

# Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

## Refugees: a risk we can't take

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

These are the words on the Statue of Liberty.

With our support of these words, one might think we'd be supportive of accepting Syrian refugees into our state and county.

But we aren't. We stand with the 31 states who are refusing President Obama's move to place these refugees in their states. And here's why.

We understand that many of these individuals are fleeing from the same terrorism that threatens America.

However, it's a proven fact, particularly after the attacks in Beirut and

Paris last week, that these groups of refugees are being used to conceal ISIS terrorists within them. There is no definitive way to vet these individuals. There's no way to screen them, to prevent them from infiltrating our states or stop them from setting up a network with which to attack us from within.

We have to protect our own first. It's the President's duty to do so.

Instead, the President and the governors of the states (including our own Kate Brown) who are willing to take in these particular masses, are opening up legal American citizens to a daily game of Russian roulette. And that's unconscionable. Somewhere, some time, some place along the way, Americans will die because of that decision. On whose hands will that blood be?

If America were to fall to ISIS, we would no longer be in a position to help anyone seeking refuge in this world. We wouldn't even be able to help ourselves. What would happen around the world if American fell? Stop for a moment and imagine the domino effect.

Accepting mass groups of refugees is a risk our government shouldn't begin to take. Yet, sadly, they are.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— GUEST OPINION —

## Oregon public records reform smells like cover-up

By Scott Roberts  
Special to The Baker County Press

In 1973, Oregon enacted one of the nation's most robust public records laws. The broad-sweeping legislation gave state residents the reins with which to control the government they had created.

Since then, however, the Legislature has added more than 400 exemptions to the law. Government administrators have also been given the latitude to determine how much records will cost and how long it will take to produce them.

The combination of all three effectively renders the laws meaningless to anyone but friends of the party in power, which is precisely how they were not meant to work.

Those who can withstand exorbitant costs and long wait times can receive the remaining records that aren't exempt. Most private citizens however, don't have the wherewithal or the patience to withstand the bureaucratic red tape.

Last year, to cite one glaring example, the Freedom Foundation requested a list of state-subsidized, in-home healthcare workers' names and addresses so we could mail them information about the recent Harris v. Quinn U.S. Supreme Court decision that determined they were not state workers and couldn't be forced to join a labor union.

The Oregon Department of Human Services informed the Freedom Foundation it was processing our request, but in reality the agency was pushing legislation to add in-home healthcare worker's mailing address to the ever-growing list of exemptions.

One day after the bill passed, the Freedom Foundation was notified the agency would like to have given us the information, but it was now exempt. Sorry.

The action by government will now cost Oregon taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in litigation because the Freedom Foundation—unlike ordinary citizens—isn't going to be



Submitted Photo

Scott Roberts is the Citizen Action Network director for the Freedom Foundation, a Northwest-based nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank promoting free markets and limited, accountable government.

bluffed or bullied out of doing what's right.

The Freedom Foundation is not alone in having to litigate for public records.

Oracle recently filed suit to obtain former Gov. Kitzhaber's emails related to the Cover Oregon website fiasco.

In 2010, former Attorney General John Kroger convened a task force and recommended the 2011 Legislature reform the records laws by reducing the number of exemptions allowed, reducing the cost of records, and providing more certain response times. The 2011 legislature failed to act.

Last month Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum convened her own task force and almost as soon as it had begun, she announced her recommendations wouldn't be ready for the 2016 legislative session.

It's unlikely there will be any new recommendations beyond the three mentioned, so apparently the task force was formed only to give the AG's Office political cover.

Republican legislators have taken interest in the public records issue and have promised to introduce legislative reforms in the 2016 legislative session.

And with good reason. Earlier this month the Center for Public Integrity gave Oregon an "F" and ranked it 44th out of 50 states in terms of ethics and public records laws. The ranking affirms what anyone who's requested records already knows.

Reforming the records laws in concept is relatively easy, but it will take a substantial dose of political will.

Until then, records will only be accessible to groups like Oracle and the Freedom Foundation who can afford them.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### Coat Drive a Success

To the Editor:  
Baker City Rotary Club held their second "Coat Drive for Kids" Saturday November 7th at Sorbenots Coffee on Campbell Street. Thank you to everyone who participated by donating a coat and to our Rotary volunteers who spent hours in the cold collecting them.

More than 100 coats were donated and with the help of local charity organizations every single one will be given to a child in Baker County that would otherwise go without this winter. Thanks to the generosity of our community and volunteers, many kids will now have coats

when they leave for school on these cold winter mornings.

Special thanks goes out to Sorbenots for their generous contribution of a coffee drink to everyone who donated a coat. When we approached Sorbenots, they were excited about being a partner in this effort and we are extremely grateful. Please visit them the next time you need a coffee pick-me-up and express your gratitude to them personally. They help make Baker City a great place to live!

Anthony Bailey, President  
Baker City Rotary Club  
Baker City

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