

# The Register-Guard

## We must pivot from our source of energy

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By Bob Doppelt

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Thanksgiving day has passed but it led me to consider some things we should be thankful for.

First, let's give thanks for what many people in the U.S. and here in Lane County have today and how it came about. Never before in human history have so many people had access to the range of material goods, housing, food, medicines, health care, education, information, communications and transportation options as we do now.

In addition, although it varies slightly by gender, race, income and location, in 2018 the average life expectancy in much of Lane County had climbed to 79.6 years, which is slightly above the national average of 78.8 years.

These and many other facets of our current lifestyle are built upon the discoveries, creativity and hard work of those who came before us. They include First Nation's people who developed sweet potatoes, corn, beans and other plants commonly eaten today. African Americans also developed many foods and created the ironing board, refrigerated trucks and countless other innovations. Latinos, Asians and people from many other locations worldwide joined with a diverse range of European immigrants to fashion the abundance we enjoy today.

Let's give a deep bow to all of our predecessors, and today's diversified population, for contributing to what we have now.

Everything has consequences however. It's also important to give thanks to those who assess the effects of our bountiful lifestyles.

Last month a group of 11,000 scientists from over 150 countries declared a global climate emergency. Led by two forest ecology professors at Oregon State University, the declaration says we are in the midst of a climate crisis, it is

happening more quickly and is more severe than anticipated, and it threatens the fate of humanity.

The scientists said we must quickly stop using fossil fuels. But human overpopulation, tree loss, soil degradation, meat production and excessive consumption are also contributing to the climate emergency.

It is far better to know what we must change to avoid catastrophe than to bumble along blindly. These scientists deserve our appreciation for clarifying that we now face an interrelated climate-ecological-biodiversity crisis that has resulted from the very lifestyle we give thanks for today.

Finally, let us be thankful that we can make the changes needed to reduce the climate emergency to manageable levels.

In response to an imminent threat, in just 18 months after the U.S. entered WWII the entire economy was converted to wartime production. We can make another swift conversion now to establish an ecologically resilient economy.

We can decide to swiftly phase out of fossil fuels, ramp up energy efficiency and convert the entire economy to clean renewable energy. We can also decide to stop clearing forests, spraying deadly pesticides and herbicides and allowing heedless development and consumption because they threaten life on earth. And, we can rapidly retrain workers and educate residents so they can thrive in the new economy.

Although Thanksgiving ended, let's be grateful to those who came before us, what we have today, and that, if we so choose, we can make the transformations necessary to ensure a livable future.

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