will suffer the consequences.

Oregon is in trouble economically. There seems to be little preparation for the downturn that is just beyond the horizon. Oregon is hemorrhaging jobs, employers are closing shop or outright leaving, and our state leaders are fiddling like Nero while it all burns.

The state cannot simply tax its way out of what is barreling down on the economy. I hear my union friends say that Oregon is a great place to work. I totally agree — it is. But one needs a job to work and that is what is at stake a year from now with the 2026 elections.

Leaders need to lead

The nursery and greenhouse industry plays a vital role in our economy, environment, and community well-being, yet its importance is often overlooked. As economic, ecological and political forces collide, being an advocate for this industry has never been more critical.

Most of the Oregon Legislature represents urban areas. The numbers do not lie.

We cannot allow urban legislators to say on one hand they love farmers, while on the other they make farming more difficult by taking away tools or adding regulation. This cognitive dissonance can be found at every committee hearing, and in every bill introduced.

Don't get me wrong — OAN has built longstanding relationships with both sides of the political aisle. But these relationships are just not doing enough to protect the state's largest sector of agriculture.

Oregon's nursery industry is an economic force, with \$1.2 billion in sales. That's something to be proud of. We are small, medium and large businesses that create jobs, support economic health, and build community connections.

We advocate for fair policies, research funding, and educational programs for growers, because these are investments in econom-

ic stability and generational opportunity.

These investments are needed because this industry faces significant challenges, from labor shortages and regulatory pressures to the impacts of climate change and disease management. Without strong advocacy, many growers will struggle to stay viable. Championing their needs at the local, state, and national levels ensures that their voices are heard.

Advocating for the nursery and greenhouse industry is about more than plants — it's about supporting environmental resilience, the economy and our community. Look in the mirror and get active and raise your voice.

What politicians don't understand

Farming is more than a profession — it's a way of life built on unpredictability, grit, and deep-rooted commitment. Yet politicians across the political spectrum fail to grasp the complex and relentless pressures farmers face. While policies are debated in air-conditioned offices, farmers are out in the field battling the elements, market swings, and regulatory burdens that most policymakers seem far removed from.

One of the biggest disconnects lies in the assumption that farming is simply about growing crops. Farmers must be business managers, mechanics, environmental stewards, and often meteorologists, all rolled into one. Their success is tied not only to their skills and work ethic, but also to factors completely outside of their control. These include market prices, climate variability, and trade policy decisions.

Moreover, many politicians push environmental regulations with good intentions, but little practical understanding. Policies around land use, water management, pesticides, and emissions often pile on without recognizing that farms are already some of the most efficient, sustainable producers in the world. Farms don't do this because of rules and mandates, but because their survival depends on it.

These regulations often feel more like obstacles than solutions, especially when they are enforced without meaningful consultation with the farming community. Ultimately, what politicians don't understand — or choose to ignore — is that

farming is not just a job; it's a high-stakes, high-risk commitment to the family farm under constant pressure. If those in power truly want to support agriculture, they must stop romanticizing it, start listening, and work alongside farmers instead of legislating from a distance. Only then can they begin to address the real pressures farmers endure every single day.

The starting bell for 2026

OAN's member rolls include the complete spectrum of political beliefs. This is a tremendous boost to our ability to educate and influence policymakers.

The 2026 election will determine who represents us in the U.S. Congress and the Oregon Legislature, and who serves as Oregon governor. In all of these races, we must demand a seat at the table.

But where to start? Your home, your neighborhood, your community. Democracy only works when you participate.

People say, "Too many elections are out of reach and why bother voting — the fix is in." The fix is in if you do not vote. In the end, YOU are the one who sets the course of the state and nation.

How to get engaged? The OAN has advocacy training scheduled for January 13, 2026, in Wilsonville. We have Government Relations Committee meetings that are open to the membership. This is where our policy direction and core political effort are crafted. You have your voice that can go directly to legislators as they convene in February for a legislative session.

All of these are within your grasp if you wish to engage. Don't be the one to look back and say, "I wish." Be the one who can say, "We did this." ☺